

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

Held as an online virtual meeting on Wednesday 11 October 2023 at 5pm

Attendees (in remote attendance):

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| <p>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></p> | <p>Basma ElShayyal (Sunni Islam, Chair) Sheralyn Snaith (Baha'i) Bhupinder Singh (Sikhism) Michelle Goldsmith (Humanism) Manhar Mehta (Jainism) Sally Strauss (Judaism)</p> |
| <p>GROUP B <i>(A committee of persons representing the Church of England)</i></p> | <p>Steve Taylor (Church of England)</p> |
| <p>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></p> | <p>Ian Slade</p> |
| <p>GROUP D <i>(A committee of persons representing the authority)</i></p> | <p>Cllr Neil Nerva Cllr Tazi Smith</p> |
| <p>In attendance:</p> | <p>Nadia Nadeem (SACRE/RE Advisor) Shirley Parks (Brent Council – Director Safeguarding Performance and Strategy) Helen Tulloch (Brent Council – School Effectiveness Service) James Kinsella (Brent Council - Governance Team)</p> |

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, and it was noted that apologies had been received from Shaun Cremin (Associate Member) and Jen Haskew (Brent Council - Head of Setting and School Effectiveness Service).

In opening the meeting, Basma ElShayyal took the opportunity, given recent events in the Middle East, to highlight the importance of faith leaders and RE practitioners

continuing to promote community cohesion and tolerance across all sections of the local community. In supporting the comments, made Councillor Nerva was also keen to recognise the level of diversity across Brent and way in which different multicultural communities were able to live side by side in peace and harmony and welcomed the lead continuing to be provided through the Brent Multi Faith Forum in this respect.

2. **Election of the Chair and Vice Chair**

Following deferral of this item at the previous meeting SACRE was asked to consider the appointment of the Chair and Vice-Chair for the 2023-24 academic year.

In considering the appointments, SACRE was advised that due to her retirement Helen Mooney had needed to step back as Vice-Chair of the Committee with a new nomination therefore required.

Having sought nominations for both positions it was **AGREED** that:

- (1) Basma ElShayyal be re-elected as Chair of Brent SACRE for the 2023-24 academic year.
- (2) Ian Slade be elected as Vice-Chair of Brent SACRE for the 2023-24 academic year.

The Chair, supported by all members of SACRE, took the opportunity to thank Helen Mooney for the work undertaken and support offered as Vice-Chair and to wish her well for the future.

3. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

It was **AGREED** to approve the minutes of the previous SACRE meeting held on Thursday 13 July 2023.

4. **Determinations**

Basma ElShayyal, Chair, advised that there was one determination to be considered at the meeting – Stonebridge Primary School.

In considering the determination, SACRE noted that whilst all other documents had been submitted the Governing Body minutes required as part of the application were still outstanding. In noting that the School had recently undergone a change in leadership and recognising the good quality of the remaining documents submitted in support of the application, members advised they were minded to approve the determination, pending submission of the final Governing Body minutes.

It was therefore **AGREED** that the determination be granted, pending submission of the supporting minutes from the school to SACRE.

Members were advised the supporting information required to complete the application had already been requested from the school which Helen Tulloch advised would be followed up after the meeting.

5. **SACRE Membership**

SACRE received an update on its current membership position having noted the following changes notified since the previous meeting:

- The resignation of Dawn Titus as the nominated catholic faith representative within Group A;
- The resignation (advised during the meeting) of Sheralyn Snaith as the nominated Baha'i representative within Group A with the Chair also taking the opportunity to thank Sheralyn Snaith for her support and wish her all the best for the future.
- The additional vacancy created within Group C as a result of Helen Mooney's retirement.

Members were advised that contact had also been made with the London Diocesan Board for Schools regarding the current status of Graham Marriner, Andrew Teather and Mark Newton as Church of England representatives within membership Group B given their limited attendance at SACRE meetings.

Given the various membership vacancies for which replacements were currently being sought, SACRE supported the proposal for a wider review of current membership to be undertaken in advance of the next meeting enabling consideration to be given to any further changes in representation that may be required linked to the outcome of the last census and attendance requirements.

It was therefore **AGREED** that a further update be provided for the next meeting, once the wider review of membership had been completed.

6. **General RE & NASACRE Update**

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

- The concern highlighted nationally by NASACRE regarding the recruitment of RE teachers given the current shortage identified. As a result, NASACRE were seeking support from SACREs in lobbying MPs for the provision of initiatives such as bursaries for RE trainees reflecting those offered for other subjects, e.g., maths, science and geography, which SACRE members were keen to support also recognising the need to ensure appropriate training and ongoing professional support remained available.
- The recent presentation made by Charles Clarke, as NASACRE patron, on the importance of SACREs continuing to promote community cohesion within their local areas given the importance of religious education in schools being able to promote inclusivity and tolerance both within and outside of the classroom. In considering the update provided the Chair welcome the lead being taken by NASACRE in seeking to strengthen and raise the profile of activities designed to promote wider community cohesion through schools, which members felt could be further strengthened through the development of appropriate links and partnership working with the Multi Faith Forum.

- The work being undertaken, supported by NASACRE, to enhance the focus in measuring and demonstrating the success and impact of SACREs especially in relation to collective worship and the delivery of religious education within schools which members were again keen to support, especially in relation to the development of monitoring information with the SACRE annual report template. In addition, members felt this also provided an opportunity to once again focus on developing more joined up working with the Multi Faith Forum as a means of promoting the resources available and work undertaken through SACRE to engage with local schools and also encourage wider participation.
- The release of a draft version of the National Content Standard for RE which, although not providing a national curriculum syllabus for RE, it was noted did include useful guidance on content for schools and which SACRE advised they would be keen to review in more detail once the final version was published.
- The outcome of a recent court judgement involving Kent County Council concerning the position of Humanists within Group A of SACRE membership. The judgement had clarified that applications for Group A membership from persons who represent holders of non-religious beliefs should be considered in the same way as applications from those who represent holders of religious beliefs, which was a position NASACRE had long been seeking guidance on from the DfE. NASACRE had welcomed the subsequent guidance provided, which had reiterated that the make-up of a SACRE was a matter for Local Authorities (rather than SACREs themselves) and that the membership of Group A should ensure that relevant traditions and beliefs in the local authority's area were appropriately reflected, including non-religious belief systems where they were analogous to a religious belief.

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 about with the agenda and would arrange to share details with any interested members. Members were keen to ensure the work being undertaken through SACRE with local schools continued to be promoted as widely as possible with details of the following events highlighted, as examples, during the meeting:

- The annual programme of events available as part of Interfaith Week, taking place in November 2024 organised by The Inter Faith Network. This included visits to different places of worship and visits to schools to focus on different faiths.
- A recent open house event organised by a local Gurdwara (as part of the London Open House Festival) which Bhupinder Singh had been involved in supporting and accompanying visit to a local Synagogue as part of the same festival.
- Ian Slade informed the meeting of the arrangements being made for a multi-faith event at Alperton Community School to be held in February 2024, on which

further information would be provided to encourage participation and support from SACRE.

In recognising the extent of activities being undertaken within the local community and importance in seeking to promote the work being led through SACRE (which members suggested could also include the use of newsletters and other promotion material) Nadia Nadeem also reminded members of the inclusion of a calendar of events as part of the RE Hub which could also be used to raise awareness and encourage wider participation in the type of events being highlighted.

As a final issue, SACRE members were advised that should any concerns be identified regarding the current content on different religions included as part of the Best Brent/SACRE website pages or within the accompanying information to support the recently adopted agreed syllabus these should be raised directly with Jen Haskew & Helen Tulloch so they could be explored, with members having noted the recent review undertaken following previous concerns raised.

As no further issues were raised the Chair thanked Nadia Nadeem for the update provided with it **AGREED** that further details on the training opportunities referred to would be supplied outside of the meeting to any interested members.

7. **Any Other Business**

7.1 **Date of Future Meetings**

SACRE noted the date for the next meeting as 5pm on Thursday 8th February 2024, with the meeting to be held online.

Following a comment raised during the meeting, members agreed that it may be beneficial (looking forward to the 2024-25 academic year) to consider holding at least one meeting in hybrid format rather than entirely online, which would be considered as part of the process in agreeing the dates for these meetings.

The meeting closed at 6.05pm

Basma EIShayyal
Chair