

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

Minutes of the Lewisham STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

which was open to the press and public and was held on

Monday 21 September 2015 beginning 6.30pm at the Lewisham Civic Suite, Catford Road,
London SE6 4RU

Present:

Group A: James Dobson, Luke Donnellan, Gerald Rose, Joan Goldberg

Group B: Shaun Burns (Deputy Chair), Revd Juliet Donnelly

Group C:

Group D: Dinah Griffiths (Chair), Cllr Jacq Paschoud, Kate Bond, Cllr Janet Daby

Also Present:

SACRE Adviser: Denise Chaplin, School Improvement Officer RE

Clerk: Stephen Sealy

Note that due to the order of the agenda not being strictly followed throughout parts of these minutes are not strictly chronological. However, in the main, this is a chronological record.

1. Welcome, Apologies for Absence

Dinah welcomed all present to the meeting.

Denise stated that documents tabled at the meeting are emailed to all members but that if members want large documents printed they should request this directly of her until a SACRE clerk is appointed.

Cllr Paschoud advised that she had to leave at 7pm.

Dinah proposed that item 5 be dealt with first in light of Cllr Paschoud's early departure.

5 SACRE Annual Report

Denise introduced the report on SACRE business and reported that her aim was for the next report to be completed before the end of the calendar year. She outlined its format,

explaining that the headings used in reports using the older NASACRE framework were followed in this report. However, she explained that future plans were to adopt a new report format that NASACRE were producing with Government encouragement.

Denise highlighted the need to have a conversation with the Agreed Syllabus Conference with regard to Section 2 – Religious Education. She explained that SACRE was at its five-year review stage but haven't had an Agreed Syllabus Conference in the period covered by the report.

With regard to section 2.2 – Standards in Religious Education, Denise explained that 2015 exam results would not be available until the second meeting of the Autumn term.

Gerald explained that there were two sets of results. Denise clarified that the meeting 'year' was actually a year and a month as shown on the cover and therefore there were 2 sets of results seen by SACRE during that time. .

With regard to Section 3 – Collective Worship, Denise explained that there had been no determinations and when questioned, defined determinations as decisions made by the SACRE acting as a panel in response to schools' requests not to hold collective worship according to the legal framework. She explained that if schools wish to deviate from the law in respect of public worship, they appeal to SACRE which looks at the case and decides whether to uphold this and approve the alternative collective worship that the school proposes.

She explained that Lewisham SACRE had granted only one, a sixth form college whose determination was effective for two years, but that although the determinations procedure still exists, no applications had been received in this or the previous year.

Denise conceded that by the time the report was issued, much of its contents would be dated but that it shows how SACRE demonstrates its use of resources.

Kate asked about the timeline of the report, which Denise in responding reported would probably not be finalised until Easter.

Discussion returned to the Standards 2014, and Denise reported that there was a significant take up for the full course in 2014. From 2013-14 the short course was no longer recommended by DfE.

Denise reported that Lewisham's take-up of the full course was in line with national trends but there was a drop for the fourth year in the short course. She reported that there is no comparative data for the short course nationally for 2014.

Regarding the data presented on page 15 Denise explained that school to school comparison was not very useful as different circumstances between schools meant that this was not 'like for like'. She reported that at Addey and Stanhope, higher achieving pupils were entered in long course, but that this differs from school to school.

Denise highlighted that Sydenham had entered its first full course in the year, and that Sedgehill's results in RS were higher than in other humanities subjects.

Denise added that Addey and Stanhope were very pleased with the results of individual pupils.

Gerald suggested that of key importance was comparing the number of pupils in the year with how many were entered for Religious Education.

At 7pm Cllr Paschoud left the meeting.

Denise confirmed the report as agreed by SACRE.

2 Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising not on the full agenda

James stated that he had wrongly been reported as absent for the previous meeting, and that he was actually present. Denise apologised for this error.

Denise reported apologies for absence from David Hutchens who cannot attend Monday meetings, Pastor Hughes who was in transit and Revered Tod Gobledale, who has now resigned owing to a move to Salisbury. John Goodey also tendered apologies for the meeting. Email apologies were also received from Gail Exon and Mohammed Barrie who were both unwell.

Dinah reported that she would send Tod a note on behalf of the SACRE. She also reported that John Ackland had retired from church and full time ministry and produced a card that was handed around the table for members to sign.

It was mentioned that membership of the Teachers' group was still a problem although over the summer 3 new members have been nominated, and made a plea for new members. Shaun reported that two of these teachers who were prospective members pending ratification from the NUT.

Gerald questioned the statement under point 5 which states that 'Gerald Rose confirmed that schools are using 'drop down' days to deliver other subjects. Denise explained the context in which this had been said, and that it had been reported in the previous meeting that a school was using dropdowns to cover the syllabus and that she has asked whether it was common for schools to use dropdowns to deliver other subjects. However, it was agreed that this be struck out from the minutes of the last meeting.

Dinah and Denise reported that Councillor Britten has been in hospital since the last meeting and is likely to be off for a considerable period as he recovers from a major operation.

All present at the meeting agreed the previous minutes as a correct record of the proceedings subject to the corrections identified.

Dinah reported that she had signed the constitution which had been agreed by Councillors meeting as the Council. She reported that no questions had been asked by the Council.

Dinah reported that the previous constitution had been inaccessible for the last 18 months.

Gerald suggested that the new constitution be backed up in hardcopy. Dinah and Denise agreed that they would retain a copy of this.

3. ASC Update

Denise explained that the ASC meeting had been held at the synagogue but that the attendance was low, falling below the number required for a quorum.

She reported that both she and Cllr Britten had met separately with the young Mayor and spoken about the level of RE that worked for students not doing a full course in RE. She explained that schools were struggling with studying the long course in RE.

Denise reported that she will be meeting with RE teachers this term.

It was decided that the date of the ASC would be the 21 October at Trinity School.

Denise reported that she had discussed with Cllr Britten about speaking with Secondary teachers about RE in schools. Dinah expressed her intention to elect a vice-chair for ASC to support Cllr Britten and Denise in doing this, but acknowledged that the cohort of people present wasn't enough.

Dinah defined the ASC as the local agreed syllabus developed by the Agreed Syllabus Conference and circulated and supported by SACRE for schools in the locality.

Dinah proposed that the election of a vice-chair went on the agenda of the ASC meeting.

Luke enquired about the process

Denise explained the urgency of the AS and emphasised that it required preparatory work. She reported that there was a national debate about HMI's advice to Lewisham and added that if HMI and OfSTED were advising schools about an alternative way of delivering RE, it was important that this was communicated to them.

Dinah noted that the production of the AS incurs costs and advised that SACRE and the LA would have to consider how this is costed.

Kate commented that Denise and herself needed to have a meeting about how this costed and emphasised the need for a cost analysis.

Shaun suggested that certain sections may need change and that different groups should be consulted appropriately.

Juliet agreed to book a room for a maximum of 25 people between 6.30pm and 8.30pm.

Denise explained that the agreed syllabus needed to be reviewed. She explained that SACRE tells the parallel body to produce the syllabus, stating that ASC was constituted of the same membership bodies as SACRE but not necessarily the same persons. She emphasised the need for the ASC meeting to be conducted properly given the legal status of ASC meetings.

Kate asked whether SACRE had run a questionnaire asking the representative organisations to rate the current AS as a means of auditing itself, explaining that in her post, she was using ten focussed questions for her own Standards and Achievements audit.

Denise explained that there were four groups, one of which was a teachers group. She added that although no teachers were present, some were coming on board and SACRE would be able to get evidence from speaking to them.

Gerald stated that questionnaires wouldn't work for the Jewish community. He expressed the view that producing a useful questionnaire would take considerable time and that it was better to speak to the small groups rather than having them tick a box.

Joan asked for clarity about the interest groups. Denise explained this. She explained that all the faith groups would take it back to their respective interest groups which they represent.

Denise reported explained that Councillor Britten's worry was Key Stage 4. HMI had told RE teachers that they can decide what to teach, which Denise and others found worrying.

Denise suggested that much of the AS wouldn't need changing given the hard work that had already been carried out.

Denise suggested that SACRE needed to ask teachers what was going well and what was the hardest bit to teach, and why.

Kate stated that teachers were trying to match AS requirements with OfSTED and faced the challenge of making sure that they gel.

Denise suggests that getting Abbi of the Hindu group involved may be useful.

James explained that the BHA was training up resources to go into schools and present the non-faith background. He explained that there was some facility in London but that the organisation was trying to develop more around the country. (Agenda point 10a)

4. Membership & LA Update

Denise reported that she would deliver training for new members.

Denise expressed her concern that evangelical and Pentecostal churches weren't represented. She reported that Revd Michelle McMahon hadn't attended any meetings. It was agreed that Dinah should write to them, letting her know that her membership would cease.

Gerald reminded the group that the policy with regard to non-attendance had been agreed in a previous meeting.

Dinah thanked Shaun for his help in filling vacancies. She asked if Juliet could assist with increasing the membership, and commented that representatives of headteachers and academies were still needed.

Dinah expressed particular concern that a secondary headteacher hadn't sat on the committee for a while.

Gerald asked if someone could cover two positions. Denise explained that they couldn't as they couldn't vote as both.

Kate suggested that a targeted approach would be useful and suggested that the use of governors was worth pursuing. Denise responded that that approach had been taken but with limited effect.

Denise reported that she was in email correspondence with several schools which she would try to encourage to attend SACRE meetings. She commented that some shire counties held afternoon meetings but that schools no longer want to release teachers in afternoons.

Luke suggested that the SACRE met in half term but Shaun and Dinah remarked that this wouldn't work.

Gerald suggested that the current gap between the working day and the meeting time is likely to be problematic. He suggested 5.30.

Denise proposed that she do a round-robin email asking members for their preferences. Luke remarked that he could be earlier if need be, suggesting that between 4.30 and 6.30 was better.

Juliet suggested that the group meeting at different times may be the solution.

5. SACRE Annual Report (continued)

Denise reported that the annual report will run the calendar year, and explained that the report for 2015 should have the previous academic year's data in.

Kate commented that Governing Bodies have to report on those who attend meetings and have conflicts of interest. She suggested that the report include an Appendix detailing the membership of meetings.

Denise committed to fill Kate in about the members of meetings

6. Public Examination national headlines 2015

Denise remarked that this point was fairly self-explanatory. She reported that Lewisham didn't have its local data yet but hoped that it would by the next SACRE meeting.

7 Survey of SACRE members' views

Denise reported that this survey was available on the NASACRE website and explained that there is research being carried out nationally by Mark Plater about the work of individual SACRE members and the aims and purposes of RE teaching in schools. There are a lot of questions whose responses Mark will analyse in order to report on the perceptions of SACRE members. She reported that there had been a debate about the bias of the research and that Mark was aware that the variance in members' experiences may colour their answers. Denise further elaborated on the 'What is RE for' survey, adding that information he was seeking included how long members have been in SACREs, which groups people represent and whether they are qualified teachers.

James asked if the survey was likely to highlight the non-welcoming/exclusive nature of some of the SACREs around the country, to which Denise responded that it was likely to highlight some of the issues within SACREs.

Denise added that the survey could be completed on NASACRE's website (for which she has sent the new password and login) or in hardcopy.

Denise proposed the group look at the 'A new settlement: Religion and belief in schools' report in the next meeting.

8. Lewisham Values

Dinah informed the meeting that John Goodey is executive head of two schools and this was a project involving both of those schools and the Olive Tree School where Mohammed Barrie is the Head but that as neither member was present, this point couldn't be discussed and will be held over to the next meeting.

9 National Update

Denise reported that she has sent out the NASACRE's SACRE briefing Issue 9 which contains valuable information. She expressed high commendation for the Professor John Hull mentioned in the briefing, who had been a founder of NASACRE and had recently died.

Denise reported that Joyce Miller has stepped down from the RE Council chair since the Trojan Horse event. Trevor Cooling is the new Chair.

She reported that the RE Council is doing a lot of work on the Young Ambassador project.

Denise reported that the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) has reformed. Fiona Bruce MP is the new chair, and the group is in the process of determining its membership and what the remit of work will be. She reported that the group is encouraging people to get involved with interfaith week.

10 Items circulated to schools

a) BHA Happiness competition

Luke reported that there was a BHA photo competition the aim of which was to encourage entrants to take a photo of something that represents happiness to them. Photos will then be exhibited.

b) Smsc self-evaluation tool

Kate explained that in discussing a self-evaluation tool within another environment she had suggested that the data it was completed, and who signed it off should be displayed on its front cover. She suggested that the requirement for Governors to sign off the tool would raise its profile.

A discussion on which points to include led to suggestions of the following:

- i Who completed the self-evaluation;
- ii where one can find the evidence;
- iii its date;
- iv which governors have signed it off; and
- v the date of the next review.

Denise suggested that how this is approached would be up to the school but that Kate's suggestion would be communicated to the schools.

c) Southwark Cathedral Education Centre request

Denise explained that the Centre wanted a teacher trustee. She committed to circulate the information electronically to any member of the group who wished to know more.

11 Any Other Business and Information Exchange

2016 Accord Inclusivity Award

Denise explained that this was a good opportunity for a school with excellent inclusive practice to self-nominate or to be nominated.

Denise reported that she had circulated information about Holocaust Remembrance Day to SACRE. Dinah said that the next local event was again to be held at the Rivoli Hall room. Gerald reported that 'Don't stand by' is the theme for next year.

Denise expressed the topicality of the theme given the current migrant situation.

Gerald reported that Lewisham has worked hard on education for Holocaust Memorial Day. They've employed a potential drama team doing workshops for primary and secondary schools which tells the stories of two older Jewish residents. One was a Kindertransport child and the other a Camp survivor. Gerald added that it was linked to the national theme, producing something of educational value. Joan commended the drama team's ability to create an impact.

Denise asked how many schools the drama team had visited but Gerald was not sure.

Gerald explained that January 27 was National Holocaust Memorial day. He expressed his desire that all schools would hold assemblies to commemorate this. He reported that the Lewisham event will take place on 24 January and that at this event the drama team would present the culmination of the work they had been progressing in the schools they'd visited. He remarked the Kinder Transport had been the theme of the previous year's NMD.

Dinah enquired about the cross-over prospects of the group work and whether the downloadable resource was available to some schools to complement the work being done by the visited schools. Gerald will check with the HMD committee.

12a To consider dates for

i) the next Lewisham SACRE meeting

Katie proposed that Sara Williams or herself be invited to all of the SACRE meetings.

At 8.25pm Kate offered apologies and left.

Joan asked if a venue where Hanukkah candles can be lit could be chosen. The proposal for the next SACRE meeting was 6.30pm to 8.30pm on Tuesday 8 December at the synagogue.

It was proposed that the meeting after this take place in a Hindu temple.

ii) an Agreed Syllabus Conference

Juliet said she would let Denise know if Trinity Primary or Secondary will be used for the AS Conference.