

The Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)

Minutes of the Meeting on 9th March 2015

Present:	Group A: Catherine Jinkerson, Christine Morgan, Anju Sharma, Dr Shira Lewin Solomons, Kathy Turner
	Group B: Rev Lisa Cornwell, Jo Fageant, Rev Patrick King
	Group C: Sue Cresswell, Michael Freeman, Lesley Green, Stephen Vegh
	Group D Cllr David Lee, Cllr Beth Rowland
Clerk to the SACRE:	Anne Coffey
R.E. Consultant to the SACRE:	Jan Lever
Apologies:	Group A Sukhdev Bansal Group C Nigel Matthias
Not present:	Shahid Younis

1. WELCOME and APOLOGIES :

Michael welcomed everyone. Apologies were received from Sukhdev Bansal and Nigel Matthias (new member); both were ill.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR:

The meeting was quorate. There were representatives from each group present. Beth left the room. Anne asked for nominations for Vice-Chair: Lisa nominated Beth, Stephen seconded and no other nominations were received. It was unanimously agreed by all present, so Beth was re-elected.

3. FORMAL APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF LAST MEETING:

The Minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting on Monday 10th November.

4. MATTERS ARISING

4.1 Inviting Buddhist member: Michael has been busy so this is held over until after Easter, when he will write to the Buddhists regarding a representative joining the SACRE in the autumn. There is a link already as last year's trip to places of worship included the Buddhist temple where teachers were made very welcome. The Buddhists may not realise that it was the SACRE that was responsible for the visit. **ACTION: Michael to write to the Buddhists after Easter.**

4.2 Images from Sonning CofE Primary School for website: Lesley advised Anne that Sally had left Sonning and was now at All Saints. Lesley will contact her. **ACTION: Lesley to chase Sally re CD images for SACRE webpage.**

4.3 SACRE publicity flier: Michael had been approached by clerics and librarians asking for publicity material for display in churches and libraries.

Information could also go in parish magazines. David suggested that Michael talk again to the Borough Council.

4.4 Michael to write to Cllr Lee re Annual Report. Michael expressed his wish to be present when the annual report is presented to full council, but David suggested a better opportunity would be to present it to the two smaller groups (representing the two main political parties) which meet beforehand. David has a contact name he can advise Michael, who can liaise with him and Beth regarding the procedure. ***ACTION: David to advise Michael of contact details.***

4.5 NASACRE news (held over from last meeting): SACRE briefing 7 from NASACRE (sent out recently) has very good information. There is guidance on what should go in SACRE annual reports; Michael has sub-edited the annual report and Jan will add an item about exam results (Michael will also add a comment on the results in the Chair's foreword), which Emily Waddilove has collated because they need to be included. The briefing also has a suggestion for replying to the Lord Nash letter. Collective Worship needs to be addressed.

5. PRESENTATION: RE IN CHURCH SCHOOLS:

Patrick gave a very good summary of the recent publication 'Making a Difference? A Review of Religious Education in Church of England Schools', commissioned by the Church of England. Members who had read the report considered that the findings were obvious. It was agreed that there was little difference between this report and the Ofsted 2013 report 'Realising the Potential'. Patrick explained that his involvement in schools was limited to collective worship at Hawthorns Primary School and reception classes at Wheatfield and Windmill free schools. He thinks that schools do well with the current pan-Berkshire Agreed Syllabus. Jo has written a diocesan response explaining that the situation in church schools across the Oxford diocese is not as the report suggests. [SIAMS](#) (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) reports a very high quality RE education in this area, e.g. at Sonning Primary School. Lesley believes primary age children can be excited by R.E. by using a cross-curricular approach. Patrick has experienced governor meetings where parents' main concerns for young children are focused solely on a possible careers and earning potential.

Critical thinking and the arts are in danger of being pushed aside. Stephen spoke of the new GCSE and A levels coming through and how they will affect R.E. education, which will be more fact-based with less critical thinking. David asked who set the exams as he felt teachers need to do something if they do not agree with changes. Jo said that the R.E. Council of England and Wales contributed to exam syllabus development and teaching representatives were also involved. If there are concerns about radicalisation, Shira pointed out that a proper questioning approach to RE goes against extremism. Jo commented that unless there is a sub-committee keeping an eye on things, the SACRE cannot do much – especially with only 3 meetings per year. David suggested that as he and Beth are kept informed they could update Michael via Emily or Anne. Jo thinks that changes have been done in a panic, post-Birmingham. Stephen informed the group that the new GCSEs would have to be taught from September 2016. He hopes he will have more information to bring to the June meeting. **Michael stressed the importance of all members reading all published documents, but Shira suggested that this task should be shared amongst members.** David suggested that Michael writes to NASACRE regarding new exam syllabuses. ***ACTION: Michael to consider Shira's suggestion. ACTION: Michael to write to NASACRE***

6. PAN-BERKSHIRE HUB: the way forward (06/02/2015):

As a result of the summer conference, there have been two meetings of the six chairs of the six Berkshire SACREs together with Jo and Jan. Relationships have been consolidated and there is a willingness to work together. Lots of ideas have been put forward and common ground established as well as priorities. Priorities are as follows:-

6.1 Enabling schools to visit places of worship and build relationships with those communities. There is scope for improvement here; communities could make visits more interactive and linked to the syllabus.

6.2 For the benefit of teachers, schools and children, putting together training opportunities for communities regarding visits to places of worship; good practice is already happening. How can it be increased? How can it be evaluated after a visit?

6.3 Alternatively, visitors from the various faith communities could come into schools.

6.4 [Culham St Gabriel's](#) (a charitable trust supporting R.E.) invited bids for grants. Jo submitted a bid on behalf of the new pan-Berkshire hub for funding training sessions for faith community representatives. The aim of this is to enable more visits to places of worship and for these to make a more dynamic impact on children's R.E. learning. The bid was returned to Jo with suggestions for emendations. Following this Jo re-submitted the bid. Jo thinks the charity might question the bid as she has the impression that they do not think this should be done by SACREs. Jo is hoping the bid will pass the first round for it will then go to the Trustees of which Jo is one, and she will be able to argue the case from the inside. Jan has had very positive outcomes from the hub meetings and believes that the six chairs coming together is a positive step forward. The photographer Jan employs has attended visits in East Berkshire and will produce teaching resources for distribution to schools as a result. Catherine suggested using feedback forms so the visits can be developed. Jo agreed that this had been included in hub ideas. Also, the six SACREs had agreed they want another joint SACREs conference but to invite teachers as well. Jo offered 3 dates and the date decided on was the 15th June.

7. WESSEX JOINT SACRE HUB:

This covers mainly South Central and South East areas and is run by Hampshire. Jan or one of her team attend and report back to the SACRE. The Wessex hub is going in a different direction to Berkshire. Jan has notes from the meeting and will send them to Anne for distribution. There is also information about the hub in the latest SACRE briefing, no. 7. ***ACTION: Jan to send notes on Wessex hub to Anne for distribution.***

8. DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND BUDGET PROGRESS:

This is the last meeting for the current development plan. Stephen queried the cost of venue and refreshments in the cost column but this has been dramatically reduced by the kind offer of Piggott School as a venue FOC, and refreshments kindly purchased by Sue on behalf of the SACRE. Jan reported that there had been about 30 teachers attending the 2 CPD trips. The secondary conference replaced the February secondary network meeting and Stephen queried whether we could afford to continue with the secondary network meetings as they are poorly attended. Jan referred to the current budget and that WBC is very supportive. However, this coming financial year the SACRE budget is reduced to £5,800. (It was previously higher to reflect the work on the revised syllabus). This is still good considering the current financial climate but we do need to think about the coming year's action plan and be mindful of what schools want as well as any issues they have.

8.1 Primary network meeting (10/02/2015): members had received Jan's notes of the network meeting via email.

8.2 Secondary RE Conference (23/02/2015): Michael and Jan were unable to attend the Federation Inset Day Joint Wokingham/Reading Secondary Teachers' R.E. Conference so Stephen reported to members on the R.E. sessions. Alan Brine was the keynote speaker for the first session. The topic was supposed to be 'Life After Levels' but it did not relate to the syllabus. Stephen was disappointed because it was mostly about data and observing teachers, although there were some interesting points about religion and philosophy/ethics. Alan Brine expressed a view that teachers should feel able to deviate from the Agreed Syllabus. The second session was quite useful and Stephen would have liked it to be longer, covering philosophy for children. The third session was a presentation by Jane Turner of Soulscape, who presented to the SACRE in November; but Stephen felt it to be more of a sales pitch, with very little observation of other faiths. This was perhaps not suitable for Waingels. Overall he felt the day had some good elements and some not so useful.

8.3 Jan passed round the proposed budget plan for 2015-2016. The statutory obligations are grouped together and below them are listed suggestions for what else could be done. Jan will need to make a new action plan based on what is needed. She advised that primary schools still ask about resources such as artefacts, and would like teaching and learning activities. Stephen suggested primary teachers visit secondary schools; it was agreed that there could be a primary/secondary exchange. Primary teachers' biggest concern is how to assess children's learning in R.E. Jan asked what next year's plan should look like; Stephen suggested supporting the secondary conference; Jo said publishers could have a display at the joint SACREs conference at Easthampstead Park and delegates could view Bracknell Forest Council's artefacts before the conference. David suggested putting in a request to WBC for £5,000 additional budget to meet obligations referred to in Lord Nash's letter, e.g. Collective Worship and the future new Revised Syllabus, which cannot realistically be covered within the parameters of the new development plan as currently budgeted. Michael will be drafting a letter to Lord Nash for approval by members before sending. ***ACTION: David indicated that he would propose to WBC the need for a substantial increase in the budget to cover additional work on these statutory requests.***

9. LORD NASH LETTER:

Because of the shortage of time this item was not discussed. Instead, members have entrusted Michael to draft a response which will be copied to them for approval. ***ACTION: Michael to draft a response to the letter.***

10. R.E. TRAIL:

Michael raised this after item 6). Helen Currie (ex-LA Officer to the SACRE) created the R.E. Trail aimed at Key Stage 2 children as a resource for schools and it is available on the [Wokingham Schools Hub](#). It covers churches within Wokingham town so is a walkable tour. It was launched to schools and received media coverage and has been promoted by Jan at network meetings as well as Helen Currie attending meetings to promote it. However, it is up to schools to arrange themselves and there is no linkage between churches; also, teachers say that they do not have time. Hence there has been no take-up of the resource. Michael thought it could be promoted to governors. Jo referred to West Berks which has R.E. trails on an interactive [website](#); she suggested we have a look at <http://retrailsforwestberks.net/> ***ACTION: ALL to check out the West Berks***

website about RE trails. ACTION: Michael to propose a plan for development of the Wokingham R.E. Trail.

11. A VISION FOR THE SACRE 2015 – 2020:

Michael says we need to look three or four years ahead, beginning with calling Conference regarding the future Revised Syllabus in January/February 2016, because the review has to begin within five years of the last one (which was launched in June 2012). He suggested that he meets with Beth and Jan to discuss the development plan and the next five years. Anju pointed out that the revised syllabus will have to reflect the new exams. **ACTION: Michael, Jan and Beth to arrange a meeting re future developments and a draft of the 'Vision for the SACRE'.**

12. NEWS FROM MEMBERS.

Anju passed on information from Sukhdev about the **Nagar Kirtan for Reading and Wokingham on Sunday 3rd May**. It is a procession from one Gurdwara to another and is a free family event watched by thousands of people annually. **ACTION: Anju to pass information to Anne for distribution by email.**

13. DATES/VENUES AND PROTOCOLS FOR NEXT MEETINGS:

8th June is fixed; later meetings cannot be decided yet as WBC's meeting schedule has not yet been published. The venue for meetings 2015 – 2016 will be discussed at the 8th June meeting.

14. AOB:

14.1 Michael proposed that all papers relevant to SACRE meetings be distributed two weeks beforehand to allow plenty of reading time for members.

14.2 Michael suggested that we hold the November meeting sooner, i.e. in October, as then meetings would be equidistant. Care must be taken not to clash with religious festivals or WBC meetings, so it was suggested that members come to the next meeting with a note of which October dates they are unable to attend. **ACTION: ALL to remember to bring dates.**

14.3 David asked Michael for confirmation that he and Beth should submit the request for additional funding as there was a council meeting on Thursday at which they could raise the issue. Everyone agreed to this.

Jo's retirement gift. Michael gave a thank-you speech for all Jo's hard work for the SACRE over the years. The group had contributed to the purchase of a Dartington Crystal bowl and vase from the Glitz range as a leaving gift, which Michael presented to her. Jo is retiring from her role at NASACRE and the Diocese but will remain as adviser to the Slough and West Berkshire SACREs. She will continue as an inspector for S.I.A.M.S. and as a trustee of Culham St Gabriel's.

The meeting closed at 9pm.