

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

Minutes of the Lewisham Agreed Syllabus Conference

which was held on **Tuesday 26 September 2017 at 6.30pm**
at The Council Chamber, Lewisham Civic Suite, Catford Road, Catford SE6 4RU

Approved by Lewisham ASC on 8 November 2018

Present:

REPRESENTING	NAME	PRESENT
Baha'i	Dr Mehdi Dabestani	
Buddhism	David Hutchens	APOLOGIES
Free Church A o G	Pastor Nick Hughes	APOLOGIES
Free Church	Jeronne Rudder (SUBSTITUTE)	
Free Churches (URC)	Rev Raymond Singh	
Hinduism	Vallipuram Bala	✓
Hinduism	Narmadha Saravanan (SUBSTITUTE)	✓
Humanism	Luke Donnellan	✓
Independent Evangelical	Nigel Desborough	✓
Islam	Mohammed Barrie	
Islam	Sarwoar Ahmed	
Judaism	Gerald Rose	✓
Judaism	Joan Goldberg	✓
Pentecostal	Layo Afuape	✓
Pentecostal	Cheryl Abbam (SUBSTITUTE)	
Roman Catholic	Rt. Rev Monsignor Nicholas Rothon	✓
Sikhism	Gurbakhsh Singh Garcha	✓
Church of England	Shaun Burns	✓ ARR. 6.52pm
Church of England - Secondary Teacher	Steven Gallears	
Church of England - Primary Teacher	John Goodey	
Governor	Gail Exon	APOLOGIES
Minister	Revd Juliet Donnelly (VICE CHAIR)	✓
ATL Section of National Education Union (formerly 'ATL')	Kim Knappett	✓
NUT Section of National Education Union (formerly 'NUT')	Karen Hansen	✓ ARR. 6.52pm
Academy/Free school	VACANT	
NUT Section of National Education Union (formerly 'NUT')	Claire Adams	
NAS/UWT	Pamela Phillips	✓
Lewisham headteachers and deputies	Judith Purkiss	
Local Authority members	Councillor Jacq Paschoud	APOLOGIES
Local Authority members	Councillor David Britton (CHAIR)	✓
Local Authority members	Councillor Hilary Moore	APOLOGIES
School Governors - Primary	Lynda De Marquet	✓
School Governors – Secondary	Adelere Adedeji	
Representative of the Executive Director of Education	Kate Bond	APOLOGIES
OTHERS		
Ahmadi Muslim Community	Mohamed Serroukh	
Primary teacher	Judith Nweze	✓
Young Mayor Team	c/oi Kay Brown and Malcolm Ball	
PREVENT		
RE School Improvement Officer	Denise Chaplin	✓
SACRE clerk	Stephen Sealy	✓

(Boxed sections in these minutes signify actions, and underlines sections decisions)

The meeting began at 6.44pm.

1a Welcome, apologies for absence and membership update.

The Chair confirmed that the committee was quorate.

Denise reported that the committee had new members - Steve Gallears, Isaac Sackey, Lynda de Marquet and Adelere Adedeji – and welcomed Lynda, the only one of the four present.

She reported that, with immediate effect, Narmadha will substitute for Bala whose schedule meant he was experiencing difficulties in attending the meetings on time.

She reported that there were now two vacancies, representing the Baptists and Academies, although she expressed uncertainty about the means of filling the Academies' vacancy.

2 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 June

The Chair reported that Luke had emailed him details of eight amendments to these meetings. He added that seven of these were non-controversial but that the eighth was problematic as neither himself, the RE School Improvement Officer nor the clerk could recollect Luke making this point.

(Luke had said that the sentence that begins 'This was unanimously accepted although...' [the second to last sentence of the third agenda point, on page 5 of the minutes] was imprecise. He had proposed that it be amended to:

'This was unanimously accepted although Luke stated that his acceptance was qualified by the fact that although he accepted the legal guidance, it failed to cover what was still legally relevant to the content of the syllabus'.

Gurbakhsh stated that it was unusual to add to minutes, and that only corrections rather than additions were permissible.

Layo commented that minutes were meant to represent a summary of what was discussed in the meeting, rather than a detailed, precise account.

Shaun and Karen arrived at 6.52pm.

Luke stated that the sentence as minuted didn't accurately reflect what he said; which he felt was accurately reflected in his proposed correction.

No committee members were able to recollect this point being made.

Luke sought assurance that the minutes would still record that he had challenged this record of the minutes and the amendment that he had proposed. The Chair confirmed that it would.
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3 Matters arising from the minutes not on the agenda

Gurbakhsh said that several members shared the same forename which meant the system of using the forename only to refer to members in the minutes was unhelpful.

Kim advised that the list of attendees on the front page showed that there actually weren't any members with the same forename in attendance. Juliet Campbell having resigned this is now the case.

4 Continued work on the primary phase between meetings

A UPDATED KS1 AND 2 OVERVIEW

Denise referred the committee to the Local Authority's KS 1 and 2 overview. She reported that work by members of the ASC was still needed to bulk it out. She added that the committee could take longer on producing support materials but some of the outstanding work on the units is statutory and she emphasised the importance of keeping the momentum of the ASC work. She suggested that where several people needed to collaborate, interested members set a diary date at the end of the meeting. She asked that where several members needed to work together, one member should drive faith specific sections forward, commenting that she would do this if no one volunteered to.

The Chair explained the intention to produce something different to the existing document. There would be two documents; a slim document of statutory content to be approved at the last meeting of the council in the municipal year. The second document would be materials that could be in a loose-leaf folder containing schemes and lesson plans to be perpetually updated and continually growing, including the best work from schools.

He reported that the 'Key Stages 1 & 2 – statutory faith content' document was as detailed as it will get.

He added that the document will be presented both to the CYP Select Committee by the start of February 2018 and to Mayor and Cabinet before Mayor Bullock retires.

The Chair tabled a motion to accept the principle of these two documents and the timescale. The committee unanimously accepted these.

B UNDERSTANDING FAITH AND BELIEF IN LEWISHAM – REPORT FROM THE WORKING GROUP

Denise referred the committee to the 'SACRE material to support the module; Understanding Faith and belief in Lewisham – How do faith group work in partnership with each other and the local community?'

She reported that it needed to be developed further and, in particular, to incorporate contact about local communities. She invited committee members to add to this, commending Carol for producing the document, particularly in view of her resignation from the committee due to family circumstances.

Joan committed to forward the afore-promised content to Denise.

Gurbakhsh expressed his preference for more than three members to work on this topic.

5 Key stage 3 – overview

5.1 TO REFOCUS ON THE EXISTING KS3 SYLLABUS STRUCTURE

5.2 TO DISCUSS THE RESPONSES TO CONSULTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS WITH PARTNERS

Denise referred the committee to the documents entitled 'Lewisham Agreed Syllabus KS 3 existing requirements' and 'Proposed Way forward for Key Stage 3'.

She explained that the existing syllabus was written for a three-year KS3 and she explained the statutory content, adding that there had been a hope that more optional units would be written but that this hope hadn't been realised.

She introduced and summarised the document 'Agreed Syllabus Consultation with Secondary schools', explaining that a small group had met at Trinity School representing three schools but that a questionnaire had also been completed by five schools.

She reported that, broadly, teachers were content with the existing syllabus, which allowed them to teach either thematically or by religion.

None of the schools were using the syllabus fully for planning KS3, although their reasons differed. She expressed her shock that the faith content in two schools included neither Hinduism, Judaism nor Sikhism.

She concluded that several schools are doing a reduced KS3 and are making random choices about what to omit. Therefore she suggested slimming the KS3 to 2 years with optional content available so that if schools want to do 3 years there would be materials to use to do this.

Referring to the 'Proposed Way forward for Key Stage 3' document, Denise explained that the top right box represented the existing arrangement, while the top left box represented the proposed future arrangement. She added that 'Origins of Belief' could be included as a half-term unit, while the table in the middle of the page listed the faiths alongside the current location of their proposed content. So, by way of an example, for a two year programme pupils would do the statutory units then select units from this middle table, but for a three year programme they can select from the middle box and the range of units in the bottom table also. Therefore, every school in the borough would study the units in the top left box, on top of which flexibility would be exercised.

The Chair commented that Denise had misrepresented the middle boxes (extra faith – specific units), choices about which he stated it is important were kept relatively free.

Denise responded that these options are what schools are likely to do.

Reflecting the discussions in the meeting with the Young Mayor's advisers, Denise remarked on their views about the importance of not only looking at faiths and beliefs prevalent in the borough and London but also other beliefs with smaller communities. She reported that most of the young people agreed that it was important to look at religions in the curriculum.

She added that the group had spoken about action research projects, which six had expressed a desire for with the rest expressing apathy about this.

One had mentioned gay relationships and marriage as a theme for inclusion.

When asked about whether non-religious worldviews and Humanism should be included, one said no, four said they were unsure and twenty-one said that these views should be included. The view was expressed that it's important for one to learn about the faiths/views that one doesn't follow/believe in.

One remarked that Humanism and other world views can hold valid ethical positions.

Denise commented that KS3 should also provide a good basis for the GCSE examination courses.

She reported that the Young Mayor's advisers would like the ASC to return with suggestions for the sixth form syllabus. She added that she was meeting with sixth form providers on the following Thursday afternoon.

Denise commended the level of engagement demonstrated by the group of young people, and highlighted the value of including the voice of young people in the debate.

The Chair directed the committee back towards the 'Proposed Way forward for Key Stage 3' document.

Referring to the 'Origins of belief' unit, Monsignor Rthon commented that origins can be controversial and questioned who would lead on this, making reference to Mohammed and the Islamic perspective on Islamic origins.

Denise remarked that the syllabus teaches what people (of faith) are meant to believe but that many young people are expressing concern that this is not always borne out in the demonstrations of these faiths in current affairs. She commented that this was a challenge for the sixth form.

Nigel commented that pupils were seeing life through the eyes of the media. Denise made mention of Myanmar, which Nigel remarked was an example of the issue with how the media portrays religion.

Denise added that what pupils are seeing is challenging when this is in conflict to the 'pure' religion that they are being taught.

5.3 TO CONSIDER CHANGES IN THE LIGHT OF CONSULTATIONS

Monsignor Rthon commented that schools should be allowed to decide what to teach. However, Denise advised that the committee is responsible for providing the structure of the syllabus.

The Chair reiterated the proposal that some sections would be mandatory and others optional.

Gerald expressed uncertainty about the middle 2 – 2.5 year section.

Denise explained that, while there was no stipulation that the extra Christianity content be studied as an optional unit, she considered most teachers would select it, as Christianity is covered in RS GCSE syllabuses and schools would wish to provide the best basis for teaching that faith for exam classes.

Shaun remarked that it was good that the committee was looking at the 2 and 3 year program and that there were statutory units, but echoed the concerns about the inclusion of the Creation and Origins unit if it wasn't known what it would include.

Denise suggested that the committee could describe an outline of this, and stated that the old units required students to compare the origins accounted in different faiths.

Shaun mooted the prospect of the two units on Humanism being replaced by non-religious worldview units.

Luke questioned what the other non-religious worldviews would be and Denise suggested the answer to this could be answering such questions as 'What's an atheist?', 'What's an agnostic?' etc.

Luke commented that the case for including Humanism was the same case as that for including other religions, referencing the point that it wouldn't be acceptable to have a generic 'religion' unit.

He added that in this arrangement, Humanism was an option and that one could do the two or three-year Key Stage 3 without studying Humanism or study from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 4 without studying any other non-religious worldview or Humanism, which he considered a serious matter. He considered the syllabus allowing for this condition as unacceptable.

Shaun commented that he felt non-religious worldviews would include Humanism but wouldn't be restricted to this.

Nigel suggested that one of the two Humanism units could Focus on Humanism with the other being a more general worldviews unit. He added that, on one hand, he agreed with Luke but that, on the other, he felt that the rest of the curriculum is secular / Humanist, exemplifying this with his view that one could mention evolution in science but would be prohibited from mentioning God.

Layo suggested that one unit should contain all of the elements of Humanism with the other focussed on other worldviews.

Luke commented that, as far as he was aware, Humanism doesn't appear anywhere else in the curriculum, including science. He added that just because Humanism may approve of science doesn't mean that that science is about Humanism.

He remarked that as the syllabus constituted the study of examples of religion so it should constitute the study of examples of non-worldviews. He added that atheism isn't necessary Humanism, although most atheists will be Humanist in all but name. He considered that Humanism is an example of a non-religious worldview with enough depth to make it worthy of study.

Denise asked Luke how many people locally belong to Humanism UK.

Luke replied that 60-70,000 are active paid-up supporters nationally and suggested that the number of members of Humanism UK was in the hundreds in Lewisham.

Denise responded that in her opinion a very small proportion of those who say they have no belief would say they're Humanists. She added that, given the small proportion, it wouldn't be justifiable for the committee to say 'Just study this worldview' while seeking to be inclusive. Luke responded that the number of Humanists in Lewisham doesn't equate to those who are signed-up members.

Denise commented that the ASC wanted to give an option for schools to include non-religious views but that it would also provide an opportunity to explore the journeys many have in and out of faiths.

Luke suggested that if this approach is adopted for Humanism, it should be adopted for the other faiths/belief systems.

The Chair cited a difference being that all Christians who attend church recite a Christian creed. However, Kim, Nigel and Denise questioned the accuracy of this statement across all denominations.

Monsignor Rethon commented that there was cross-fertilisation between subjects, and that religion was discussed in science. As comparable examples, he opined that an understanding of Humanism was essential to understand George Ellis, and an understanding of religion was necessary to understand history. He added that a core understanding of Religious Studies was essential to understand much of the curriculum.

The Chair added that Humanism could be studied as part of the suggested units on Creation and Origins, Philosophy and Ethics, and Smaller world religions, which cumulatively he considered to be a notable representation.

Denise reminded the members that the KS 2 units on the 'Journey of life and death' and 'Understanding faith and belief' should also include Humanism.

5.4 TO AGREE CHANGES TO THE STRUCTURE

In view of this discussion, Luke proposed the motion that the statutory compulsory content should have an additional unit of Humanism.

Shaun asked what would disappear to accommodate this. The chair replied that there would just be one less optional unit. Denise added that 'Origins of belief' would then replace Humanism 2.

This motion was not seconded.

The Chair then proposed a motion that Humanism 2 be replaced by 'non-religious worldviews'.

Juliet proposed that this be voted upon.

Karen seconded this.

The committee split into their 4 groups to discuss this for ten minutes when they returned the following votes:

Group 1: For this motion (that Humanism 2 be replaced by 'Non-religious world-views')

Group 2: For

Group 3: For

Group 4: For.

It was therefore Agreed that the Humanism 2 unit will be replaced by a Non-religious worldviews unit.

The Chair proposed a motion on accepting the proposed structure (outlined in the 'Proposed Way forward for Key Stage 3' document) with the voted-for amendments.

All four groups unanimously voted for this.

It was therefore accepted that the Key Stage 3 structure will be the structure outlined in the referred document but incorporating the voted-for amendments.

Denise clarified that the 'Origins of belief' unit was an optional one.

5.5 TO DECIDE WHO WILL DO WHAT AND HOW

Denise acknowledged that the task of reducing the content would be harder for the Christian denominations because of their number and diversity, and asked ASC members to agree what the reduction (from the previous Statutory content to the newly agreed equivalent) would look like, ie deciding which parts would now comprise the core section and which parts the optional section.

The Chair acknowledged that the Humanist task was additive rather than reductive.

Luke asked if there was an existing model for the Humanist units, to which the Chair advised that he look at the existing units of the main faiths. He also reminded him that his contribution to the other units was sought.

The Chair stressed that the relationships between the faiths was important.

He clarified that the deadline for the submission of the revised units to Denise was 22 October but appealed, on behalf of Denise, that these were submitted as soon as possible.

Denise reminded the committee that someone needed to co-ordinate the Christianity section. Layo volunteered to do this. The Chair invited her to consult him if in doubt.

Luke asked if Kate was seeking to work with others in the Philosophy and Ethics unit, and enquired who would write the non-religious worldviews unit.

Denise advised that progress would be monitored and action take as and when. The Chair added that a group may be formed of Luke and other interested members to work on this unit separately.

6 Key Stage 4 – to consider implications for the Agreed Syllabus of the national consultation on the E-Bacc

Denise informed the committee that there had been a government consultation on implementing the e-Baccalaureate. Referring to the 'Implementing the English Baccalaureate' document in the meeting papers, she directed the committee's attention to paragraph 72;

'72. We have considered suggestions to include additional subjects or pillars within the EBacc but have decided that this could reduce pupil choice at GCSE to the point where no other subjects can be studied. Religious education must be taught to all pupils until the end of key stage 5, a qualification (such as GCSE religious studies) should be offered at the end of key stage 4 to accredit pupils' knowledge and understanding. The proportion of pupils in state funded mainstream schools entered a GCSE in religious studies remains high at 47% in 2015/16.'

Denise proposed that the ASC continues to require that at Key Stage 4 all students should be offered a GCSE in RE as the Government mentioned in the document. This would mean that the ASC wouldn't have to write KS4 and the KS4 RS would continue to be an accredited course and all local students. She expressed pleasure that the Government had affirmed this, and mentioned that this had been reinforced by the young people she had met.

The committee unanimously Agreed that this would be included with no other additional units.

7 Work between meetings

1. TO CONSIDER HOW CHANGES CAN BE MADE TO EXISTING KS3 SYLLABUS MATERIAL IN THE LIGHT OF DISCUSSION DURING THE MEETING;
2. NEW UNITS OUTLINES;
3. TO REVIEW WAYS FORWARD FOR MATERIALS BEING DEVELOPED FOR EARLIER SYLLABUS MATERIALS;
4. SIXTH FORM SYLLABUS

The Chair acknowledged that most of these points had been discussed in the meeting.

He expressed the need for a further two meetings; one before Christmas and a second in 2018 before the end of January. He suggested the second week of term, with the purpose of agreeing the wording of the syllabus but advised the group that the meeting wouldn't be closed until the wording was agreed.

Denise committed to send around date suggestions.

8 Work between meetings
DESIGN AND PRODUCTION UPDATE
LAUNCT DECISIONS AND PROCESS

Denise advised that she had approached Lewisham's design term about designing the document but hadn't heard back from them. Discussions for its launch would commence after she had heard back from them.

9 Date of future meetings

The Chair acknowledged that the last meeting of the academic year may be a joint ASC and SACRE one.

Kim requested that an updated meeting diary be circulated.

The Chair advised that the forthcoming ASC meetings would be held in the Council Chambers and that there would be no walkabouts or refreshments served to maximise the time available for progressing the action points.

Denise reminded ASC members of the training for new SACRE members to be held at the Synagogue on 3rd October from 6.15pm to 8.30pm, and requested those attending to let her know.

At this point the meeting closed.