

ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

4 December 2023

Present (virtually): Karen Butler (Chair), Barbara Meaney (Vice-Chair), Vicci Davidson, Anthony Lewis, Ila Gangotra, Karen Waller, Laura Dexter, Margaret Smith, Michael Gammage, Ravinder Singh, Thomas Kingsley-Jones, and Councillors Richard Coe and Kashmir Singh.

Officers in attendance (virtually): Helen Mastrilli, Anne Andrews and Laurence Ellis

ACTION

SACRE MEETING

1 Welcome

The Chair, Karen Butler, welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Margaret Smith as a new member representing Maidenhead Quakers.

2 Reflection

Reverend Vicci Davidson (Methodism) started off by explaining that Methodism, the church she was a minister for, had the President of the Methodist Conference – the equivalent of the Archbishop of Canterbury – who was elected every year for a single-year term. She added that Methodism had a sort-of triumvirate: the ex-president, the sitting president, and the president designate (who would succeed in the following year). Every year, the president would come up with a theme for the year, with the theme for 2023 being ‘Hidden Treasure’. She believed that this was relevant because all traditions, whether faith groups or Humanist, had hidden treasures within their stories and understandings which were sometimes forgotten because they were so intrinsic to how the world was seen.

(Councillor K. Singh entered the meeting at 5:08pm)

Rev. Vicci Davidson stated that the ‘Hidden Treasures’ theme was taken from the words in Book of Isaiah 45:3 (from the Old Testament of the Christian Bible). She felt that the traditions (or ‘hidden treasures’) gave everyone something to “steer the ship of [their] lives” as they grew on.

Rev. Vicci Davidson then shared her Methodist Prayer Handbook with other SACRE members which contained 30 days of prayers which Methodists prayed through each month. As the date was 4th December 2023, she concluded the reflection by reading a prayer from the handbook for that date.

3 Apologies For Absence

Apologies were received from Clare Roberts (KS2 Teacher – Cheapside Primary School), David Saunders (Church of England), and Vanessa Alfred (Judaism). Thomas Kingsley-Jones (KS3 Teacher – Churchmead School) had notified that he was arriving late to the meeting.

Clive Haines, Deputy Director for Education (Achieving for Children, AfC), was unable to attend and was substituted by Helen Mastrilli, SEND/EAL Advisory Teacher (AfC).

Councillor Coe informed that Councillor Douglas had given his apologies. He then notified that he would have to leave the meeting early.

4 Minutes of the Meeting on 11th September 2023 & Matters Arising

The Chair went through the matters arising in the previous meeting minutes:

- Laura Dexter (KS1 Teacher – Furze Platt Infant) confirmed visits to Maidenhead Mosque and Synagogue had taken place, though she still needed to write the articles for the newsletter. She also stated that she still needed to do the article on the book which the Bahá'í Faith had donated. When she asked for the date of the newsletter, Anne Andrews informed the meeting that it would be circulated at the beginning of January 2024, and therefore asked for the article to be forwarded by the first week of January 2024.

ACTION: Laura Dexter to write articles for a future newsletter on:

Laura Dexter

- Trips to Maidenhead Mosque and Synagogue,
- The book which the Baha'i Faith had donated to the school.

- The Chair informed SACRE members that, while some new members were recruited, a resignation had been received.

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

Karen Butler

- Regarding the changes to SACRE's Constitution (terms of reference, ToR), Laurence Ellis, Democratic Services Officer (clerk), confirmed that Anthony Lewis (Humanism) was now a member of Group A on SACRE as the Humanist representative; and that the references to 'Chairman' and 'Vice-Chairman' had been changed to 'Chair' and 'Vice-Chair', a minor amendment which did not require a ToR amendment at a SACRE meeting.

- The Chair requested Laurence Ellis to circulate the list of action points relating to the current meeting as he had done so after the previous meeting in September 2023.

ACTION: Laurence Ellis to continue to circulate the action points shortly after each meeting.

Laurence Ellis

- The Chair informed the meeting that she had received only one email from a SACRE member regarding the Development Plan. It was agreed that the discussion on this issue would be deferred to the next meeting as members would be meeting in-person.

ACTION: SACRE to discuss the SACRE Development Plan at the next meeting in March 2024

ALL

- Laurence Ellis confirmed that he had circulated the NASACRE Resource login details to SACRE members. The Chair requested for these to be re-circulated again in case anyone had missed them.

ACTION: Laurence Ellis to re-circulate the new NASACRE login details.

Laurence Ellis

- Laurence Ellis informed the meeting that he received email replies from members consenting to their email addresses being added to a SACRE member email list but had not received responses from every member. He then asked members in attendance whether they consented or

objected to their email being added to the membership email list. Councillor Coe and Ravinder Singh gave their consent. The Chair highlighted that this was based on the headteachers requesting the email addresses of faith leaders.

ACTION: Laurence Ellis to further confirm whether SACRE members would consent for their email addresses to be added to a mailing list which would then be made available to other members. Laurence Ellis

- Anne Andrews, SACRE Advisor, believed that she forwarded the dates of secondary RE Network meetings to Laurence Ellis for circulation, and that she also circulated them to teachers.
- Anne Andrews confirmed that the newsletter had been completed and it had been circulated to all schools. Karen Waller (Headteacher – Eton Wick CE First School) confirmed she received the newsletter.
- Anne Andrews informed SACRE members that Clive Haines had requested that the invoice for the RE Hubs be raised ahead of the deadline in April 2023, which she managed to get the Oxford Diocese to do. However, she did not know whether the invoice had been processed, though she speculated that it had been due to the Diocese not contacting her on the invoice being outstanding. She informed that she had asked for confirmation on this.

ACTION: Anne Andrews to confirm that the invoice had been processed. Anne Andrews

- In regard to contacting MPs and councillors to ask them to highlight RE at Party Conferences, the Chair stated that she intended to do but had not managed to get round to doing this. Anne Andrews said that she had emailed her MP in Bracknell but had received an unsatisfactory answer. Councillor Coe advised the meeting that people needed to write twice to MPs to receive a response.
- On the RE scrapbook, Laura Dexter asked how this could be shared as it contained photographs. The Chair suggested to presented it at the next SACRE meeting in March 2024.

- **ACTION: Laura Dexter to bring her RE scrapbook to a future meeting.** Laura Dexter

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 11th September 2023 were approved as a true and correct record.

5 Membership Update

The Chair reiterated (and Laurence Ellis confirmed) that two new candidates had been recruited to SACRE: Reverend Matthew Scott (Baptist Church) and Rachel Beaumont (Church of England and RE lead teacher at Eton Porny First School). Laurence Ellis confirmed that the appointments had been approved at the Cabinet meeting on 29th November 2023.

The Chair also noted (and Laurence Ellis confirmed) that Clare Roberts had stepped down as a SACRE member. She hoped that the next person to replace Clare Roberts might come from the Ascot area.

ACTION: SACRE Chair and Diocesan Adviser to confer over strategies required to recruit a replacement Key Stage 2 Karen Butler and Anne

6 Budget update

The Chair informed the meeting that Clive Haines had sent out an email with a summary of the budget. The annual amount remained the same at around £6,200 and half of this had already been spent by the time the email was sent a couple of weeks prior to the meeting. The Chair believed that the invoice for the Hub was still outstanding.

The Chair reminded attendees that a financial commitment by SACRE was to offer all schools up to a £100 bursary towards RE-related training. She added that SACRE would support up to 10 schools, stating that a number of requests had been received from schools for this money. Anne Andrews confirmed that the latest update from Clive Haines was that there were at least four schools to receive funding from SACRE though it could be more.

7 Ofsted/SIAMS reports

The Chair commended the very positive Ofsted reports for Riverside Primary, St. Luke's Primary and Altwood Schools. She highlighted the Ofsted reports on Riverside and St. Luke's primaries, quoting from them sections that commented on how pupils valued difference and the schools sought to ensure that everyone was treated with respect and tolerance. She also pointed out in the reports that pupils learned about different faiths through local faith walks and school panels attended by local faith leaders.

Helen Mastrilli mentioned that she used to work as a teacher at Riverside Primary before working for the Borough.

The Chair then referred to the Ofsted report for Altwood School, highlighting the inspectors' praise for Sixth Formers mentoring students in younger year groups.

Michael Gammage (Baha'i Faith) informed the meeting that he took part in the 75th anniversary of St. Luke's Primary during which the school brought together parents and faith leaders at the local church. He highlighted that the school accommodated the pupils who had English as a second language by translating the school prayer into various languages, such as Arabic, Portuguese and Hindi.

The Chair briefly asked for attendees to introduce themselves, having missed this out at the start of the meeting. Each member also revealed their links to education, from being teachers or former teachers to having schools in their local area.

8 Feedback from teachers/school visits: RE & Collective Worship

The Chair reported that she had visited Queen Anne Royal Free CE First School after reviewing the school's SIAMS report at the SACRE meeting in September 2023, congratulating them on the school's positive report. During this visit (meeting the headteacher, Judith Street), she learnt that Queen Anne First School had linked up with another school in Soho (Westminster, London). As part of this, the schools had joint assemblies through Zoom, involving their local priests and developing curriculum work around parts of London. In addition, Queen Anne First pupils had visited Soho on a school trip, and all staff had benefited from a joint training day on spirituality. The Chair described

the impact of collective worship as “excellent”.

The Chair said that Queen Anne First School had been encouraged to broaden the sphere of its faith work; and had recommended *Real People, Real Faith*, the SACRE Hub series of interview films featuring a wide range of faith communities.

The Chair then explained her other visit to Desborough College, during which she observed Dai Prendiville (KS4 Teacher – Desborough College) teaching a tutor session through the use of Lyfta, a platform which showed short videos of compelling stories on different ways of life and cultural dimensions from individuals from across the world. She commented that some of the pupils had been very enthusiastic about Lyfta.

Each teacher representative on SACRE then gave a brief update concerning their respective schools.

Laura Dexter reported that Furze Platt Infant School (FPIS) recently had an Ofsted inspection at the end of September 2023, describing it as refreshing and a positive experience. She informed SACRE members that they had received positive comments from inspectors when it came to the curriculum at FPIS.

For Eton Wick CE First School, Karen Waller reported that she had been busy with Nativity plays and maintaining a structured curriculum to ensure the pupils remained focused through to the end of term. She also added that Eton Wick continued to embrace collective worship. Karen Waller added that the school continued to utilise *Space Makers* after a couple of years, having joined an online call with a group of teachers and headteachers with Reverend Charlie Kerr to share experiences with *Space Makers* and how to develop it further. She also noted that a couple of schools were visiting to observe *Space Makers* in action. She added that the use of *Space Makers* was positively commented on during a SIAMS inspection in 2022.

The Chair asked for a brief overview of *Space Makers*. Karen Waller explained that *Space Makers* was a programme which had 5 practices (stilling, noticing, dwelling, mending and blessing) and encouraged children (of any faith or worldview) to consider the world around them, such as things which they were sorry or thankful for. Describing the resource as amazing, she recommended it to any school who were considering to alter their collective worship. Karen Waller further explained that the programme was used once per week whereby an aforementioned practice was focused on and developed over the year. Using an example of either ‘stilling’ or ‘mending’, pupils picked up a crochet stone and placed it back in a basket if they were prepared to forgive someone who had upset them.

After the Chair commented that it would be great to share effective approaches to collective worship, Karen Waller offered to do a presentation on *Space Makers*, either alongside the RE Lead Teacher at Eton Wick or on her own.

ACTION: Karen Waller to do a presentation on *Space Makers* at a future SACRE meeting.

Karen Waller

Anne Andrews informed the meeting that *Space Makers* was a product of the Oxford Diocesan Board of Education and was a project led by Charlie Kerr (the chaplaincy advisor), and that there was also a *Space Makers for families* which was introduced to multiple Anglican churches. While training for *Space Makers* was available, Anne Andrews was uncertain on whether it was free or not. She

stated that the programme was based on Ignatian Spirituality and had links to Christian mindfulness but could nevertheless be delivered in a way that made it accessible to people from any faith.

Karen Waller informed the meeting that the training fee was £130, which involved a trainer and working with a local reverend to set it up. Despite the price (particularly for small schools), she stated that the benefits were incredible.

(At 5:57pm, Councillor Coe and Ravinder Singh left the meeting, while Thomas Kingsley-Jones entered the meeting.)

In regard to Churchmead CE School, Thomas Kingsley-Jones informed SACRE members that with the end of term approaching, Year 11 pupils were having mock exams. He added that there were some progressive improvements in knowledge, particularly with Islam, and that RE continued to be good at Churchmead. He stated that he was looking forward to promoting the use of the new RBWM audit tool, based on REQM criteria, to help monitor and track the quality of RE in the Borough and possibly linking up with different people across the Borough's schools to implement this.

9 Training attended: NASACRE/Hubs etc...

The Chair informed the meeting that she herself, Anne Andrews and Clive Haines attended a virtual regional NASACRE (National Association of Standing Advisory Councils for RE) meeting for South-East England on 16th November 2023. She found the meeting useful as it brought together other SACRE members and chairs to share their experiences, as well as discussing the successes and challenges with the SACREs in south-east England.

Anne Andrews hoped that this meeting would be repeated to build stronger links with other SACREs. She then reminded meeting attendees that there was a NASACRE training session on how to monitor RE in schools, taking place during the following evening (7:00-8:00pm) which she was attending. Laura Dexter and the Chair confirmed that that they were also attending the session.

Recognising that monitoring RE education was an issue, Anne Andrews informed meeting attendees that many other SACREs paid their advisor for half-a-day per week or one day per week whereas she herself was only paid by RBWM for five-and-a-half days per year. This meant she could not visit schools as other advisers in other LAs could and stated that half-day-a-week payment (2 days per month) would make a huge difference. The Chair stated that it was within SACRE's remit to monitor RE in schools by visiting them with their advisor, thus providing the basis of a sound argument for increased payment to Anne Andrews as SACRE's advisor if required. Further discussion on this issue was needed.

ACTION: At a future meeting, SACRE members to debate the possibility of increasing the budget to enable Anne Andrews to make monitoring visits to Borough schools alongside SACRE colleagues.

ALL

10 RE Network Meetings: primary & secondary

Anne Andrews explained that one RE Network meeting had taken place, focusing on the proposals for the Agreed Syllabus. The meeting had improved attendance with people keen to talk about the syllabus though there had been

some confusion on what constituted a syllabus as opposed to a scheme of work.

The RE Network meeting discussed the audit tool (which Thomas Kingsley-Jones mentioned earlier) and a couple more schools became interested in pursuing the audit tool, with two or three teachers stating that they had found the tool helpful and had requested a copy.

Anne Andrews believed that there was a desire amongst the schools attending the RE Network meetings to evaluate and audit their provision of religious education and to improve on this.

The Chair mentioned that she asked the clerk of the RE Network meetings, Elaine Norstrom, to send an email out to the schools stating that they could contact her if they wanted to use the audit tool. She added that she was open to using SACRE funding to support those meetings to promote its use.

The Chair asked Thomas Kingsley-Jones whether there were any notes from the second Secondary RE Network meeting at Altwood School which had been circulated. He replied that he had not received any notes, though he was aware that the question was raised at the meeting on whether RE teachers wanted to come together to moderate in 2024. While he had not been able to attend the meeting, he stated that he would attend the next meeting in January 2024.

The Chair informed the meeting that the RE Network meeting was a meeting of the Heads of RE at secondary schools in the Borough, convened and headed by the Head of RE at Altwood School.

11 SACRE Development Plan Progress Report

Before discussing the item, the Chair raised the fact that the item title should be 'SACRE Development Plan, 2023-25, Draft 1', in contrast to its current title in the agenda.

The Chair explained that she had drawn up a development plan which was based on the previous one from last year (2022) but had been extended for another two years on the grounds that its content was too ambitious to be achieved within 12 months. She said the changes which had been made were to remove the completed actions points, while retaining the outstanding actions.

Covering Part 1 of the draft plan, the Chair highlighted the actions which SACRE needed to push forward on:

- Induct new SACRE members, particularly due to the resignation of some members and the recruitment of new ones.
- To strengthen SACRE's understanding of RE in schools through the use of exam results and visits to schools when doing SACRE meetings, such as the next one at Desborough College in March 2024.
- To further build links between SACRE and other key support networks and IT providers.

Moving onto Part 2, the Chair went over the additional priority areas:

- Establish a universal approach to the auditing of provision for RE in RBWM schools through the use of REQM (Religious Education Quality Mark) criteria.
- Develop a simpler approach to auditing collective worship in schools, with hopefully a more extended network once the audit tool was shared

across more schools.

- Implement a more systematic way of getting schools to report on their religious education so that SACRE could fulfil its role in spreading good practice in RE, alongside maintaining the RE Network meetings and Ofsted/SIAMS inspections being fed back to SACRE.

When the Chair asked whether they approved the draft plan, SACRE members gave their approval.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED: To approve SACRE Development Plan 2023-25, Draft 1

12 SACRE Annual Report - approval required

Anne Andrews announced that she had not received any feedback on the draft Annual Report for Academic Year 2022-23 from any SACRE member apart from the Chair, assuming that the draft report was approved for submission to NASACRE and Department for Education (DfE). She would then request for Elaine Norstrom, Clive Haines and/or Helen Mastrilli to circulate it using the circulation list at the bottom of the report. She requested that any questions arising to be sent to her as soon as possible.

The Chair approved the draft Annual Report.

13 Developing the role of SACRE - Discussion

The Chair explained that the proposal was to add another priority area to the action plan to SACRE. There were three suggestions:

- Strengthen professional relationships between SACRE members, stating that it was important for its various members (Councillors, school and faith representatives) to know each other better. She suggested that SACRE members have a meal together after the next meeting in March 2024.
- Establish a simple system to enable SACRE to support teaching and learning in RE in RBWM schools. This would involve SACRE becoming the 'go-to' hub for faith representatives to visit schools. The Chair acknowledged that this would require training for representatives through the Hub.

Anne Andrews said that the Hub website was a 'one-stop shop', and they offered free training for places of worship, organisations and speakers who wished to be accredited and Kitemarked to visit and talk at schools. She added that Anthony Lewis did not need to do this because all accredited Humanists speakers were automatically Kitemarked by the RE Hub, though she mentioned that this did not prevent Anthony Lewis from adding his details to the RE Hubs website. Anne Andrews informed meeting attendees that the website was free to access and recommended the training. She offered to share the link to the Hub website.

The Chair suggested that the website link could be included in the meeting minutes.

**ACTION: The RE Hubs weblink to be added to the minutes.
RE Hubs website: www.re-hubs.uk**

**Laurence
Ellis**

**ACTION: All faith representatives willing to make visits to
schools to seek appropriate training.**

ALL

The Chair elaborated that this would give SACRE an enabling and active role, stating that there were schools which wanted to invite speakers to visit and that the processes involved needed to be formalised.

ACTION: SACRE to develop a formal procedure for schools' requests for faith group representatives to visit. ALL

- Hold a 'Worldviews Exhibition'. Having visited West Sussex SACRE in October 2023, the Chair said that this SACRE had held a 'Worldviews Roadshow'. This involved an exhibition showcasing all faith groups with their representatives as well as teachers across the key stages being invited to build connections with faith leaders who could potentially visit their schools. It included religious films, artefacts and food (e.g., Jewish cake).

The Chair asked SACRE members what they thought about the proposals. Laura Dexter supported the idea of a Worldviews Exhibition for teachers to attend. Vicci Davidson also supported the idea, stating that it would be useful for everyone to better understand each other.

Michael Gammage highlighted that the Chair visited his house and gave a talk to a U3A group about RE in schools, namely what was taught and what should be taught as well as discussing RE in a broader societal context and the merits of SACRE.

The Chair extended her gratitude to Thomas Kingsley-Jones, Laura Dexter and Barbara Meaney (Vice-Chair, Roman Catholicism) for allowing themselves to be interviewed by her about RE teaching at their schools. Describing the interview process as wonderful, the Chair hoped to show these interviews to SACRE without requiring an additional meeting. She said that a suggested time would potentially need to be sought which was suitable for the three aforementioned teachers and anybody else who was interested.

ACTION: Schedule a time to share the three interviews about RE teaching from Laura Dexter, Barbara Meaney and Thomas Kingsley-Jones with SACRE members.

Karen
Butler,
Laura
Dexter,
Barbara
Meaney and
Thomas
Kingsley-
Jones

Anthony Lewis supported the three aforementioned proposals, stating that he enjoyed sitting on multi-faith panels, having sat on some in Buckinghamshire and West London.

Thomas Kingsley-Jones agreed with the Chair's proposals, particularly the first one on the grounds that it was important for SACRE members to know each other and to build connections, elaborating that there would be little basis to the claim that teachers were advocating understanding of other people if they did not really know other SACRE members.

ACTIONS:

- SACRE members to identify an ideal time of year for a 'Worldviews Exhibition' to be held in the Borough and to make initial plans for this to take place. ALL
- The Chair to confer with colleagues in order to find a suitable venue and SACRE members to consider having a meal together, at that venue, after the next meeting on 4th March 2024. Karen Butler

(Barbara Meaney entered the meeting at 6:26pm)

14 Any Other Business

No additional business.

15 Dates Of Future Meetings

SACRE attendees noted the future meeting date:

- Monday 4th March 2024 at 5:00pm – Desborough College (college tour at 4:15pm)

AGREED SYLLABUS CONFERENCE

16 Welcome

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

17 Apologies for absence

As with the SACRE meeting, apologies were received from Clare Roberts (KS2 Teacher – Cheapside Primary School), David Saunders (Church of England), and Vanessa Alfred (Judaism).

By the time that the Agreed Syllabus Conference had started, apologies were also received from Ravinder Singh (Sikhism) and Councillor Coe.

18 Pan-Berkshire Hub/JASC - Developments

Anne Andrews, SACRE Advisor, reported that an RE Hubs meeting took place after the last SACRE meeting in September 2023 where she received feedback from the Christians in Groups A and B. From this feedback, she had written some minor modifications to the Agreed Syllabus and would share this in due course. She added that she had received little feedback on the questions in the Agreed Syllabus from non-Christian organisations. While she tried to use notes from the conversations surrounding this, she commented that most people on the SACRE Hub were not a very mixed group of people. With the exception of Ashpreet Singh Nainu (Chair of Slough SACRE), most SACRE chairs were “white British” and (at least, nominally) Christians. As a result, Anne Andrews received much feedback and interaction in regard to the questions on Christianity, while receiving little feedback from the other groups, hoping there could be some discussion on this during the current SACRE meeting.

Briefly reflecting on the feedback from teachers, Anne Andrews reported that teachers wanted to see how they could build something coherent from the syllabus so that it provided clear progression in content, skills and understanding. They also wanted the syllabus to be more streamlined so that it was clearer on what they were meant to teach, namely ensuring that it was precise and not too vague and was easily accessible. They also wondered whether there were too many questions and whether to divide the syllabus between compulsory and optional courses (though questions were raised on whether coherence was lost if teachers were given a choice).

Anne Andrews advised that SACRE needed to consider the syllabus proposals and discuss the questions. Afterwards, if there was time and with the Chair’s approval, she would then share some of amendments to the Christianity

section of the syllabus.

The Chair asked Anne Andrews to go through the syllabus proposals, through Zoom screenshare.

Starting with the section on Christianity at Key Stage 1, Anne Andrews informed meeting attendees that the feedback from Christian groups was that they wanted to see more emphasis on the big story of the Bible (i.e., how the Bible fitted together and became a story). For the time being, she suggested to leave this section unchanged.

Moving onto the recommendations for the next section on other faiths (namely Abrahamic and Dharmic faiths), Anne Andrews noted that she had used the current syllabus as the basis for the new one rather than making radical changes to the range of recommended religions because most schools did not want radical change. Therefore, her suggestion was that, alongside Christianity, schools could choose to focus on Judaism in one year, Islam in another year, and Sikhism in another year in each year group across Key Stage 1 and Lower Key Stage 1. However, there could be deliberation later on in regard to whether the study of each of the aforementioned religions should be assigned to a specific academic year group (e.g., Hindu Dharma in Year 2, Islam in Year 3 and Sikhism in Year 4).

Anne Andrews then asked SACRE members what they thought about the questions in the Pan-Berkshire syllabus proposals, namely whether they were applicable to each of the four religious traditions; and if so, what the content could be.

Anne Andrews mentioned that she received some feedback from a non-Hindu who believed that the subjects of focus with Hindu Dharma were incorrect. Going over the suggested Worldview questions, she asked SACRE members whether they were applicable for Judaism, Islam, Hindu Dharma and Sikhism:

- “WV1: What do [faith followers] believe about God and what symbols, artefacts or stories are used to express these ideas? (Theology)”
- “WV2: How do beliefs affect the way [faith followers] live in modern Britain? (Human and Social Science)”
- “WV3: What do [faith followers] believe about where the world came from? (Or how the world began?) (Philosophy)”

Anne Andrews also extended the question to other faiths which were not recommended in the syllabus, such as the Baha’i Faith or Humanism (if Worldview Question 1 was reworded slightly).

Anthony Lewis (Humanism) stated that he had sent comments regarding Humanism in the syllabus to Anne Andrews. She confirmed this but stated that they focused on the Key Stage 3 section of the syllabus and that she was asking a different question. Anthony Lewis then stated that it was important to teach at early stages that there was a variety of different origin stories and beliefs.

Anne Andrews then suggested that Worldview Question 3 could be adapted to cover any range of faiths, religions and traditions. Anthony Lewis agreed, stating that Humanists believed that reality was a natural place, with The Big Bang and evolution as the scientifically-based origin story. He mentioned that he had attended assemblies for 5-to-6-year-olds at schools where he would bring his dinosaur fossils along and the young children understood it and found it inspirational.

Referring to Anne Andrews's mention of the feedback from Christian groups on more focus on the narrative of the Bible, Thomas Kingsley-Jones (KS3 Teacher – Churchmead School) stated he liked those types of questions. He then suggested to add or weave these types of questions and vision into all religions and worldviews, namely the “big story” of the respective religion or worldview, believing that it was a helpful practice to hook together beliefs and practices.

Anne Andrews approved of Thomas Kingsley-Jones's comment, stating that she hoped to receive that type of comment from the conversations surrounding the syllabus. While needing to defer to those of a religion besides her own, she theorised that the “big story” of other religions may not be as coherent: while Christianity could be interpreted as having a core narrative, she wondered whether this applied to Judaism, Sikhism and Hindu Dharma.

Thomas Kingsley-Jones said this would be interesting to discover. While considering the first Worldview Question, he believed that it should ask what the overarching narrative or “big story” of the respective religion or worldview was so that it would open up discussions. Anne Andrews viewed this as helpful.

While believing that the idea of the “big story” would be really helpful, Margaret Smith (Quakers) observed that the questions related to Judaism focused on artefacts and Shabbat in contrast to the questions on Islam, Hindu Dharma and Sikhism which made references to God and symbolism. Mentioning that she had a Jewish background to some degree (though added that she was not seeking to speak for Judaism), Margaret Smith stated that Judaism included the origin of the one God, similarly to Christianity and Islam. From this, she wondered whether the questions focusing on Shabbat, artefacts and family life were slightly too peripheral compared to the main narratives.

Anne Andrews responded by saying that when she had discussions with Jewish people and asked them what they most wanted children to learn about Judaism, they tended to point to Shabbat and family life rather than understanding God in Judaism; though she added that she had spent much time with Liberal and Reform Jews. Nevertheless, she took on Margaret Smith's comment.

While understanding that family life and Shabbat were meaningful, Margaret Smith added that the question on Judaism could be more theological rather than being focused on artefacts.

Ila Gangotra (Hinduism) commented that there was usually too much focus on symbols in Hinduism, pointing out the importance of the Hindu trinity (Trimurti). She then mentioned that there was an organisation in the UK which was responsible for setting up the national curriculum in India, from pre-birth to adulthood. She wondered whether it was worth the Chair and Anne Andrews to have a discussion with them on the teaching of Hinduism, stating that they were experts in this area.

The Chair and Andrews agreed with the suggestion and requested for the contact details of this organisation. Ila Gangotra agreed to provide them.

ACTION: Ila Gangotra to provide the contact details of the organisation to the Chair and Anne Andrews to help formulate/amend the teaching of Hinduism in the syllabus. Ila Gangotra

There followed a detailed discussion on the Sikh faith.

While agreeing to ensure that faiths and worldviews were taught accurately with no misconceptions, from a Key Stage 1 perspective, Laura Dexter (KS1 Teacher – Furze Platt Infant School) explained that Judaism was introduced to Year 1 pupils at Furze Platt Infant with a focus around Shabbat because it made it relatable and reachable for young children, some who may have never experienced religion. Therefore, she argued, it was important to include artefacts to make teaching pictorial and concrete to make it accessible for children.

Michael Gammage (Baha'i Faith) made a couple of comments. Firstly, he mentioned that Anne Andrews suggested that the Bahai Faith may fit more naturally in Key Stage 4 and that she invited him to suggest some topics. Anne Andrews confirmed that she had received some comments from Michael Gammage though confessed that she had not looked at them yet due to focusing on the earlier stages of the syllabus.

Secondly, Michael Gammage commented that there should be a focus on diversity within religious traditions and worldviews as well as between them, believing that this was something that could not be left until Year 10. He pointed out that there were hundreds of plausible answers to religions believing in a certain subject, stating that it was a disservice to conceptualise everything as "being in a silo and unrelated to everything else".

Anne Andrews agreed, stating that diversity within religions and worldviews was a key area which needed to be included. This would include, for example, some Christians and Jews who believed in the Big Bang and those who did not. She hoped that this would be part of the methodology which teachers would build in with encouragement at every stage, and that understanding diversity would be one of the key areas that grows as children go through school. She added that "too much diversity" could not be taught to 5-year-olds but could nevertheless inform them that not everyone thinks in the same way.

Michael Gammage added that another important thread was the links between the religious faiths. For example, along with the story of Jesus in the Bible, the Quran also covered the story of Jesus (Isa), while the Baha'i writings also made some references relating to Jesus (some of which did not appear in the Bible or Quran). From this, Michael Gammage argued that these supposedly separate faiths were interlinked and interconnected in certain ways, and that this should be highlighted as well.

Anne Andrews replied that this was being built up to and was part of the theme of diversity in the syllabus. She requested for Michael Gammage's thoughts to be forwarded to her in an email.

ACTION: Michael Gammage to send over his comments to Anne Andrews on the Pan-Berkshire Syllabus.

Michael Gammage

Anne Andrews reiterated her request for feedback on the proposals of the Pan Berkshire syllabus in order for it to be finalised. She then noted that some Hub members proposed that a team of teachers wrote the syllabus while another member suggested that SACRE advisors should do it instead. From this, she asked SACRE members whether the teachers across the six SACREs in Berkshire (Slough, Wokingham, Bracknell Forest, Reading, West Berkshire and Windsor and Maidenhead) should be involved with the formulation of the syllabus, or rather this should be done by the RE advisors with the information and advice from SACRE members and communities; with SACREs having the

final word.

Revd. Vicci Davidson (Methodism) felt that it was important that the syllabus was deliverable, stating that education had dramatically changed since she attended school, namely the speed and depth in which pupils were taught. She stated that this needed to be a dual act whereby both SACRE advisors and teachers provided input, with the question being where these layers of input would be added to ensure that teachers understood what they needed to teach and ensure that the faiths and worldviews were accurately taught.

Anne Andrews responded that this was what she was seeking to do: having discussions with and then receive feedback from faith groups, and then feed these back into the syllabus proposals. However, the struggle she experienced was not receiving feedback and responses from the respective faith groups.

(Michael Gammage left the meeting at 6:57pm)

Laura Dexter wondered whether there was some key information which teachers should teach and ensured that it was accurate to ensure misconceptions did not happen. The Chair and Anne Andrews liked the suggestion.

Thomas Kingsley-Jones commented that a great aspect of SACRE was that it brought together two main pieces of expertise: religious people who knew about their faiths, and teachers of RE who knew how to teach religion in education. Essentially, it brought a link between both areas of expertise. He then said that it was vital for the syllabus that the expertise from the religious and worldview representatives filtered out the misconceptions and then the expertise from teachers shape the deliverance of the content.

19 Next steps

Anne Andrews conveyed the importance of the interaction between the ideas which the RE Hub and SACRE members put together and the individual SACREs with the faith representative members. She then sent out a plea: if anyone was a member of a worldview or faith community, whether they were a representative of that community or a member of SACRE from that faith, that they forward any feedback on the syllabus proposals. From there, she would then present a new syllabus proposal based on the feedback from all the SACREs which had met in the current term in early 2024.

20 Any Other Business

No additional business.

Before closing the meeting, the Chair wished everyone a wonderful Christmas and a Happy New Year.

21 Dates of future meetings

SACRE attendees noted the future meeting date:

- Monday 4th March 2024 at 5:00pm – Desborough College

The meeting, which began at 5.03 pm, ended at 7.07 pm