

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

Held as an online virtual meeting on Thursday 6 February 2025 at 5pm

Attendees (in remote attendance):

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| 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> | Sagar Forouhi (Baha'i) Bhupinder Singh (Sikhism) Sally Strauss (Judaism) Amanda Whelan (Roman Catholicism) Michelle Goldsmith (Humanism) Elizabeth Sims (Baptism) Ruzbeh Holdiwala (Zoroastrianism) Manhar Mehta (Jainism) |
| GROUP B <i>(A committee of persons representing the Church of England)</i> | Steve Taylor (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> | Stephanie Enas (Association representing Teachers) |
| GROUP D <i>(A committee of persons representing the authority)</i> | Cllr Neil Nerva Cllr Robert Johnson Cllr Arshad Mahmood |
| In attendance: | 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) |

1. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Given the absence of the Chair and apologies for absence submitted by the Vice Chair, SACRE **AGREED** to appoint Councillor Robert Johnson as Chair for the duration of the meeting.

2. **Apologies for Absence**

The meeting opened by noting that apologies had been received from Shaun Cremin (Associate Member), Kyriacos Papasavva (CoE), Kim Wilson (Association representing Teachers), Ian Slade (Vice Chair), Malcolm Deboo (Zoroastrianism), Yazadh Bhadha (Zoroastrianism).

3. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

It was **AGREED** to approve the minutes of the previous SACRE meeting held on Thursday 8 February 2024 subject to the correction of Amanda Whelan's surname.

4. **Determinations**

Members noted that there were no applications for determinations to be considered at this meeting.

5. **SACRE Annual Report 2023-24**

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

Members were advised that by statute, every local authority was required to adopt a Locally Agreed Syllabus (LAS) for Religious Education and to review it every five years. The previous LB Brent LAS had been in place for some time, but in recent years had been undergoing a rigorous process of review and revision. In 2021-22, this process was completed successfully and a new LAS for Brent was approved by the Agreed Syllabus Conference on 6th July 2023. The syllabus was successfully being implemented across schools within the local authority.

SACRE Members considered the various national and local developments concerning the provision of RE. Their discussions were prompted by the information provided to the SACRE through the regular updates from Teacher Members, the SACRE Adviser and NASACRE briefings. During 2023-24, SACRE gave particular attention to various areas, such as the embedment of the new Locally Agreed Syllabus and strategies to promote its implementation as well as making it accessible to schools by promoting it through the Head Teachers bulletin.

SACRE explored meaningful ways to engage with the RE Hubs website as a means to build bridges between Brent's SACRE and Brent's Multi Faith Forum, in order to support Teachers and schools collectively. Training opportunities were available for Members of both Brent's SACRE and Brent's Multi Faith Forum. Empowering everyone to effectively engage with schools, thus providing purposeful experiences whereby pupils could engage with religious and non-religious worldviews.

SACRE monitored RE Hubs and NASACRE training uptake and promoted this to SACRE Members for the purpose of executing SACRE roles more efficiently.

Since September 2024, the RE advisor (Nadia Nadeem) had issued newsletters for schools on a half termly basis. The newsletters provided additional support and guidance for schools and Teachers in delivering a high quality, rich and inclusive RE curriculum with the delivery of RE across schools in Brent also subject to ongoing

monitoring involving LA's school advisors and surveys of both primary and secondary schools.

SACRE regularly reviewed the world religion summaries on the Brent website to ensure that these were reflective of the diverse lived experiences of our Members and local communities.

A 'Good Practice Network', for community primary and secondary school subject leaders in RE, continued to run on a termly basis during the 2023-24 academic year. These sessions were led by Stacey Burman, the RE Consultant supporting the work on the embedment of the agreed syllabus. Agreed areas of focus were pedagogy and the OFSTED report to ensure schools were meeting the requirements.

There had been no complaints or withdrawals from RE or collective worship and schools with a determination were listed in the report.

The Chair thanked Nadia Nadeem for her report and welcomed questions from the Members with the following points noted:

Members requested to see the monthly newsletters that were sent out to schools every half term. Nadia Nadeem also asked for any materials from SACRE Members that could be added into the newsletters. It was suggested that passages about human values could be used in newsletters to educate the reader about different religions and how their overarching beliefs tie in together, especially as Brent was such a diverse borough.

Clarification was also provided in relation the determination process for schools in terms of the delivery of collective worship.

Members asked if a welcome pack was available for new SACRE Members. Member's attention was drawn to the free online NASACRE training course called 'So, you've joined your local SACRE...' to help new SACRE Members understand their role, how SACRE works, its statutory responsibilities and how Members make their contribution to SACRE's work which would be taking place on 24 June 2025 at 6.30-8pm and was free to attend.

In highlighting the value of the work being undertaken by SACRE as detailed within the Annual Report, the Chair thanked Nadia Nadeem for her work in preparing the report and SACRE **AGREED** to approve the final draft of the 2023-24 Annual Report, subject to any final comments submitted by Members following the meeting.

6. RE and NASACRE Updates

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

NATRE Survey on the provision for RE in Primary Schools (Autumn 2024) had identified that fewer schools were meeting their statutory duty to teach RE to all pupils. In 2022, almost all schools (96%) reported that all pupils were being taught religious education but by 2024, this figure had fallen to 87%.

In contrast, leaders of RE in primary schools were now more likely to be more experienced Teachers than in the past. The greatest concern was that too many primary school Teachers were not adequately prepared to teach RE, either in their initial teacher training or as part of their continuing professional development. Consequently, they reported a lack of confidence in delivering some aspects of the curriculum. This was needed to be addressed urgently by the Department for Education as part of a National Plan for RE as well as the lack of opportunity to study RE at A Level.

Focussing on Brent, SACRE noted and welcomed the work being undertaken to deliver the current RE syllabus across schools in the borough, which members were advised would continue to be kept under review and SACRE's attention drawn to the suggestions included within the paper in seeking to develop their impact and role.

Naomi Franks, a volunteer at Willesden Jewish Cemetery, which was an orthodox cemetery wanted to make SACRE and schools aware that the cemetery offered a range of activities for both Jewish and non-Jewish schools. They would like to make contact and offer twilight sessions to Brent Teachers to explain how to teach about Judaism as well as offer relevant activities through the RE, English, History and RSHE curriculum and they support all Key Stages. Twilight sessions for Teachers and education workshops can be found at <https://www.willesdenjewishcemetery.org.uk/schools>

Sally Strauss wanted to share a new resource 'Jewish Living Online'. A digital education initiative jointly produced by the Board of Deputies and the Anti-Defamation League: <https://jlo.org.uk>

Anna Silver had shared an invitation from the Faith and Belief Forum to help shape the future of Inter Faith Week, which was not funded by the government this year but various RE organisations banded together to fund the initiative.

In terms of training opportunities, Places of Interest and School Speaker Training was available on the RE Hub and free to participants. The comprehensive training would be held online and last for 1.5 hours. It was recognised as an opportunity to develop knowledge about hosting schools in a place of worship/interest or going into a school to speak to pupils. It was also an opportunity to meet other people who offer a similar service and share ideas, practice and experience. The training was valid for two years and participants who complete the online training receive the RE Hubs Kitemark. This was a recognised kitemark in the education community, which allows the participant or their organisation to be registered on the RE Hubs directory for schools to contact them. More information can be found at <https://www.re-hubs.uk/get-involved/places-of-interest> and <https://www.re-hubs.uk/get-involved/school-speakers>

NATRE were also offering ECT webinars for free for subject knowledge monthly. For more details visit <https://www.natre.org.uk/Membership/early-careers-teachers/ect-free-monthly-webinar>

Forthcoming NASACRE events included Being an Effective SACRE Clerk on 25 February 2025 at 7-8pm and Working on an Agreed Syllabus Conference on 11 March 2025 at 7-8pm. Both events were free to SACRE Members and the full training programme can be found at <https://nasacre.org.uk/wp->

<content/uploads/2024/09/Virtual-training-programme-24-25.pdf> and further information could be found at <https://nasacre.org.uk/training-and-support>

The Chair thanked Nadia Nadeem for her report and welcomed questions from the Members with the following pointed noted:

Future objectives for the SACRE would be established once the Chair and Vice Chair had been elected for the 25-26 Academic Year, including the monitoring of delivery of the RE syllabus based on teach insight.

It was agreed that SACRE was a useful space to share information and make more specific to the communities in Brent. Information about events, resources and training for all faiths were incorporated in the newsletters. Further thought needed to be given to the influence of SACRE in Brent and how it encouraged appropriate and positive learning about different religions. Following SACRE Members receiving training, a programme could be developed for Members to go into schools and teach as well as SACRE Members sharing knowledge with one another.

Members agreed that that it would be helpful to learn about other religions and perhaps a visit could be arranged to the Willesden Cemetery and then to a temple for example to raise awareness.

Shirley Parks said that it would be beneficial for SACRE to meet face to face and she and Jen Haskew would meet to discuss the programme of work SACRE was doing bearing in mind that Members were giving their time in a voluntary capacity. The Chair agreed and recognised it would be a learning process for everyone and an opportunity to learn about each other's faiths and principles.

Stephanie Enas said that the teachers in her school were confident about teaching RE and the Brent agreed syllabus and carried out collective worship. Some concepts had been hard to teach like the concept of a 'spirit' especially to younger aged children as well as challenges in teaching the changing nature of cohorts of children.

With no further issues raised SACRE **AGREED** to note the update provided.

7. **Any Other Business**

Members were advised that the next meeting would include the election of Chair and Vice Chair for the 2025-26 Academic Year with any members interested in standing for either position invited to submit expressions of interest or contact Shirley Parks for further details.

It was agreed that Shirley Parks and Jen Haskew would contact the current Chair to discuss the going chairing arrangements prior to the next meeting.

8. **Dates of Future Meetings**

SACRE NOTED the date for their final meeting during the 2024-25 Academic Year as follows:

- Thursday 10 July 2025 at 5pm to be undertaken online.

The meeting closed at 6pm

Councillor Robert Johnson
Chair