

Agenda Item 3

SACRE (STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION)

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON 20 JUNE 2022 AT 6.15 PM

Committee Members Present

Group A

Catherine Jinkerson	Free Church
Beth Rowland	Free Church
Anju Sharma	Hinduism
Shira Solomons	Judaism

Group B

Linda Galpin	Church of England
Rev Philip Hobday	Church of England

Group C

Stephen Vegh	Chairperson Education Advisor
Julie Easton	Primary RE Teacher
Philippa Chan	Primary Headteacher
Samantha Lawless	Primary RE Teacher

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 2 new members. Nigel Harman, an Elder of Wycliffe Baptist Church representing the Free Church Group A and Cllr Adrian Mather who is replacing David Hare. We are very pleased that they have both chosen to join us.

Apologies were received from Nick Barnett and Shahid Younis.

2 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 7th March 2022 were proposed by Beth Rowland and seconded by Philippa Chan.

3 MATTERS ARISING

This will be dealt with as we go along.

4 SUMMER TERM 2022 - HOW ARE THINGS FOR WOKINGHAM SCHOOLS? - EW

Things have eased since last term with staff and pupil absences being less of an issue but we know that Covid is on the rise again nationally and some schools have reported a slight increase in absences.

Schools are operating more normally but some practices may have changed permanently since the pandemic. Some schools for example are keeping parent/teacher meetings online as these worked well from both sides. Some schools have kept staggered break-times and start-times and increased ventilation.

Most if not all covid restrictions have been lifted. Schools have gone back to having extra-curricular activities, trips & visits, whole school assemblies etc.

Schools seem busier than ever working hard to support children to recover from the effects of the pandemic in terms of their wellbeing, social skills and academic achievement, with the amount of face to face classroom time missed being now more fully realised. And of course, there has been an effect on the children's families over those pandemic years and now the cost of living crisis and other family pressures: these are all having an impact on children in schools.

There have been various reports recently looking at the impact of the pandemic on children in Schools. Some of the most significant areas of impact are young children's communication and language skills, and children's personal social and emotional development. Some Head Teachers have said that children are noticeably less mature than they would normally be. Children are showing increased levels of anxiety and less confidence and resilience. Of course children have gaps in their knowledge and skills, although there's a lot of progress being made in closing those gaps and, in some cases, children have got back to where schools would have expected them to be.

Schools are providing a lot of extra support at the moment to help children to catch up, and supporting their wellbeing. In some cases they are adapting the curriculum for all children in order to fill the gaps in their learning. There is Government support being provided to schools in the way of extra funding for example to support children via a national tutoring programme, although this isn't always easy to access. The tutoring program has had a lot complaints about the excessive amounts of bureaucracy around it, the lack of tutors being available and the quality of the tutors not necessarily always being good. So, many schools have decided to use their own staff for tutoring which can work out a lot better but of course that is additional work and effort for the school staff.

This summer's statutory assessment is happening which means primary school testing is happening for the first time since the pandemic. 'A' Levels and GCSE's are also happening currently in secondary schools and school staff have been working really hard to prepare children for those tests and exams.

A completely different thing that schools are having to deal with at the moment is new arrivals from other countries. Here in the South East of England, Wokingham and Reading are the two most popular boroughs for Hong Kong families to settle in so, for the last 18 months/2 years we've had a lot of families coming to the Borough from Hong Kong and that is continuing. In addition, more recently we have families from Ukraine coming to the Borough. The latest data tells us that over 100 households in Wokingham have volunteered to host Ukrainian families and so far 40 Ukrainian children have been placed in Wokingham schools but we're expecting a lot more in the coming months.

All of this means that there is quite a lot of pressure on school places in the Borough particularly in some year groups and some Head Teachers are admitting children over their admission number in order to offer those children a school place. Schools are working together to come up with solutions for how can they find school places for all these extra children and of course when schools do admit these children they have got to support their language needs and in many cases their wellbeing needs, especially if they've come from Ukraine.

In terms of LA officers working with schools we're finding in the school improvement team that we are getting quite a lot of teachers sending apologies for network meetings and training because there is so much going on at the moment meaning teachers simply cannot attend even though they want to get to everything. There is an awful lot of tiredness among staff from dealing with the impact of the pandemic.

Schools are now welcoming visitors. As a school improvement team we are now visiting schools in person where we need to but we are still meeting with teachers online where that works well, for example, our training and network meetings. Going forward, what some teachers seem to be saying to us is please carry on doing things online. Other teachers are saying please can we meet face to face. Some are saying we'd like a mixture so it is really hard to know in practice what to do but it will probably be a mixture. Therefore, in conversation with Angela about the SACRE development plan going forward, we are thinking we will offer schools a mixture of online and in person sessions. Our training and network meetings will probably continue to be online with just a few face to face. And maybe, as we have agreed for our SACRE meetings, we will have face to face sessions in the summer months and online for the rest of the year.

5 DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND BUDGET UPDATES - EW AND AH

Budget update [EW] – please refer to page 13 of the agenda pack.

This is just a quick update on the end of the last financial year - the blue font shows the things we've spent money on since our last SACRE meeting in March where we had a discussion about how to spend some additional money that we had left in the budget. We put forward a proposal of offering our secondary schools a programme of training which SACRE members approved. So, on that basis, secondary schools have been offered one training session that took place live on zoom and then three recorded training sessions that they have been able to access whenever they like. Coming up this week, Angela and her colleagues are offering a Q&A session to follow up on the live and recorded sessions. Altogether we spent £1800 on this which, added to Angela's invoice for her consultation time, brought our end of year spending to £9409. Just £191 short of our budget allocation of £9600.

Draft budget plan for this current financial year – please refer to page 15 of the agenda pack.

This year's draft budget plan includes most of the things that are usually included. To avoid being in the same position as last year where we had surplus right near the end of the financial year, Emily has tried to be really forensic by working out exactly what we are going to spend. That has been made easier by the fact that we already know what will be online and what will be face to face and, of course online means we do not have to budget for travel costs and refreshments.

Our budget allocation this year is as usual £6800. We didn't carry forward any from last year like we did previously and our budget plan, as things stand, adds up to a total of

£6670. We have £130 that we haven't budgeted for yet which we could either decide to budget for or we could leave it as contingency funding depending on what people want to do.

Just to note, the syllabus review should have taken place next year but has been deferred to 2023/2024 so we will need to request a slightly higher budget in that year to take account of the additional costs.

The final budget document – page 17 of the agenda pack - documents the small sums that we have spent so far to date this financial year. It does not include Angela's summer term invoice as she invoices us termly.

Stephen asked whether we do anything for Early Years. Angela replied that, last year, we had a network meeting with early years focus and training provided by Fiona Moss. This was well received and is something we are looking at developing in the near future.

Development Plan [AH] – please see page 19 of the agenda pack.

Angela highlighted a few items as follows:

A CORE BUSINESS Action 3 It has been very difficult for members to visit schools as before but that may be possible in the coming months. This would enable members to see what is going on in classrooms and collective assemblies. In addition, we have noted another way for members to engage with schools - by attending online network meetings as observers.

Stephen pointed out the typo in the 'Actions' box, it reads 2019-20 instead of 2022-23

B. To support teachers of RE ... Action 1

We have surveyed teachers and listened to what they have to say in respect of their needs for training and we will continue to be flexible and offer what they need.

Instead of 3 network meetings for Primary, we have included 2 Primary network meetings, 2 Secondary network meetings and 1 Primary & Secondary network meeting. The latter has proved incredibly useful in recent years as it has enabled colleagues to come together on areas like transition and the conceptual understanding project and see them from a different perspective.

In terms of the hub projects.....There is no appetite at the moment for the syllabus to change but we have picked up on the fact that some teachers do not fully understand what the current syllabus is and its place within their teaching practice. There is a meeting planned for the pan-Berkshire hub which will be held online on 14th July 2022. There will be more news on the syllabus review after that meeting.

The 'Real People Real Faith' project is ongoing with more films being made with different faith communities and also with humanists across Berkshire. These have been well received by teachers and can be access via the NATRE website.

Sam Lawless attended one of the subject knowledge training sessions for secondary schools and, speaking as a Primary RE Teacher, found it incredibly useful and would encourage other SACRE members to access the recordings and to attend future training sessions.

Angela found that comment very encouraging and reminded us that all that network meetings are open to both Primary and Secondary teachers as well as SACRE members and we try to ensure that all meetings are advertised to all. Angela and Emily are working on a one page flyer with all of the training and network opportunities for next academic year included so that teachers know what is available and can plan their diaries.

Catherine asked whether 'getting ready for the syllabus review' could be included in the network meetings so that teachers understand that the pan-Berkshire syllabus underpins any other schemes that might be used. Angela agreed that it is important to ensure that all RE teachers fully understand this, and this can be included in network meetings.

Stephen reminded us that with regards to membership we are a couple of members down in Group B and need a Buddhist member to join Group A. As always the best way to recruit is by personal connection/invite so please think if there is anyone you know who could join these categories.

Stephen explained for new members that we have a statutory duty to review the syllabus every 5 years and make appropriate changes based on local needs. This should have been done for 2022 but due to the pandemic we have deferred it to September 2023 with a view to having it ready for September 2024. This will then last for 5 years and will be reviewed again in 2029. Beth further explained that we work together with the 'Hub', which is a group consisting of all Berkshire SACRES, on the syllabus. This enables us to share costs because it takes a lot of hours and is therefore quite costly financially. The Hub meets termly and either Stephen, Beth or Angela attend the meetings. Apart from sharing the costs it also ensures that all the schools in Berkshire are working with the same syllabus. The Hub also feeds back information into NASACRE. Stephen thanked Angela for attending every hub meeting and for championing Wokingham.

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

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

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. COMPLETE

6 FEEDBACK FROM TEACHER NETWORKS AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES - AH

Please refer to page 23 of the agenda pack

Teacher networks have been positively received and quite well attended. Not so well attended by secondary schools but there are fewer of them. The Primary subject leader training happened on 21st March 2022. The only negative feedback was from a teacher who felt it would have been much more helpful to have had the training in September rather than struggling to manage until March. We have, therefore, taken that on board, and will run the next Primary subject leader training on 22nd September 2022.

SACRE members are welcome to come along to St Crispins on Wednesday 29th June at 4pm for our first face to face Primary & Secondary RE network meeting. Please let Catharine Newport know if you would like to come.

Emily advised that school staff were asked to respond to a School Improvement team survey. This included questions about support for RE teachers in terms of network meetings and training. Schools had the option of saying the support exceeded expectations, met expectations, or was below expectations. We had twenty-two respondents who had attended some form of RE support. Of those twenty-two, ten said it exceeded their expectations, ten said it met their expectations and two said below expectations. Throughout the survey, there were one or two people who responded with 'below' and unfortunately, they didn't give a comment so we don't know why. It could be that the meetings were at a time that didn't suit them for example or that they would have liked them to be in person when they were online, rather than any issue with the quality of the meeting. So, we have no idea why they those two said below but still it means 90% said we either met or exceeded their expectations which is really positive.

7 SACRE PROJECTS - EW

We have updated the SACRE leaflet which is on our website and explains who we are and what we do. It is updated once a year and, because it includes names of current members, becomes out of date almost immediately! This new leaflet is attached.

Stephen was reminded from the content of the leaflet that the 'Crossing the Bridges' project may have fallen by the wayside since covid and suggested that he, Angela and Beth take it to the Hub and relaunch it.

Catherine mentioned that her experience recently showed, encouragingly, that the 'Crossing the Bridges' project had not been completely forgotten. She was reminded that she had heard a comment several years ago that the cover of the SACRE leaflet did not have a symbol for Christianity, just a building. Stephen agreed that it would be good, in the interests of equity, for Emily to review this.

Shira pointed out that for many schools visiting places of worship is a time consuming and costly activity and that many have said they would welcome the opportunity to do it online instead. It may be worth looking at how many places of worship can accommodate this. Stephen agreed and said this should be mentioned at the Hub as well.

Action: Stephen relaunch 'crossing bridges' at the hub and the issue of whether places of worship are set up for 'online visits'.

Action: Emily to review the pictures on the cover of the SACRE leaflet regarding the missing symbol for Christianity.

8 BERKSHIRE SACRES HUB UPDATE - FEEDBACK FROM HUB MEETINGS INCLUDING SYLLABUS REVIEW PLANS - AH

No further updates from the hub at the moment

Beth just wanted to highlight to new members the 'Real People Real Faith' films which can be found here.

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

These videos can be used by teachers in the classroom for children to find out more about a particular faith.

9 WORLDVIEWS - AH WORLDVIEWS

In 2018 the RE report made lots of recommendations. One of those being to not limit discussion to the big six religions but to broaden it and change the name of religious education to religion and worldviews. That hasn't happened and nothing from that report has become statutory but it's been massively influential to thinking around our RE curriculum.

Definition of Worldviews

'A worldview is a person's way of understanding, experiencing and responding to the world. It can be described as a philosophy of life or an approach to life. This includes how a person understands the nature of reality and their own place in the world. A person's worldview is likely to influence and be influenced by their beliefs, values, behaviors, experiences, identities and commitments.'

Angela played a video 'Nobody Stands Nowhere' which encapsulates a lot of the thinking around the commission's recommendations on RE.

The video can be found here [Nobody Stands Nowhere - Theos Think Tank - Understanding faith. Enriching society.](#)

Shifting to world view reflects society which is less religious than it once was and is also more inclusive, encouraging people to realise that everyone believes something. This would mean that RE is more inclusive and perhaps more relevant.

The topic of Religion and Worldviews is messy to say the least and, whilst there has been a great deal of thinking behind it, there is no firm consensus of what it is. But, it encourages us to recognise the messiness of human experience and the complexity of belief and the interchange between different religions and worldviews, ideas and ideologies and encourages us to celebrate the messiness. And this needs to be considered when we look at the new curriculum.

You will see from the diagram in the slides that there are opportunities as well as threats in shifting to the religion and worldview paradigm. One negative aspect is that there is too much subjectivity in relation to what you include or exclude from the topic. Ofsted are keen to see that schools have prepared pupils well for life in a multi-religious multi-secular world where worldviews are complex with people perhaps holding multi views and faiths at the same time.

Draft Handbook on Religion and Worldviews in the Classroom: Developing a worldviews approach - See handouts from page 58 -69 in the Agenda pack.

As part of a three-year Worldviews project , the RE Council of England and Wales (REC) has published a draft Handbook for Religion and Worldviews in the Classroom.

The Draft Handbook sets out a rationale for a religion and worldviews approach, building on the developments since the 2018 Commission report. It incorporates a revised **National Statement of Entitlement (NSE)**, which gives a clear description of an education in religion and worldviews, and sets a benchmark for high-quality teaching and learning. The Handbook then offers practical guidance, including how to use the NSE to develop a syllabus or curriculum, applying ways of knowing, developing pupils' personal worldviews, and what progress looks like in a worldviews approach.

We will aim to look at this in more detail at our next meeting.

Anju asked whether the curriculum would need to be changed in line with this. Angela advised that at the moment, this is just something for us to be aware of, that this is the current thinking and that it will probably be relevant when we look at reviewing the syllabus next year.

Shira commented that she has misgivings about it as, for example, Judaism is not a worldview but a way of life, a culture, an identity, a history, whereas the term 'Worldview' seems focus on individualism. Angela pointed out that, whilst she had only been able to give a taster to the topic this evening, Shira's views highlight the complexity and the need for wider discussion.

ACTION Here is a link to the Draft Handbook. Could everyone please read it and come to the next meeting prepared with views and comments.

10 NATIONAL UPDATES RELATING TO EDUCATION AND RE - AH

Please refer to pages 25 – 30 in the Agenda pack

Just to highlight a couple of items.

The report card on RS is interesting. Just a quick glance shows the picture of RE over the last five years with some good news as well as some concerning trends. You can also see that no money has been spent on RE by the Government whereas other subjects have enjoyed quite a lot of investment. However, RE entries for the GCSE full course are on the up so it seems RE is recovering from lack of inclusion but there is also a lot of work to be done in terms of resourcing specialist teachers for RE as well as allocating a decent amount of time on the curriculum. It does seem, from Ofsted inspection reports, that these issues are being addressed. An RE Today colleague has reviewed some Ofsted reports and it is becoming clear that Ofsted are holding schools to account if there isn't equal time allocated for RE in relation to other humanities subjects. This is really encouraging.

We've already covered the Draft Handbook on Religion and Worldviews but it would be really good if everyone could try and engage with that and come to a SACRE meeting with questions.

NASACRE have online training available and, as we are paid up members, you will receive updates of that training from Catharine. We recommend, if you have the time, that you sign up for some of them as they are very good.

Those of you who are teaching, if you can, just keep promoting and plugging the NATRE Spirited Arts 2022 competition.

ACTION Share entries from Wokingham Schools at next meeting.

The University of Edinburgh training on Buddhism is very valuable and free to access. Really handy if you are teaching about Buddhism in Key stage 3 to Key stage 5. It is written and presented by academics.

11 NASACRE UPDATES AND FEEDBACK FROM NASACRE CONFERENCE / AGM - AH

The NASACRE Annual Conference took place online on Monday 23rd May 2022 and the slides from that conference are included in the agenda pack pages 31- 69.

The main focus of the conference was really about how SACREs can be ambitious, what they can do to make sure that they are working in ways that gets RE in front of pupils in schools, how SACREs can overcome challenges like underfunding or lack of members. There were lots of discussions around Worldviews and all in all it was a most valuable conference. A summary of the meeting is attached.

12 SELF-EVALUATION TOOL DISCUSSION

There was an action from the previous meeting for Stephen, Beth and Angela to get together to discuss this. Due to time and work pressures, this has not happened.

Angela explained to the committee that NASACRE have come up with a self-evaluation tool to help SACREs be introspective and look at what they are doing well, what needs to be improved and identify areas where they may need some support.

The tool is very lengthy and detailed and will require a lot of time and effort either from SACRE members, which is asking a lot of members, or from Angela which will incur a charge. Angela and Emily have had a brief discussion and agreed that there may be some benefit to using some sections of the tool but it will need to be agreed which areas to include and which to leave out. There is no statutory requirement to use any of it so we should only do it if we see it as a benefit to ourselves vs the amount of time and effort to do it.

Catherine Jinkerson suggested that, as everyone on the SACRE committee have volunteered to be on it, it would be good if everyone could review the tool and recommend areas which may be of benefit and feedback so that Stephen, Beth and Angela can see if there is any commonality.

Adrian Mather suggested discussing it with other SACREs as a way of self-checking and measuring ourselves against their activities.

ACTION: Everyone to review the tool and feedback suggestions to Catharine Newport by 3rd October 2022 to enable discussion at the next SACRE meeting.

ACTION: Angela Hill to share and compare our use of the tool with other SACREs at the Hub.

13 AOB

This is Rev Philip Hobday's last meeting and we are very sad to see him go and will miss his calm presence at our meetings. Thank you Philip for your commitment to Wokingham SACRE, we wish you every success in your new role in Wakefield.

14 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

Monday 7th November 2022 6.15pm – online in TEAMS; Monday 20th February 2023 6.15pm – online in TEAMS; June 2023 date tbc

Part 2

In 'part 2' of the meeting (confidential matters), Stephen updated members on his thinking regarding previously discussed actions in relation to RS provision in our secondary schools.

