

**MINUTES OF THE STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
(SACRE)**

Held as an online virtual meeting on Thursday 8 February 2024 at 5pm

Attendees (in remote attendance):

GROUP A <i>(A committee of persons representing such Christian denominations and other religions and denominations of such religions as, in the opinion of the authority, will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area)</i>	Saghaf Forouhi (Baha'i) Dr Kavita Koka (Zoroastrianism) Bhupinder Singh (Sikhism) Sally Strauss (Judaism) Amanda Whelan (Roman Catholicism)
GROUP B <i>(A committee of persons representing the Church of England)</i>	Steve Taylor (Church of England) Tim Wright (Church of England)
GROUP C <i>(A committee of persons representing such associations representing teachers as, in the opinion of the authority, ought to be represented, having regard to the circumstances of the area)</i>	Ian Slade (Vice Chair) Varsilla Bhudia (Association representing Teachers)
GROUP D <i>(A committee of persons representing the authority)</i>	Cllr Neil Nerva Cllr Tazi Smith

In attendance:	Shaun Cremin (Associate Member) Nadia Nadeem (SACRE/RE Advisor) Shirley Parks (Brent Council – Director Safeguarding Performance and Strategy) Jen Haskew (Brent Council - Head of Setting and School Effectiveness Service) Helen Tulloch (Brent Council - School Effectiveness Service) Abby Shinhmar & James Kinsella (Brent Council - Governance Team)
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1. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting opened by noting that apologies had been received from Basma ElShayyal (Sunni Islam, Chair). Given her absence, it was confirmed that Ian Slade (as Vice Chair) would take over as chair for the meeting. In welcoming everyone to the meeting it was noted apologies had also been received from Michelle Goldsmith (Humanism) and Kim Wilson (Association representing Teachers).

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

It was **AGREED** to approve the minutes of the previous SACRE meeting held on Wednesday 11 October 2023.

3. Determinations

3.1 Ian Slade, Chair, advised that there were six determinations to be considered at the meeting as follows:

- (a) Anson Primary School
- (b) Brentfield Primary School
- (c) Mitchell Brook Primary School
- (d) Mount Stewart Federation & Mount Stewart Infants
- (e) Newfield Primary School
- (f) Northview Junior and Infant School

In considering each determination application members of SACRE were keen to recognise the quality of the applications which had been submitted for consideration having noted the wider context of collective worship within the determination process and current statutory requirements in relation to the application process. Whilst recognising, as an example, the value in the provision of supporting information designed to outline how the RE curriculum had been tailored to reflect different religions in each school, members were reminded this did not form part of the formal application requirement to SACRE.

In addition, members were keen (in reviewing the Collective Worship Policy provided by each school in support of their applications) to recommend as good practice the inclusion of details, as part of any application moving forward, should any parents/carers at the school have indicated they wished to withdraw their children from collective worship.

Having considered the applications, it was therefore unanimously **RESOLVED** (with each of the four membership groups voting in favour) to approve and grant the renewal of the following determinations:

- (1) Anson Primary School
- (2) Brentfield Primary School
- (3) Mitchell Brook Primary School
- (4) Mount Stewart Federation & Mount Stewart Infants

- (5) Newfield Primary School
- (6) Northview Junior and Infant School

3.2 Following the decision made at the previous meeting, members were also advised that the Governing Body minutes in support of the determination application from Stonebridge School had now been received, with members noting the determination application had subsequently been approved.

4. **SACRE Membership Review**

James Kinsella (Brent Council – Governance Manager) advised that following the discussion at the previous meeting on 11 October 2024 the review of current SACRE membership had been completed. The review had sought to identify and seek replacements for any vacancies within the existing membership as well as remind members about the need to ensure they attend at least one SACRE meeting each academic year.

Members were advised that as a result of the review and vacancies reported at the last meeting, the following changes in membership had been approved by the Local Authority:

Group A: Faith Group representatives

- Amanda Wheelan had replaced Dawn Titus as the new Roman Catholic representative.
- Saghar Forouhi had replaced Sheralyn Snaith as the new Baha'i representative.

Group B: Church of England representatives

- Tim Wright had replaced Mark Newton as the new Church of England representative.

Group C: School & Teaching Association representatives

- Varsilla Bhudia (Oakington Manor) had filled one vacancy.

Members were advised that contact had also been made with the London Diocesan Board for Schools regarding the exiting vacancy in Church of England representation and need to replace Graham Marriner as an existing member on SACRE.

In relation to the School and Teaching Association (Group C) representation, SACRE noted that one vacancy remained with Ian Slade advising he was aware of a potential expression of interest from a primary school colleague that he would encourage to make the necessary contact to progress.

The Chair thanked officers and members for their hard work and ongoing contribution with SACRE noting the outcome of the membership review and

welcoming the appointments made as a result. At this stage no further action was identified as required in relation to the membership review, with SACRE to be kept updated on any further appointments needing to be made.

5. **SACRE Annual Report 2022-23**

Nadia Nadeem (SACRE Advisor) introduced the item, which presented a final draft of the 2022-23 Annual Report.

In considering the report, members noted the detail provided in terms of the activities undertaken by SACRE to support schools in relation to delivery of their RE responsibilities, collective worship and determinations supported by the latest census data. Following on from the discussion earlier in the meeting, it was noted that no schools had indicated they had pupils who had been withdrawn from collective worship, which it was felt reflected the high quality of RE provision across the borough.

SACRE was advised that the report had been presented in final draft with members welcoming the update on implementation of the Agreed Syllabus and encouraged to submit any final comments they may have direct to Nadia Nadeem for incorporation in the final version of the Annual Report.

In highlighting the value of the work being undertaken by SACRE as detailed within the Annual Report, Shirley Parks (Brent Council – Director Safeguarding Performance and Strategy) took the opportunity to thank Nadia Nadeem for her work in preparing the report and SACRE **AGREED** to approve the final draft of the 2022-23 Annual Report, subject to any final comments submitted by members following the meeting.

6. **General RE Update**

SACRE received an update from Nadia Nadeem (SACRE Advisor) which covered the following issues:

- In July 2023 the RE Council had released a preliminary report on the new national content standard for RE. This report provided guidance on the quality of the RE education that needed to be provided with a further report available at the end of March 2024. The DfE were in support of this guidance.
- The publication of the Annual OFSTED report at the end of Autumn 2023, which had included reference to individual subjects including RE. The comments made had focussed on the way in which it appeared RE (despite being a statutory subject) appeared to be undervalued as a subject on the curriculum with a lack of clarity and support from the government making the position more complex. In highlighting a number of concerns the report had identified a need for co-ordinated effort amongst stakeholders to improve the quality of RE in schools including the provision of high quality professional development for RE teaching staff and clarity in terms of the breadth and depth of curriculum to be followed and government expectations regarding RE provision in schools.

SACRE noted that the findings reflected the views of NASACRE and a number of other RE organisations with the issues highlighted in relation to the recruitment,

retention and professional development of RE teaching staff recognised as being of specific concern given the national shortage already identified across the sector and with SACRE keen to ensure the position and support available to schools across Brent remained under review. In terms of specific outcomes, it was agreed that arrangements should be made for the Ofsted report and any available supporting resources to be shared with schools, which Jen Haskew advised could be arranged (in conjunction with Nadia Nadeem) via the Head Teacher School Bulletin. ACTION: Jen Haskew & Nadia Nadeem.

Details were also sought on the level of feedback received from schools who had implemented the new Local Agreed RE Syllabus. In response, Ian Slade advised that feedback from the RE Teachers Panel had been very positive which had also been supported by feedback from individual schools. SACRE advised they would be keen to explore how this feedback could be captured and reviewed in a more formal way, which Jen Haskew advised could be considered as an action moving forward. In terms of implementation of the new syllabus, SACRE were advised that whilst not an issue which fell under their direct remit, support continued to be provided to individual schools through Stacey Burman (RE Advisor), and the School Effectiveness Service.

As no further issues were raised the Chair thanked Nadia Nadeem for the update provided.

7. **NASACRE Update**

Having considered the report from the Ofsted Chief Inspector under the RE Update, SACRE received a further NASACRE update from Nadia Nadeem (SACRE Advisor) which covered the following issues:

- Details were provided on the NASACRE AGM and Annual Conference which was scheduled to take place on Monday 20 May 2024 in York. Members were advised that the theme of the conference would be how SACREs could support high quality RE & Collective Worship. The cost per delegate would be £120 excluding travel and accommodation. Whilst a small budget was held to cover the administration of SACRE meetings it was confirmed that should any members be interested in attending the conference, further funding support would need to be obtained to cover the cost of travel and accommodation. It was agreed that any members interested in attending the NASACRE Conference should contact Jen Haskew/Abby Shinhmar so further details could be provided and, if necessary, additional funding sought to cover the cost of attendance.
- Members noted the NASACRE Briefing (No.37) which had been circulated as an additional supporting document with the agenda.
- Members were reminded that Ramadan was due to commence in early March, with SACRE keen to ensure that appropriate guidance was issued to schools regarding the support needs of Muslim pupils and staff during the fasting period.
- The opportunity was also taken to remind members of the available training and professional development available through NASACRE for SACRE

members including the training offer and information available through the RE Hub. This included a range of upcoming training available for those members of SACRE visiting schools, which Nadia Nadeem advised she had included details on with the update and could arrange to share further details on with any interested members. As an example of the development opportunities available Bhupinder Singh advised he had recently been accredited as a Sikh Advocate and RE Advisor via the RE Hub and as a result was now delivering faith presentations to a range of schools.

- As a final update, SACRE members were advised of the opportunity currently available to stand for election to the NASACRE Executive. Members were asked to contact Abby Shinhmar or Nadia Nadeem should anyone be interested in being nominated for appointment.

As no further issues were raised the Chair thanked Nadia Nadeem for the update provided.

8. Any Other Business

8.1 Members were advised about a range of upcoming activities and events, which included:

- A play and supporting talk that would be taking place on 19 February 2024, called 'Kindness' by Holocaust survivor Susan Pollock for which tickets could be made available for school representatives.
- The establishment of a Jewish living web-resource that would be available shortly to support teaching in relation to Judaism.
- Sally Straus had also gained accreditation to present at schools and act as an RE Advisor/Advocate on Judaism and would also be keen to share these details with schools. SACRE noted that Saghar Farouhi had also been accreditation through the RE Hub as an Advisor and Advocate for the Baha'i faith with SACRE keen to ensure that the list of accredited advocates and advisers available to support schools was updated on the RE Hub.
- Concern was expressed at a recent press article from the Trustees of the UK Board of the Inter-Faith Network which had advised that due to the withdrawal of Government funding the charity would need to consider closing. Members hoped it would be possible for a solution to be reached enabling the network to continue given the benefits the network had been able to provide over a number of years in sharing good practice and encouraging dialogue amongst representatives from different faiths.

8.2 Dates of Future Meetings

SACRE NOTED the date for their final meeting during the 2023-24 Academic Year as follows:

- Thursday 11 July 2024 at 5pm to be undertaken online.

The following dates were approved as the draft programme for meetings during the 2024-25 academic year:

- Wednesday 9 October 2024 at 5:30pm – it was agreed that, subject to sufficient interest being expressed, this meeting should be offered in hybrid format enabling members able to do so to attend in person.
- Thursday 6 February 2025 at 5pm – to be held online
- Thursday 10 July 2025 at 5pm – to be held online

The meeting closed at 6.01 pm

Ian Slade
Chair