

ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

11 September 2023

Present: Karen Butler (Chair), Barbara Meaney (Vice-Chair), Dai Prendiville, Thomas Kingsley-Jones, Vanessa Alfred, Suzanne Hull, Vicci Davidson, Karen Waller, Laura Dexter, Michael Gammage, and Councillor Richard Coe.

Present (virtually): Ravinder Singh Zandu, Saghir Ahmed, Anthony Lewis, and Councillors Jack Douglas and Kashmir Singh

Officers in attendance: Clive Haines, Anne Andrews and Laurence Ellis

ACTION

SACRE MEETING

1 Election of Chair and Vice-Chair for the New Academic Year

As it was the new academic year, an election of the Chair and Vice-Chair of SACRE was required.

Barbara Meaney proposed Karen Butler as Chair of SACRE for the 2023/24 academic year. This was seconded by Michael Gammage.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Karen Butler was elected Chair of SACRE for the 2023/24 academic year.

Karen Butler proposed Barbara Meaney as Vice-Chair for SACRE for the 2023/24 academic year. This was seconded by Thomas Kingsley-Jones.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Barbara Meaney was elected Vice-Chair of SACRE for the 2023/24 academic year.

2 Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and attendees introduced themselves.

3 Introduction to RE & Collective Worship at Furze Platt Infant School

(At 5:03pm, Saghir Ahmed entered the meeting virtually and Vicci Davidson entered the meeting in-person)

Laura Dexter gave a presentation on religious education and collective worship at Furze Platt Infant School (FPIS), whereby the school sought to promote experience, excitement and engagement in its religious education. The vision of the school's federation (FPIS and Furze Platt Junior) was for children to explore the skills and the knowledge that they had been taught and promote a 'hands-on' learning approach. This was underpinned by the values of Passion, Well-being and Respect.

To achieve this vision, the curriculum encouraged children to explore their curiosities as well create a sense of community.

At FPIS, the curriculum sought to ensure that there were no limits or barriers to

children's achievements whereby children of all abilities could access the same curriculum as well as an understanding, from the teacher's perspective, that children learn in different ways. FPIS's Early Years and Key Stage One curricula were formulated to be exciting, engaging and challenging as well ensuring that they were both intertwined. They also took into account children's natural desires (what they want to do) and interests (what they want to know). While the timetables were rigid to an extent, they nevertheless allowed children the time and space they need to learn. The learning environment promoted continuous provision to enable children to explore and consolidate their learning.

FPIS sought to ensure children were achieving its curriculum threads for each of its subjects by the end of their time at FPIS. For example, the history curriculum thread involved sharing family history and photos (Early Years), visiting Windsor Castle (Year 1), and learning about Nicholas Winton (Year 2).

FPIS had worked with Julie Fisher, an independent Early Years Adviser, to formulate an effective method of teaching.

FPIS provided continuous provision through the Early Excellence model to stimulate a learning environment that built children's curiosity, provided learning opportunities and balanced child-led and adult-led learning.

As part of its Key Stage One curriculum, FPIS utilised 'Sticky Knowledge' whereby children have their learning embedded into their brains throughout their learning at FPIS, similar to something being written on a sticky note.

Regarding religious education, FPIS used the Discovery RE scheme. Children in reception were taught a range of religions and beliefs based on the time of year to ensure it was as meaningful and accessible as possible. In addition, they had hands-on experiences in class alongside a visit to a local Church. Meanwhile, Year 1 were taught Christianity and Judaism, and received a visit from a local Rabbi which included a Shabbat meal. Year 2 were taught Christianity and Islam as well as visited Maidenhead Mosque.

At FPIS, collective worship took place daily and was carefully planned and sequenced for the whole academic year. There was also an opportunity for children to reflect on the key message which has been shared.

Councillor Coe asked if other faiths were covered in Furze Platt Junior School (while the Infant School covered Christianity, Islam and Judaism). Laura Dexter confirmed this, whereby from Year 3 onwards, children were taught other religions. Despite this, Early Years pupils were still being exposed to other religions outside the three Abrahamic religions.

Ravinder Singh Zandu offered assistance relating to Sikhism to SACRE members, such as a school visit to a Sikh gurdwara. Laura Dexter accepted the offer.

Anne Andrews, SACRE Adviser, asked what links were being made between the Discovery RE scheme and the Agreed Syllabus. Laura Dexter replied that links were made whereby the school would always go back to the questions from the locally Agreed Syllabus when mapping out the Discovery Scheme.

Michael Gammage asked what Sticky Knowledge was. Laura Dexter replied that is a teaching method to ensure knowledge was embedded into children's brains during their learning journey.

4 Apologies For Absence

Apologies were received from Ila Gangotra, Clare Roberts, Chris Sayers and David Saunders.

5 Minutes of Meeting on 13th June 2023

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 13th June 2023 were approved as a true and correct record.

6 Matters Arising

The Chair went through the actions from the last meeting:

- SACRE Constitution amendment was added to the meeting's agenda.
- The Chair was certain that Thomas Kingsley-Jones would be open to doing another tour around Churchmead to any SACRE members who had missed the pre-meeting tour in March 2023.
- The Membership Update was added to the meeting's agenda.
- The Chair extended her gratitude to the two headteachers, Karen Waller (from Eton Wick CE First School) and Suzanne Hull (from Oakfield First), for filling the two vacant Teacher Representative (Group C) positions.
- The Chair asked Laura Dexter about the scrapbook as mentioned at the previous meeting in June 2023 at Cheapside Primary School. Laura Dexter confirmed that she had the scrapbook and that evidence for this had been gathered. The Chair requested for this to be shared with SACRE.

ACTION: Laura Dexter to share the RE scrapbook evidence with SACRE members.

Laura
Dexter

- Dai Prendiville had written an article for the SACRE newsletter on the 'Solutions not Sides' session, which covered the Israel-Palestine conflict.
- Laura Dexter had yet to write an article for the SACRE newsletter on the school trips to Maidenhead Mosque and Synagogue.

ACTION: Laura Dexter to create an article about the trips to Maidenhead Mosque and Synagogue to include in a future newsletter.

Laura
Dexter

- Laurence Ellis, Democratic Services Officer, had provided a list of training sessions in which SACRE members had attended. This was to be discussed further under 'Item 11 – NASACRE training opportunities/events'. The Chair informed the meeting that a NASACRE (National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on RE) induction training session for new SACRE members was taking place on 21st September 2023. Anne Andrew added that the session was online and free.
- The Chair informed the meeting that she had visited Lowbrook School and spoken to the RE Lead who had talked about the recent 'deep dive' into RE. The experience was summarised in the SACRE newsletter.
- The Chair had invited the Headteacher of Lowbrook Academy to join SACRE, but he had declined. The Academy Representative role has now been filled by Suzanne Hull.
- Not all SACRE members had completed the syllabus comparison exercise, but it was understood that the teachers would have been busy.
- Representatives for the Agreed Syllabus Conference were to be discussed during the Agreed Syllabus Conference.

- The post of Representative for Judaism on SACRE had been filled by Vanessa Alfred.

7 Membership Update

(Councillor K. Singh entered the meeting virtually at 17:42)

Three new SACRE members had been appointed: Vanessa Alfred (Group A – Judaism), Karen Waller (Headteacher), and Suzanne Hull (Academy Representative).

The Chair informed that she had discussions with and then visited Matthew Scott, Minister at Dedworth Green Baptist Church, on whether he could become a SACRE member. He was unable to attend the meeting. The Chair also informed that she had contacted Maidenhead Quakers on to enquire about the possibility of finding someone to join SACRE, but discussions went nowhere.

The Chair stated that she would continue to search for potential candidates to fill the vacant SACRE positions.

ACTION: The Chair to continue searching for potential candidates to fill the vacant SACRE positions. **Karen Butler**

8 Amendments to the SACRE Constitution

Laurence Ellis explained the proposed amendments to SACRE’s Constitution (Terms of Reference). The first amendment was to create the position of Non-Religious Worldviews as a full member in Group A. Once this was approved, Laurence Ellis would arrange for Cabinet to formally appoint Dr Anthony Lewis into this position (in contrast to being a co-opted member). The second amendment was to make the Constitution specifically state how SACRE members were to be appointed: SACRE would nominate the members and Cabinet would then approve the appointment. This was in contrast to the Constitution vaguely stating that the “local authority” shall make the appointments.

While happy with the amendments, Vicci Davidson suggested that the Constitution should be further amended to replace ‘Chairman’ and ‘Vice-Chairman’ with ‘Chair’ and ‘Vice-Chair’.

Councillor Coe asked who approved the amendments. Laurence Ellis replied that the amendments were reviewed and approved by the Head of Legal and Governance, and that SACRE needed to approve the changes.

To get the current changes in place, Anne Andrews suggested the current proposed changes be approved while another separate amendment could take place to remove ‘Chairman’ and ‘Vice-Chairman’. Laurence Ellis agreed.

UNANIMOUSLY AGREED: To approve the proposed amendments to SACRE Constitution.

ACTIONS:

- **RBWM Cabinet to formally appoint Anthony Lewis into the new Non-Religious Worldview position in Group A.**
- **Amend the SACRE Constitution to replace ‘Chairman’ and ‘Vice-Chairman’ with ‘Chair’ and ‘Vice-Chair’.**

Laurence Ellis
Laurence Ellis

9 SACRE Development Plan Progress Report

The Chair briefly explained to the new SACRE members that the SACRE Development Plan was built on the NASACRE self-assessment tool which identified the various strengths and weaknesses of SACRE and how these might be improved. She then went through the draft Development Plan, particularly the areas which were coloured red.

Key Area 1a – Funding: Professional and financial support:

The Chair informed the meeting that the proposal for additional funding from the Local Authority had not been forwarded yet and proved to be challenging. This was because SACRE did not have a specific set of actions which cost more money than the funding which was allocated. There was also an RE self-assessment tool which permeating across the schools in the Borough, and it was becoming a useful opportunity for teaching staff reflect on their practices and share their experiences with other RE teachers. From this, the Chair hoped that SACRE would have a development action plan from which it could propose additional funding from the Local Authority.

Key Area 1b – SACRE meetings:

While understanding that Laurence Ellis would have other work priorities which would inhibit him from circulating the meeting minutes sooner, the Chair requested that the minutes be published/circulated within two weeks from the meeting.

Councillor Coe informed that there had been suggestions of having summary minutes whereby the list of action points and decisions would be circulated shortly after the meeting and before the full minutes were published.

ACTION: The clerk to circulate the action points shortly after the meeting.

**Laurence
Ellis**

Key Area 1g – Relations with the Academies sector:

No secondary BASH representative was recruited.

Key Area 1b 6 – Ensure that schools' major priorities for improvement form the basis for some SACRE agenda items:

Once the self-assessment tool permeates, SACRE would begin to understand what was going on across the Borough's schools, namely their strengths and areas to improve upon.

The implementation of a comprehensive approach to evaluate collective worship across RBWM schools had been slow.

The Chair informed that she would review the SACRE Development Plan alongside Anne Andrews and the Vice-Chair and welcomed any feedback from SACRE members on the Plan and its priorities.

ACTION: SACRE members to email the Chair on any feedback which they may have on the SACRE Development Plan.

ALL

The Chair requested for Laurence Ellis to circulate the new NASACRE login details.

ACTION: Clerk to circulate the new NASACRE login details.

**Laurence
Ellis**

10 Feedback from teachers/school visits: RE and Collective Worship

Each teacher at the SACRE meeting gave an update from their respective schools.

For Eton Wick CE First School, Karen Waller informed the meeting that collective worship had been strong and had also been adapted. They included two regular school assemblies, local walks, and assemblies which espouse the school's values. There were also award ceremonies for children to which parents were invited.

For Desborough College, Dai Prendiville explained that the school was using a tool called Lyfta, a platform which shows short videos of compelling stories from individuals from around the world. For example, a person collecting and using beach litter to create sculptures. The presentation of the story was followed by students being allowed to reflect on what they heard.

For Wessex Primary School, Vanessa Alfred informed SACRE that the school was using a tool called Kapow for RE lessons. RE lessons were taught for two days during every half-term so that students were fully immersed into the subject rather than being taught 1-hour RE lessons per week.

For Churchmead CE School, Thomas Kingsley-Jones informed the meeting that he began to teach A-Level RE for the first time in a couple of years and has a class of 5 students. The formulation of the curriculum had been positive. In addition, Year 7 students were experiencing an introductory RE unit, and had made a positive start to their RE educational journey.

Barbara Meaney had moved to a secondary school in Buckinghamshire. She informed that 32 new staff members had started and there were 150 new Year 7 students. The school was also due to have an inspection.

For Oakfield First School, Suzanne Hull informed SACRE that collective worship at the school was going well. The Covid pandemic had caused a reconsideration on how to approach collective worship, changing it from a very structured approach to a more flexible one where topics which were relevant at the time were discussed. She added that the school struggled to invite external guests. She hoped that being a SACRE member meant that there were potential opportunities. The Chair highlighted Ravinder Singh Zandu's offer of assistance for Sikhism as an example.

Karen Waller asked if SACRE members' emails were available. Laurence Ellis commented that it was up to SACRE members on whether they consent to their emails being available to all members. The Chair suggested that SACRE members should be asked if they consent for their email addresses to be available to other members.

ACTION: Laurence Ellis to confirm whether SACRE members consent for their email addresses to be made available to other members.

**Laurence
Ellis**

11 NASACRE training opportunities/events

SACRE noted the training list.

Laurence Ellis highlighted that Laura Dexter had attended some other NASACRE training sessions which were not noted down on the training list in the agenda due to being notified of this after its publication. The other NASACRE training sessions which Laura Dexter had attended were:

- 'What's happening to Collective Worship beyond determinations? (14th

- March 2023, 7:00-8:00pm);
- 'So, you've joined your local SACRE...' (26th June 2023, 7:00-8:30pm).

12 RE Network Meetings for the year ahead

Anne Andrews informed SACRE that the RE Network meetings for 2023-24 were in the termly RE Newsletter and that SACRE members were allowed to attend:

- Thursday 19th October 2023 (4-5.30pm on Teams)
- Wednesday 7th February 2024 (4-5.30pm on Teams)
- Tuesday 11th June 2024 (4-5.30pm on Teams or in person)

Anne Andrews requested that SACRE members who were headteachers to inform their RE teachers of the meetings to ensure they were aware of them and that they attend them if possible.

Anne Andrews then stated that Altwood CE School were running some secondary RE Network meetings. When it was revealed that SACRE members had not received this information, Anne Andrews stated that she would circulate the dates. The first meeting was being held at Altwood School on 27th September 2023.

ACTION: Anne Andrews to circulate the dates of secondary RE Network meetings.

**Anne
Andrews**

Anne Andrews also informed SACRE that Diocesan church schools had two-termly RE network meetings. She then highlighted that there was a new website called [RE Hubs](#) (shown in the newsletter) which held information on RE meetings across the UK. She added that the website provided free training for individuals who conducted school visits or were connected to places of worship.

(Vicci Davidson left the meeting at 18:19)

13 Termly RE Newsletter to schools

Anne Andrews informed SACRE that the RE Newsletter was nearly ready, with Clive Haines, Deputy Director for Education (AfC), confirming that it would be published on Friday 15th September. Clive Haines also requested that remaining information be provided to him by Friday 15th September 2023.

ACTION: Anne Andrews to finalise the newsletter by Friday 15th September 2023.

The Chair went through the newsletter.

14 Draft Annual Report

Anne Andrews informed SACRE that the deadline for the draft Annual Report was 31st December annually, and it would likely not include GCSE and A-Level data as they were not received around this time. She requested that SACRE members send her any feedback relating to the draft Annual Report. From there, SACRE could approve it at the next SACRE meeting in December 2023.

ACTION: SACRE members to read the draft Annual Report and send any comments/feedback to Anne Andrews in preparation for a final approval at the December 2023 meeting.

**Anne
Andrews**

15 Budget update

For the budget of April 2023 to April 2024, Clive Haines informed that £2,110 had been allocated for supplies and services, and £4,150 had been allocated for specialist consultancy fees. From this, the total budget was £6,260 more than last year. In addition, the total cost for subscription fees would be around £700 for the year.

Anne Andrews stated that she had invoiced £2,200 from the Diocese. Clive Haines responded that this had not come through and that the figure was £2,400 for the year. Anne Andrews stated that she would chase up the Diocese regarding the invoice.

ACTION: Anne Andrews to chase up the Diocese to get the invoice forwarded

**Anne
Andrews**

(Suzanne Hull left the meeting at 18:25)

16 Ofsted/SIAMS reports

The Chair introduced and commended the SIAMS report from Queen Anne Royal Free Church of England First School.

Councillor Coe asked if Councillor A. Tisi, as Cabinet Member for Education, would receive a copy of this; to which Clive Haines replied that she would not. Anne Andrews added that SIAMS reports were published on school websites. She added that she would try to inform the local authority at every SACRE meeting on any SIAMS or Ofsted inspections taking place. She also informed the meeting that Diocese and the schools would receive a notification of an inspection, but not the local authority.

17 Any Other Business

Anne Andrew raised an issue from NATRE (National Association of Teachers of Religious Education), NASACRE and REC (Religious Education Council) who were asking SACREs to write to their Members of Parliament (MPs) to ask them to raise questions at party conferences on teacher training and provisions for RE. If SACRE agreed with the suggestion, she would liaise with the Chair and Vice-Chair to write a letter to the MPs of Windsor and Maidenhead: Theresa May (Maidenhead) and Adam Afriyie (Windsor).

When asked by the Chair, Anne Andrews elaborated that the intention was for MPs to raise the issue at their party conferences that RE required more funding. The details of this would be in the SACRE newsletters.

Councillor Coe highlighted that writing letters only to the MPs of Windsor and Maidenhead meant the request would only go to one political party, and thus suggested to also write to Council Leaders and Councillors. Anne Andrews agreed with the suggestion, adding that Councillors could also be verbally encouraged to raise the issue of RE funding at their party conferences.

The Chair wanted the briefing to take place first before any action took place. Anne Andrews stated that the briefing would take place in the following week.

ACTION: SACRE members to consider, following the distribution of information, whether to contact MPs and councillors to ask them to have conversations with RE organisations at Party Conferences.

ALL

18 Dates of Future Meetings

Dai Prendiville offered to have Desborough College host the SACRE meeting in March 2024.

SACRE attendees noted future meeting dates:

- Monday 4th December 2023 At 5:00pm – Virtual Via Zoom
- Monday 4th March 2024 At 5:00pm – Desborough College

AGREED SYLLABUS CONFERENCE

19 Welcome

The Chair declared that the SACRE meeting had ended and that the Agreed Syllabus Conference had begun.

20 Apologies For Absence

(Anthony Lewis and Saghir Ahmed left the meeting at 6:33pm)

As with the SACRE meeting, apologies were received from Ila Gangotra, Clare Roberts, Chris Sayers and David Saunders.

By the time that the Agreed Syllabus Conference had commenced, apologies were also received from Suzanne Hull, Vicci Davidson, Dr Anthony Lewis and Saghir Ahmed.

21 Membership

As attendees at the Agreed Syllabus Conference were the same as those attending the SACRE meeting, the Chair presumed that the nominated school and religious bodies on SACRE were satisfied with having the same representatives for both meetings.

22 Pan-Berkshire Hub/JASC - Developments

The Chair thanked the SACRE members who responded to the draft syllabus.

Anne Andrews introduced the draft syllabus, which provided a proposed framework of the religious education syllabus. The draft produced a mixture of subject/religious specific and generic questions.

Feedback received from teachers conveyed the view that specific questions were more helpful because words and ideas were not always used or understood in the same way. Therefore, having questions relevant to the particular tradition would hopefully steer people away from some stereotypes. From this, Anne Andrews sought to formulate questions which covered similar themes and topics across religions.

In the draft, Anne Andrews proposed to alternate between Abrahamic (Christianity, Judaism and Islam) and Dharmic religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Jainism) so that pupils would encounter Christianity in every year group, Judaism in one year group, Islam in another year group, and the

Hinduism and Sikhism (two Abrahamic and two Dharmic religions) by the end of lower Key Stage 2. In upper Key Stage 2, schools would be allowed to choose to revisit one of the Abrahamic and Dharmic religions.

Feedback from teachers conveyed the view that there needed to be some agreed content, information and guidance, to which Anne Andrews stated that there would be discussions on what content would be covered under each of the questions in the draft. There was an option of not having questions and instead have suggested content.

Anne Andrews proposed to specify content for Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 core religious studies. By creating something workable, it would hopefully attract academies and VA (voluntary aided) schools to use the syllabus. It was revealed that schools generally were delivering GCSE religious studies (RS) but were not providing any RS for pupils who did not study it further at A-Level.

Councillor Coe asked what the legal requirement was. Anne Andrews answered that every pupil in every key stage should learn RS. When Councillor Coe followed by asking how much should be learned per week, Anne Andrews responded that SACRE could not determine how long RS should be taught in a week, but it could provide a curriculum and syllabus with a recommendation that sufficient time was devoted so that the requirements were fulfilled.

Councillor Coe asked if there was a possibility for a website which had resources for schools to access. Anne Andrews stated that this could be part of the request for extra money for religious education.

Anne Andrews stated that politicians should have conversations with NATRE and REC so that the latter could explain the consequences of the lack of money in religious education. For example, the result in cutting the bursary included that 26% of GCSE classes were taught by non-specialist RS teachers, which then had a large knock-on effect of undermining religious literacy. Therefore, Anne Andrews conveyed, it was important to highlight this to politicians.

23 Next steps

For the next steps, Anne Andrews then asked SACRE members from Group A to review the questions relating to their faith in the draft syllabus. She requested for this to be forwarded by 14th October in preparation for the HUB meeting on 16th October.

The Chair offered to forward this request to Group A members who had left.

ACTION: Group A members to forward any feedback to the questions relating to their respective faiths in the draft new syllabus by 14th October.

Group A

Anne Andrews stated that Michael Gammage could suggest some content for the Baha'i faith and possibly some questions.

Clive Haines asked what the deadline for the draft syllabus was. Anne Andrews replied that the legal requirement was to begin the process within five years and SACRE's final deadline was April 2025. The review had started within the required deadline.

24 Any Other Business

There was no additional business.

25 Dates Of Future Meetings

SACRE attendees noted the future meeting dates:

- Monday 4th December 2023 At 5:00pm – Virtual Via Zoom
- Monday 4th March 2024 At 5:00pm – Desborough College

The meeting, which began at 5.01 pm, ended at 6.50 pm