

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

Minutes of the Lewisham Agreed Syllabus Conference

which was open to the press and public and was held on
Thursday 25 January 2018

At Catford and Bromley Synagogue, 6 Crantock Road, SE6 2QS

These minutes were approved by the ASC on: 22 March 2018

Present:

GROUP	REPRESENTING	NAME	PRESENT
A	Baha'i	Molly Ballard	✓
A	Buddhism	David Hutchens	✓
A	Free Church A o G	Pastor Nick Hughes	APOLOGIES
A	Free Church	Jeronne Rudder	APOLOGIES
A	Free Church (Baptist)	(Vacant)	
A	Free Churches (URC)	Rev Raymond Singh	
A	Hinduism	Vallipuram Bala	
A	Hinduism	Narmadha Saravanan	✓
A	Humanism	Luke Donnellan	✓
A	Independent Evangelical	Nigel Desborough	APOLOGIES
A	Islam	Nadia Ali	✓
A	Islam	Khadijah Knight	✓
A	Judaism	Gerald Rose	✓
A	Judaism	Joan Goldberg	✓
A	Pentecostal	Layo Afuape	✓
A	Pentecostal	Cheryl Abbam	
A	Roman Catholic	Rt. Rev Monsignor Nicholas Rotherham	
A	Sikhism	Gurbakhsh Singh Garcha	
B	The Church of England - Diocesan Board	Shaun Burns	APOLOGIES
B	The Church of England – Secondary teacher	Vacant	
B	The Church of England – Primary teacher	Karen Hansen	✓
B	The Church of England - Governor	Vacant	
B	The Church of England - Minister	Revd Juliet Donnelly	APOLOGIES
C	NEU - ATL	Kim Knappett (Chair)	✓
C	NEU - NUT	VACANT	
C	Academy/Free school	VACANT	
C	NEU - NUT	Vacant	
C	NAS/UWT	Pamela Phillips	✓
C	Lewisham headteachers and deputies	Judith Purkiss	APOLOGIES
D	Local Authority member	Councillor Jacq Paschoud	✓
D	Local Authority member	Councillor Hilary Moore	APOLOGIES
D	School Governors – Primary 1/2	Isaac Sackey (shared place)	
D	School Governors – Primary 2/2	Lynda De Marquet (shared place)	✓
D	School Governors - Secondary	Adelere Adedeji	
D	Executive Director of Education	Kate Bond	✓
Other and Co-optees			
	Primary Teacher	Judith Nweze	✓
	Rastafarians	VACANT	
	Young Mayor Team	c/o Katy Brown and Malcolm Ball	
	Also Present		
	Also Present		
	RE School Improvement Officer	Denise Chaplin	✓
	Minuting clerk	Stephen Sealy	✓

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

The meeting began at 6.25pm.

1 Welcome, and apologies for absence and membership update

The Chair advised that Denise would be delayed due to a domestic emergency.

All members introduced themselves. The apologies were reported (as listed above).

The Chair reported that Karen had been nominated to the Church of England Primary position. She added that she had attempted to rally her colleagues to attend the union meeting for an election to fill vacancies on the NEU (as one had to be present at the meeting to nominate) but had been unsuccessful in doing so.

2 Matters arising from the previous minutes not on the agenda

SYLLABUS PROGRESS DOCUMENT

The Chair reported that this had been covered in the previous meeting.

PROGRESS WITH DESIGN PHASE OF THE SYLLABUS

The Chair reported that this too had been covered in the previous meeting.

Denise arrived at this point in the meeting.

The Chair reported that since the last meeting, she had met with Sid Hughes, Denise and a Sixth Form teacher to consult about the Sixth Form content. She added that this represented a work in progress.

Denise added that three meetings for teachers had now been convened, with only one teacher being in attendance at each one (different teachers each time). She reported that she and Sid had discussed a way forward and would write a draft which she would duly circulate.

She commented that it appears that those responsible for establishments' Sixth Form curriculum do not always have links with Heads of RE for KS 3 & 4.

She added that the group had talked about how to make the syllabus appealing to managers with a view to providing something for all students. She acknowledged that the concept of a contribution to PSHE or fundamental British values are the type of triggers to make managers take notice as these help them prepare for Ofsted.

Kate remarked that major Sixth Form centre providers (e.g. Lewisham College) aren't required to follow the syllabus, but added that the group would have met someone from the second largest Sixth Form provider in the borough, adding that the third, Sedgehill was a small provision.

Layo enquired where the meetings had been held, to which Denise replied that that they had been held in different venues.

Kate followed-up Layo's question by suggesting that the draft be taken to all of the borough's Sixth Form providers.

Councillor Paschoud questioned if Prendergast had a Sixth Form provision and was informed that they hadn't, but that Hilly Fields had.

3 Late adjustments of final Primary elements of the Agreed Syllabus

The Chair enquired when the deadline was but, without access to the previous minutes in the meeting, the response was inconclusive.

Denise reported that she had received the Buddhism and Judaism texts, and advised that any text agreed tonight would be sent off to the designers.

The Chair advised that the deadline for the submission of text would be two weeks before the next meeting, with Kate elaborating that the end of February would be the deadline for any final changes to Key Stages 1 and 2. She reported that the EYFS units had already been signed off.

Denise queried if Khadijah and Nadia planned to make changes to the Primary Islam text, to which Khadijah responded that they would look at this text.

Kate requested that Denise send an email out next week to remind members of the end of February deadline.

Gerald suggested that each sheet should clearly state which Key Stage it applied to.

The Chair accepted this suggestion.

4 Key Stage 3 – for agreement

The Chair suggested that Philosophy and Ethics, and non-religious worldviews be discussed by the committee collectively before the committee divide into their respective groups.

David commented that neither the Buddhism nor Sikhism unit were agreed in the previous meeting.

Kate suggested that these be agreed in the March meeting.

The Chair summarised that the committee would agree the two tabled units, deferring the two from the previous week until the next meeting.

PHILOSOPHY AND ETHICS

Kate summarised that she had retained the agreed headings and that, with philosophy's core being questions, each box contained an example for teachers to explore. She added that she had attempted to avoid using time-specific examples so that the unit remained relevant over time.

Layo commended her for the level of detail, with Lynda adding her commendations and making congratulatory mention of the references.

Luke commented that the categories are very defined and requested that the phrase 'for the existence of God' be replaced with 'for and against the existence of God'.

Khadijah asked if it was a compulsory unit, to which Denise replied that it wasn't.

The Chair commented that this was the type of unit that she, as a teacher, would have been attracted to.

Joan remarked that it felt very inclusive.

Kate responded that she enjoyed doing it, making use of the fellow Philosophy graduate who sits next to her at work.

Molly commented that the types of discussion engaged in by the group were the type of discussions that it would be good for students to be engaging in at a young age.

Luke opined that it was a travesty that philosophy wasn't studied at GCSE level.

Gurbakhsh remarked that it was a harder subject to teach than most as it required a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

NON-RELIGIOUS WORLDVIEWS

Luke acknowledged the challenges of identifying the main non-religious worldviews and deciding how to approach this unit. He explained that he had approached it from a sociological perspective, attempting to encourage children to be aware of the diversity in non-religious worldviews.

He added that a reference to some examples of non-religious worldviews may be added to the first box.

Denise questioned which non-religious worldviews he was thinking of, suggesting there was a need to name some.

Luke replied that he'd struggled to name sufficiently prominent worldviews and, in response to the suggestion of atheism, advised that this was simply a status of belief or non-belief in God.

Kate added suggestions of agnosticism, while hedonism was also mentioned.

Karen suggested Scientology, which Luke (??) advised was not non-religious.

The Chair emphasised that a list would be a useful addition, and suggested that Luke think about these outside of the meeting.

Denise suggested that the first box could contain agnosticism and atheism, commenting that one's journey of faith may take them in and out of religion. She also recognised that the influence of religion on the non-religious would affect their ethical beliefs.

Luke added that there was diversity within individual religions, citing as examples atheist Jews or Christians who didn't believe in the resurrection.

Kate commended him on the quality of the key questions.

Cllr Paschoud remarked that non-religious doesn't necessarily mean non-believing, and that one's beliefs were sometimes formed on the basis of existing religions or by coming to one's

own religions. She added that she knew a lot of Christians who would label themselves as 'non-religious'.

The Chair acknowledged this point but advised that the terminology was such that people would understand what was meant.

Gerald commented that there were a significant number of Jews by birthright who were non-religious, with many believing in God but not following any religious practices in their everyday lives.

Gurbakhsh added that some people self-identified as being multifaith, not belonging to any particular organised faith but selecting practices or beliefs from different faiths, often holding the view that faiths should unite people.

Kate suggested that the question "If you believe in a god, are you by definition religious?" could be included in the text.

Molly asked if the debate extended to ideas like feminism.

Luke commented that concepts like this or vegetarianism do not address the existential questions in the way that religion and humanism etc do.

Judith suggested including a key vocabulary list to aid the understanding, and teaching and learning, of the teachers and children.

Gerald suggested that a glossary would be better.

The Chair commented that if she as a teacher didn't know the definition of a word, she would look it up. She added that she thought the contents of the second box were good and covered some of the point that Cllr Paschoud had made. She added that non-religious worldviews may include those holding, say, Christian or Jewish views but not following them.

Lynda remarked that it was important for children to know that it was okay to hold this position.

Luke commented that spirituality is often associated with religion but can exist independently of it.

Denise requested that examples were provided of the 'variety of expression' mentioned.

She queried whether the name of the unit should be changed.

With regard to the friction between science and religion, she also queried whether the view that people who follow non-religious worldviews have turned their back on God should be challenged, and advanced the view that these people rather feel that the world of belief isn't real to them and that they haven't identified anyone to turn away from. She emphasised the need to include the questions that will get students thinking.

Kate remarked that Denise's point about making sense of the meaning of life when one doesn't have a religious view was important by referencing the words 'meaning of life'.

The Chair noted that this was referenced in the third box.

Khadijah commented that she didn't understand 'beliefs about the supernatural' in this context.

Luke explained that some people will be atheistic while others may believe in the existence of other supernatural forces.

In response to a suggestion that the Mayans were one such group, Denise countered that they were religious; adding that paganism also is an authentic ancient faith.

She suggested that the supernatural was covered by the religious units.

Luke suggested that astrology and alternative medicines fit within this sphere. Denise suggested that the text be re-drafted to include this.

The chair asked the committee if they needed until the end of February to develop the text and whether it needed more work.

Lynda commented that she thought it was really good.

Gurbakhsh added that he thought it was sufficient, given that a subject such as this could be discussed ad nauseum.

Denise acknowledged that the discussion had been interesting but added that members may think of other information that would assist the discussion.

Kate felt that a few tweaks were needed and requested that Luke edit a final version. Luke therefore requested that members email him directly to which he would respond directly back, thus avoiding long chains of email communication.

Layo left at this point.

JUDAISM

Gerald introduced the unit as being the same as before but divided into two parts.

Denise suggested that Gerald may have the original drafted unit on his computer as she believes that he was the author.

She commented that box 6 contained little information about science.

Kate added that she would welcome more information as there wasn't sufficient to guide the reader. She suggested that the compulsory unit would have been covered in KS2 and questioned whether the current text benefitted KS3 sufficiently to move them onwards. By way of example, she referred to a television program she had seen on the differences of belief between Hassidic and non-Hassidic Jews.

Karen confirmed that the content would already have been deal with at KS2.

Kate requested that questions replace the theme words such as 'the Torah', adding that the second box would include other sources in addition to the Torah. She concluded that the questions were probably not nuanced or challenging enough for KS3.

Gerald suggested that he meet with Joan to rewrite it 'from scratch', as he may have confused the remit.

The Chair suggested that rather than it being re-written, it needed to be fleshed out, with more detail added.

Denise recounted that when she worked with the Sikhism and Islam groups, they had rewritten key questions too, while Narmadha is working on rewriting the Hinduism KS3. She added that this was an opportunity for groups to ask themselves what needed to be expanded in the units.

She emphasised the scarcity of the information about science and added that more was needed in the boxes as well as linking to other faiths in the interfaith dialogue box.

Gerald commented that he'd hate for teachers to rely on searching on the internet for information on the religion, to which the Chair suggested that he include a link in the text.

Luke commented that the scenario of this unit being the first Judaism unit that year 9 pupils have studied since year 4 was a possibility, which added value to revisiting the basics of the faith.

Gerald added that he thought that the content included was the minimum that he wanted pupils to have learnt by the time they completed the unit.

Denise remarked that teachers will use this as the route through the six weeks of study, and that the focus was not merely on learning but also on discussing.

Joan commented that she had struggled contextualising it.

Karen added that a focus was also about making the connections between faiths and exploring one's response to what they are being taught.

Gerald sought clarity on whether one sheet was all that was required.

Cllr Paschoud suggested that the Judaism unit adopt the approach taken by the two faiths/worldviews previously discussed, of making a point and following that with questions.

Kate added the suggestion that Gerald and Joan keep the idea of 11-14 year-old intelligent children in mind, commenting that the content needed more depth to push the children further. She advised that Denise would happily look over any content that she is sent.

The Chair reminded Gerald and Joan that the deadline was 22 February.

ISLAM

Khadijah reported that she and Nadia, like the Judaism members, thought that they were tasked with reducing and streamlining the existing content.

Kate commented that the sixth box of the compulsory unit made her think on a level that she hadn't before, adding that faith in action was also useful.

She added that LBQT and transgender issues were one of the more contentious issues of the level that she thought students at this age should be engaging in.

Denise suggested that reference to this should be included either in each of the faiths' units or in a box of its own.

Khadijah commented that, with regard to the religion and science box, they wanted to convey the message that religion and science are not contradictory and that Muslims are encouraged to develop their knowledge. She drew reference to the location in Morocco where the two seas do not quite meet.

Denise advised that footnotes were needed for this unit, as teachers wouldn't know what to look for/research otherwise.

Khadijah added that Qur'anic teaching with regard to attitudes to women is very enlightened, often contrasting starkly with the reality of people's lives, which she thought could be said for all religions.

The Chair suggested that no units were signed off in the meeting but rather sent to Denise by the end of February for the next meeting.

Lynda asked if all faiths would include LGBT references to which Kate responded by suggesting that all faiths could include a reference to fundamental British values in their text.

Chair remarked that this concerned her. Kate suggested that the faiths could choose one that they felt strongest about and make reference to this.

Denise suggested that all groups should put something in the interfaith dialogue box also.

Gurbakhsh requested that some information on the British fundamental values be circulated on the basis that there are no set values to which Molly advised that Ofsted had defined the British values that schools have to promote.

Kate commented that the curriculum would be strengthened if these were referenced in the syllabus, adding that it was important to have a discussion about what these mean in the introduction to the RE syllabus.

Lynda asked if children would be able to identify these; Karen and Kate confirmed that they would, with Kate referencing an outstanding display about slavery by pupils of a primary school that she had attended a few months ago.

6 AOB / Information Exchange

REMINDER OF WIDE HORIZONS TRAINING

Kate reminded the committee of this training.

Joan reported that she had applied the morning after being told about this but had received no reply. Kate advised that she emailed again.

Denise queried how many had booked, but Kate was unable to answer conclusively.

7 Dates of future meetings

Denise suggested that getting agreement on sections of the syllabus would be helped by discussing and agreeing units one by one.

Karen asked what time the meeting was scheduled to start. The Chair advised that this had yet to be confirmed.

Kate thanked all who were writing units and advised that they needn't feel all on their own, but rather if they need help to contact Denise.

The Chair closed the meeting at 7.50pm when the Christianity group convened their sub meeting.

PS. Joan apologised for the temperature of the room.

Draft