

SACRE (STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION)

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON 7 MARCH 2022 AT TIME NOT SPECIFIED

Committee Members Present

Group A

Catherine Jinkerson	Free Church
Beth Rowland	Free Church
Shira Solomons	Judaism
Shahid Younis	Islam

Group B

Linda Galpin	Church of England
Rev Philip Hobday	Church of England

Group C

Stephen Vegh	Chairperson Secondary RS Teacher
Julie Easton	Primary RE Teacher
Philippa Chan	Primary Headteacher
Samantha Lawless	Primary RE Teacher
Nick Barnett	Soulscape

Group D

Jackie Rance	Wokingham Borough Council
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Clerk to Sacre

Catharine Newport

LA Link / RE Advisor

Angela Hill and Emily Waddilove

1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chairman welcomed members and 2 new members who are joining us as part of Group C. Sam Lawless is a teacher from Shinfield St Mary's and has been an RE co-ordinator for 21 years, with experience helping at the University with their lectures in RE. And Nick Barnett, CEO of Soulscape – a Wokingham charity of 25 years who work in and with schools to create space for young people to deal with the issues that affect them.

Apologies were received from David Hare

2 MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting held on 29th November 2021 were proposed by Philippa Chan and seconded by Jackie Rance and Beth Rowland

3 MATTERS ARISING

Matters arising from the 29th November 2021 will be covered in the items on the agenda.

4 SPRING TERM 2022 - HOW ARE THINGS FOR WOKINGHAM SCHOOLS? - EMILY WADDILOVE

Last half term things were incredibly challenging in schools, and most Head Teachers and teachers would probably say that it was the most difficult half-term since the start of the pandemic. It was made particularly difficult because the Government's national messages were about declining infection rates, life returning to normal, the removal of Plan B, and the removal of mitigations in schools, and that was completely at odds with what was happening in schools where infection rates were soaring incredibly among staff and children. In the second half of January, there was nearly a 200% increase in infection rates in Wokingham schools, particularly in primary schools where there are hardly any children vaccinated. Primary children are not doing regular lateral flow tests in the same way that secondary pupils are being asked to. Of course, that level of staff and pupil absence causes huge disruption to learning. So, it was a real headache for school leaders to ensure they had adequate numbers of staff in school every day and two of our secondary schools, actually because of lack of staff, had to switch to remote learning in some year groups. Leaders were having to cover for absent colleagues rather than doing their normal leadership roles. Teachers were finding it incredibly difficult because they had up to 30% of their class absent at any one time. Morale was quite low. Staff were very aware that exams and primary assessments are all going ahead as normal this year; some children were anxious about that too. Thankfully, since half term, things appear to be much better in terms of infection rates, although we do get a daily email updating us all on the case numbers and today's shows a higher number of cases than we've had in previous days.

We had a discussion with head teachers at our meeting with them last week about the approach that they're taking this half term, particularly in primary schools where the children are still almost all unvaccinated. Many Head Teachers are thinking along the lines of how can we try to minimize infections in staff and children? Many schools are still not holding large events and in their messaging to parents, they are reminding them that, although the laws around the restrictions have gone, the guidance actually hasn't changed and the UK HSA have emphasized that the pandemic is not over. From April primary school children can be vaccinated. So, hopefully next term this will help things to improve, together with the better weather.

For now, schools are still being cautious to different degrees. Most are still continuing with having windows open, hand washing and more regular cleaning. Some schools may still be asking staff to take regular lateral flow tests, although schools are no longer being sent test kits.

There is a lot of tiredness among staff just from the length of time they've been dealing with the pandemic.

In terms of SACRE members visiting schools, we've been having discussions as a school improvement team about how to approach visiting schools going forward. Experts seem to be saying that COVID is not going to completely go away and probably at least for the next few years during the colder months of the year, infection levels will rise. Meetings with school colleagues can work well online. But some activities require us to visit schools in person. We may think in terms of doing those activities mostly in the summer term and the first half of the autumn term when infection rates are likely to be lower and it's easy to have windows open. SACRE members might want to think along those lines in terms of our visits to schools.

5 FINAL ANNUAL REPORT ON PREVIOUS ACADEMIC YEAR TO BE SHARED - ANGELA HILL

The final annual report has been emailed to members. It was discussed in draft form and agreed at the autumn meeting. Please feedback to Angela Hill or Emily Waddilove if you have any concerns regarding anything in the report.

Emily Waddilove is going to send the report to the design team at the local authority. Because it has been written very differently this year in accordance with the NASACRE framework and is not so appealing to readers, Emily will ask the design team to include pictures and make it look like our previous reports to engage with the various audiences.

6 DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND BUDGET - EMILY WADDILOVE AND ANGELA HILL

Budget- Emily Waddilove

We had a larger budget this year because we were able to carry forward some funding from last financial year. We have quite a lot of money left although not as much as it first appears because we have some outstanding invoices. After taking all of that into account we will have about £1600 left in the budget. We have been informed by our finance team that we will not be allowed to carry this forward. If we do not spend it by the end of March, it will be lost. There are several factors that have contributed to the surplus funding: a smaller request for funding from the hub than was anticipated; no travel expenses being required for Angela Hill; a shorter online Subject Leader training than was budgeted for; less funding being needed for Angela's work for the hub.

Comments made at a Secondary School network meeting in January indicated that teachers would welcome training to develop their subject knowledge in key stage 3, particularly for non-specialists. We sent out a survey and asked them to indicate which religion they felt they most needed subject knowledge. We only got 4 schools' responses, despite our reminders. Those 4 responses indicated they most wanted training on Worldviews followed by Buddhism, Sikhism and then Hinduism. The least wanted was Judaism and Islam. This was no surprise to us as most schools are teaching Judaism and Islam at GCSE level and would, therefore, have relevant materials for this.

Angela Hill and her colleagues at RE Today came up with a proposal for training and moved things around in their diaries to accommodate us so that we could spend the money by the end of March. We are bringing the proposal for the training to this meeting to get SACRE members' thoughts.

The proposal involves a training session for secondary schools on each of those four religions. We were concerned that, due to the short notice, it might not be possible for all the relevant secondary school colleagues to attend. We propose, therefore, that three of the sessions will be pre-recorded sessions which the staff could access whenever they have time. The Worldviews training is interactive and therefore needs to be done live.

These 4 sessions would cost £1600.

The proposal was discussed among SACRE members.

Shira Solomons suggested that the sessions be both live and recorded as this will ensure that the trainer knows the level of understanding and the specific questions these school colleagues have. Having live sessions also encourages colleagues to be actively involved

rather than putting off watching a recording at a later date, which they may never do. And finally, do a doodle poll to work out the most popular time and day to run the course.

Angela Hill's reply – Three of the sessions are going to be pre-recorded but we will give school colleagues the opportunity for a 'live' Q&A in the summer term. We have needed to take into account the prior commitments of Angela and her colleagues when planning the training programme.

Queries from Stephen Vegh:

- Have we sourced any other advisors to see if there are any alternatives?
- How much is each session? £400 per session seems steep.

Emily Waddilove and Angela Hill's reply –

- We have not approached any alternative training providers due to the time constraints
- RE Today would normally charge £450 per session but are charging £400 per session in this case. This would also cover the cost of the live Q&A later in the year. The standard charge for an RE advisor is £1,000 per day.

Samantha Lawless asked whether there would be resources to go along with the training that could be used to enhance the learning and shared with other colleagues?

Angela Hill's reply – yes, we always ensure that there are resources which teachers can use straight away in the classroom.

Beth Rowland has concerns about the budgeting as it would be better not to find out about a surplus at such a late stage in the financial year. She would be happy to help with the budgeting as she has accounting experience.

Emily Waddilove's reply - Help would be welcome. However, she isn't sure that this situation could have been avoided. The pandemic has made budgeting particularly difficult – for example, we budgeted for travel expenses for Angela Hill who would normally travel from Cardiff, but no travelling was needed. Because the budget is relatively small, it is a challenge to get it exactly right - we have to ensure we have allowed in the budget for funding that may be needed. Emily believes that in previous years there has been a surplus to some extent but that this has not always been picked up on until the end of the financial year when it has been too late to spend it.

Catherine Jinkerson –

- is there a reason why we cannot hold the SACRE meeting earlier in the year so we have more time to review the budget before the end of the financial year?
- Is there anything we can do to offer funding to schools directly, such as for travel costs for school visits to a mosque for example?

Stephen Vegh's reply - Giving money to schools is a great idea but there is not enough time now to do that.

Shira Solomon suggested that when doing the budget we have an agreed 'wish list' so that when we know we have surplus we know how to use it.

There was a majority vote in favour of the proposal for spending this surplus.

In terms of the timing of SACRE meetings, traditionally these take place on the second Monday after half term so that we are in sync with other Berkshire SACREs – this was thought to be helpful during the syllabus review process, and to support other hub work. It was agreed that it would be good to check with the hub whether this is still useful or whether we could move our meeting dates.

Development plan – Angela Hill

The development plan is in line with the budget and is for the financial year rather than academic year. I am currently looking ahead to the next financial year. If anyone has any suggestions for something we have not included in this year's plan, but they would like to see in next year's, please let me know to see if we can accommodate it.

Because SACRE member visits to schools have been difficult due to the pandemic we are thinking of including in next year's development plan networks and training under this heading: members' attendance at network meetings and training is a good alternative way for them to keep in touch with schools.

The NASACRE training sessions are valuable, but it has not always been possible for SACRE members to attend due to busy schedules. It would be great if SACRE members are able to attend the sessions, particularly the one coming up in June which is for new members.

We are still working closely with the Pan-Berkshire Hub – the syllabus review is ongoing.

We have done well to attract new members. We still have 4 vacancies – in Group A 2 vacancies for Christian denominations other than Church of England and 1 Buddhist, and in Group B 1 Church of England member. The best way to recruit is by word of mouth so we would appreciate members of SACRE helping to fill these vacancies by inviting their contacts.

Catherine Jinkerson volunteered to speak to Nick Hudson at Wokingham Baptist Church. Beth Rowland has volunteered to contact Churches Together in Woodley.

School training coming up which SACRE may wish to attend -

21st March Primary RE Subject Leader training 4pm – 5.30pm via Teams

29th March Primary Network Meeting 4pm – 5pm via Teams

Agenda will include talking teachers through the syllabus review survey questions. We will also be asking teachers for feedback on the free resources and autumn term training that SACRE provided. SACRE members may find this meeting interesting.

Anyone wishing to attend, contact catharine.newport@wokingham.gov.uk

ACTION: Beth Rowland and Emily Waddilove to work together on budget for 2022-23 and include a wish list.

ACTION: Emily Waddilove and Angela Hill to proceed with the proposal for the training for secondary school staff and send SACRE members **AND** Primary School colleagues a link to the training.

ACTION Everyone to contact Emily Waddilove with 'wish list' proposal if you have one

7 FEEDBACK FROM TEACHER NETWORKS AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES - ANGELA HILL

(Members were referred to the document in the agenda pack)

There only 2 events to report back to SACRE.

The Primary Network Meeting in the autumn term was a training session on RE in the early years foundation stage, led by Fiona Moss of RE Today. 21 teachers attended and 1 SACRE member. The session was about story, subject knowledge, creative strategies and examples of pupil's work. This session was well received with overwhelmingly positive feedback.

Secondly, the Secondary Teachers Network in January. Sadly, this was not well attended, with only 4 teachers at the meeting. However, the feedback was extremely positive - teachers felt the meeting was really useful. Sarah Whitethread from the Forest School had experience of going through Ofsted and gave us a lot of insights, and the teachers had the opportunity to ask her questions. We talked about future training needs and the subject knowledge issue was identified.

We believe we will be able to successfully build network meetings online with secondary teachers as we believe word is getting out that what we are providing is useful and valuable for the teachers and we are hoping numbers will increase.

8 SACRE PROJECTS - ANGELA HILL

Nothing to report – current projects are being undertaken through the hub.

9 BERKSHIRE SACRE HUB UPDATE - FEEDBACK FROM HUB MEETINGS - BETH ROWLAND

The main discussion at the recent meeting was around the syllabus review.

The survey return rate from teachers across the whole of the Berkshire authorities was only 57 reported returns: 17 from Wokingham, 17 from Bracknell and the rest were just spread around. This is likely to be because of exhaustion and frustration because of the pandemic and answering a survey from SACRE was not a high priority.

In light of this, SACREs are being asked whether it would be wise to defer the process of the syllabus review to allow teachers time to give their views.

Sam Lawless suggested that, as one of the teachers who completed the survey, the survey included tricky questions requiring the person completing it to look up other information and meant the survey could not be easily and quickly completed. It might be a good idea to look at that aspect.

Angela Hill agreed and stated that some of the results made it clear that some of the teachers were confused about which documents the survey related to. The average time to complete the survey was 18 minutes.

Angela Hill also pointed out that there is no obligation for Wokingham SACRE to partner up with the other SACREs. Wokingham can go its own way with its own syllabus.

Catherine Jinkerson added that from feedback from teachers who had filled it in, there needs to be clarity around syllabus vs scheme of work.

Philip suggested that bite-size videos supporting the syllabus would be very useful. Stephen agreed and said the suggestion would be taken back to the Hub as, although the Real People, Real Faith videos are very good, some are a bit lengthy.

Beth stated further films are planned and funding is available.

Link to the videos [HERE](#)

[Real People Real Faith \(natre.org.uk\)](http://natre.org.uk)

Shira suggested the new syllabus be online and hyper-linked to relevant videos and resources.

Angela Hill pointed out that, whilst she is a fan of hyper-links, these are known to move around, especially the BBC hyper-links, and also they can be hacked so teachers would need to be vigilant. Having said that, it would be good to make resources easily available and it should be considered when reviewing the syllabus.

Shahid suggested a SACRE YouTube channel for these resources. Stephen said this would be taken to the Hub for consideration.

Conclusion: Wokingham SACRE agrees with the suggestion to delay the review of the syllabus.

10 NATIONAL UPDATES RELATING TO EDUCATION AND RE - ANGELA HILL (Members were referred to the document in the agenda pack)

NATRE have been examining Ofsted inspection reports - not just those that relate to deep dives into RE, but those which mention RE at all or anything that is RE related. Please take a look at the links and consider what's going on in the national picture across England. We could start to think about how we can analyze the inspection reports for Wokingham schools. Monitoring Wokingham school Ofsted reports used to be done on a regular basis but hasn't been happening regularly – partly because there have been few inspections during the pandemic. We might want to think about monitoring inspection reports moving forward, to help the local authority to monitor standards.

A teacher survey was conducted via the NATRE Secondary school survey. There weren't very many respondents, but there is a link to some of the results. Some encouraging news and other not so encouraging content.

There has been no financial support from government for religious education, where other subjects have received significant amounts of money. There's a suggestion in the updates that perhaps SACRE could get involved by contacting their local MP. Perhaps this is something that individual SACRE members will consider doing by writing to their MPs and making them aware that there hasn't been any financial support for our subject.

Religion and worldviews Education – Training by NASACRE. Unfortunately, nobody from our SACRE was able to attend. Perhaps Worldviews needs to be on the agenda for the summer meeting as it is a big change in focus for RE. Steven agreed on behalf of SACRE that it should be added to the agenda.

Some competitions for schools to enter: the spirited arts competition, and the lessons that make a difference which is a blog competition.

There's some news about offers for a free Bible magazine to pupils.

Some websites have been relaunched and there are a number of revamped videos.

ACTION: Catharine to add 'Worldviews' to the agenda for the summer meeting

11 NASACRE UPDATES - ANGELA HILL

(Members were referred to the document in the agenda pack)

SACRE members are invited to attend the upcoming NASACRE AGM. It will be held in Birmingham on Monday 23rd of May and there's also the option to attend virtually, but you'll only see part of the conference.

The Local Area Network observes what is going on in SACREs and calls upon SACREs to make local links. Wokingham SACRE has strong links - with the local authority and faith communities and so on, as well as across the Berkshire local authorities. This is going to be discussed further at the NASACRE AGM in May.

Another item we think is appropriate for the summer agenda is the self-evaluation tool that NATRE are hoping SACREs might engage with. It is quite a detailed document. Its use is completely non-statutory. There might be parts of the self-evaluation framework that we want to use as a SACRE, or we might want to adopt the whole thing. It would be good to discuss this in the summer meeting if everyone is in agreement.

ACTION: Stephen Vegh, Beth Rowland and Angela Hill to discuss adding the Self-Evaluation Tool to the summer meeting agenda -Catharine Newport to include this in the draft agenda to prompt this discussion.

12 AOB

There was no AOB

13 DATES FOR NEXT MEETINGS

It was agreed that we should aim to have one face-to-face meeting in the summer and the other 2 meetings online. The face-to-face meeting could be a hybrid where it is possible to still participate in the meeting online if you are not able to attend in person.

Monday 20th June 2022 6.15pm –

Wokingham Borough Council Offices, David Hicks 1

Monday 7th November 2022 6.15pm – online in TEAMS

Monday 20th February 2023 6.15pm – online in TEAMS