

Minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2014 (17.30 – 19.30)

Present: Group A – Christian, Other Faiths & Beliefs

Peter Kendrick (PK) – Chair

William Doris (WD)

Mike Freedman (MF)

Audrey King (AK)

Saleem Sheikh (SS)

Group B – Church of England

None

Group C – Teacher Associations

Kaye Seamer (KSe)

Group D – Local Authority

Cllr Imran Uddin (IU)

Co-opted

Asad Malik (AM)

LA Adviser

Keith Shipman (KSh) – Merton Education Inclusion Manager

Others

Rachel Clarke (RC)

Kate Saksena (KSa) – Local Authority Director's Representative

Leo Hanmer (Minute taker)

Note: This meeting was not quorate as there was no representative from Group B

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1 Apologies for absence

Received from:

Cllr Laxmi Attawar

Cllr Gilli Lewis-Lavender

Lilian Zwarts

2 Introductions and update re clerking

The Chair thanked KSe for inviting SACRE to hold this meeting at Beecholme Primary

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<p>School, and also for providing members with a very interesting pre-meeting briefing on how RE is promoted within the school.</p> <p>He welcomed new SACRE members Asad Malik (Co-opted), representing the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association, and Cllr Imran Uddin, representing the local authority, to the meeting. He also welcomed Rachel Clarke who had been appointed by SACRE's sub-committee to revise Merton's agreed RE syllabus; and explained that in the absence of a Clerk Leo Hanmer had agreed to attend the meeting and take the minutes, with a view to possibly taking over the Clerk role from Penny Garry.</p> <p>All present introduced themselves in a "tour de table".</p>	
<p>3 Minutes and Matters Arising The minutes were agreed.</p>	
<p><u>Matters arising</u></p>	
<p>a <u>Item 2 - Apologies for absence</u>: It was noted that for a second successive time the meeting was not quorate. For the benefit of the new members PK explained that to secure a quorum representation was required from each of the 4 groups A-D. PK undertook to contact the Church of England (Group B) to confirm details of their representatives and to discuss attendance.</p>	PK
<p>In addition to issues around non-attendance there were also a number of vacancies. AK reported that she had been taking steps to try to recruit a representative from the Hindu Community. Efforts were also being made to try to recruit a new representative from the Sikh community as Mr Singh had now retired.</p>	
<p>b <u>Item 8 – Schools Places of Worship</u> booklet: Action to send the questionnaire to places of worship with the added question "Are you able to offer training to teachers at your facility and/or at schools?" was ongoing. PK explained that the purpose of the booklet was to provide information to schools about which places of worship welcomed visits by school groups. It was agreed that it would also be helpful if recipients of the questionnaire could provide information about their facilities, dress codes and contact details.</p>	PK
<p>AM offered to complete a form on behalf of the Baitul Futuh Mosque in Morden. He also said that he would be very happy to host a future SACRE meeting at the Mosque and would lay on a tour.</p>	AM
<p>c <u>Item 8 – RE Consultant offering training</u>: KSh confirmed that Penny Smith-Orr was available to offer training within Merton.</p>	
<p>d <u>Item 9 – RE Quality Mark</u>: It was agreed that this should be an agenda item for the next meeting. For the benefit of new members KSh explained that the quality mark was a form of accreditation developed by the Religious Education Council with the aim of improving RE in schools.</p>	Feb 2015
<p>4 Update on teachers refreshing the agreed syllabus PK explained for the benefit of new members that there was no statutory National Curriculum for RE. Instead it was mandatory for each local authority to produce an Agreed Syllabus.</p> <p>KSh reported that two teachers had been appointed to help with the revision and</p>	

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updating of the Agreed Syllabus, which dated back to 2008. The review of KS1 and KS2 content was well underway, but the secondary teacher who was going to deal with the KS3 and KS4 content had had to withdraw for personal reasons and those sections had barely been touched. An approach had been made to the Merton Secondary Heads group but no-one from the non-faith schools had come forward.

It was agreed that the task of recruiting someone for the project should be delegated to the sub-committee as it had a strong quorum. Options included appointing a consultant; or advertising directly to secondary teachers. KSe offered to approach her Year 6 teacher at Beecholme, although she had had no experience of teaching Merton's KS3 and KS4 syllabus; and KSa suggested approaching the RE subject leads at the non-faith secondary schools.

The next step, once all the revisions had been carried out, was to submit the draft to the Merton Agreed Syllabus Conference where a vote would be taken on whether or not to accept it.

5 Visits to schools and buildings

PK explained that there were 2 policies designed to be of use to schools as follows:

- i. Visits to schools by members of SACRE; and
- ii. Visits to schools by people from a faith or belief community.

He undertook to email copies of both policies to SACRE members.

PK

6 Agreed Syllabus refresh

PK thanked Rachel Clarke for coming to the meeting and invited her to report on the work that she had been doing.

RC explained that she had been tasked by the sub-committee with the job of reviewing the KS1 and KS2 sections of Merton's Agreed RE Syllabus, and to update it taking into account the recent review carried out by the Religious Education Council and the associated Curriculum Framework which contained a foreword by the former Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove.

Copies of the revised text, with the changes highlighted, was tabled for those present. RC said that a key aim had been to make the document easier for teachers to use. She had looked at a number of other local authority's syllabuses, but she liked the Merton one best. The main change she had introduced was the addition of extra material for each unit by creating two new boxes headed "Key Vocabulary" and "Helpful Resources". The latter included hyperlinks to suggested sources of information. Other changes related to the formatting of the document to make it more user-friendly.

In discussion the following points were covered:

- i. Level descriptors: the Government had not yet provided guidance on how "national expectations" would be defined in the new curriculum. For the time being, therefore, RC had not made any changes to the level descriptors. She confirmed that this was in line with what other local authorities were doing. Similarly the 2 sets of attainment targets ("Learning about" and "Learning from" religions) remained unchanged. KSa explained that in the new curriculum there would still be levels, but for external reporting purposes pupils would be at, above

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or below the specified level. However, for internal monitoring purposes schools would require a more sophisticated breakdown. It was noted that once the Government's guidance had been published this area of the Agreed Syllabus would need to be looked at again to ensure the correct vocabulary was being used.

- ii. Resources: It was noted that a lot of the resources mentioned in the document were for the benefit of pupils, and that there was a comparative lack of signposting to resources for teachers. It was also suggested that there might be scope to incorporate or cross reference to the information in the "School Places of Worship" booklet; and the policies on visits to schools.
- iii. Accessibility: RC commented that whilst it had been a time-consuming task she had found it interesting. Although she had been using the syllabus herself in the classroom, she had previously only had access to the pages relating to the units that she was teaching. It had therefore been useful to see the document in its entirety. She suggested that it would be helpful if teachers were able to access the full document, particularly information about religions they were unfamiliar with and the signposting to useful resources. It was agreed that when the document was in its final agreed form there should be a re-launch and it would become accessible on the web. RC also suggested that it would be helpful to familiarise RE Coordinators with its contents.
- iv. Front cover: AK pointed out the symbol for humanism was missing from the cover of the printed version.
- v. Headteacher input: PK confirmed that Headteachers would be invited to the conference which would approve the syllabus, and they also had the opportunity to input to the revisions through KSe who was their official representative on SACRE.
- vi. Special Schools: It was noted that Special Schools should be following the Agreed Syllabus. KSe therefore agreed to speak to the Headteachers of Melrose, Cricket Green and Perseid schools.

Next steps were agreed as follows:

- i. All SACRE members to review the sections of the document that had been updated by RC and tabled at the meeting, paying particular attention to the units that concerned their faith or area of belief, to ensure that they were accurate and up to date.
- ii. All SACRE members to check and if necessary amend the summaries¹ relating to their faith or area of belief: these are intended to help teachers who don't have a background in that particular religion.
- iii. All SACRE members to provide information about resources available to teachers and to pupils, including places that welcomed school visits or were willing to provide visiting speakers.

All
SACRE
members

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All

¹ These summaries were not included in the document tabled at the meeting. They will be sent out separately by the Chair.

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- iv. All contributions to be sent to PK in the first instance.

Finally, on behalf of SACRE, PK thanked RC for the invaluable work she had done on the syllabus, and also for attending a number of sub-committee meetings.

7 New Ofsted inspection criteria – with reference to Modern Britain and RE

Extracts from the new School Inspection Handbook (September 2014) were tabled. KSA explained the relevant changes as follows:

- a **Guidance for Ofsted Inspectors:** Although there was no change in the legal requirements for non-faith schools concerning RE and collective worship, it was a new development to have them set out in the Ofsted handbook. What was new was the content relating to the definition of “Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development” which now incorporated the new emphasis on Britishness and the development of qualities such as tolerance and understanding. It was also now stated unequivocally that SMSC would play a prominent role in determining Ofsted judgements about:
- the quality of teaching (“Inspectors should verify that good teaching within a broad and balanced curriculum, accompanied by effective spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is helping to prepare children and young people for life in modern Britain.”)
 - leadership and management (“Inspectors should consider how well leadership and management ensure that the curriculum .. actively promotes the fundamental British values of .. mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs .. [and] promotes tolerance of and respect for people of all faiths or those of no faith, cultures and lifestyles through the effective spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils .. [and] includes a balanced approach to the pupils’ RE that is broadly Christian but, where required, takes account of the teaching and practices of other principal religions represented in Britain .. [and] includes a rounded programme of assemblies that help to promote pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, providing clear guidance on what is right and what is wrong.”)
 - behaviour and safety (“Inspectors should consider .. the effectiveness of the school’s actions to prevent and tackle all forms of bullying and harassment [including] prejudice-based bullying related to .. religion and belief .. [and] to tackle discriminatory and derogatory language.”)
 - overall effectiveness – where the quality of SMSC development would now be a decisive factor in determining the grade given (“In judging the school’s overall effectiveness Inspectors should consider whether .. the school requires improvement as it is not a good school because one or more the key judgements requires improvement **and/or** there are weaknesses in the overall provision for pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.”)
- b **Grade descriptors:** The descriptors now included a bullet point relating to SMSC in all the judgements about leadership and management; and behaviour and safety of pupils as well as in the judgement on overall effectiveness, where there is a clear expectation that schools will take a proactive approach to SMSC. For example to the overall effectiveness descriptor for Outstanding is “The school’s thoughtful and wide-ranging promotion of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development .. enables them to thrive in a supportive, highly cohesive learning community”. The equivalent descriptor for Inadequate is “There are serious weaknesses in the overall promotion of pupils’ spiritual,

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moral, social and cultural development .. so that pupils are intolerant of others and/or reject any of the core values fundamental to life in modern Britain”.

In discussion the following points were noted:

- It was agreed that the increased prominence given to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development was helpful to SACRE and to the RE syllabus.
- There was now a clear message that “good RE helps you get a good Ofsted”.
- The All Party Parliamentary Group on Religious Education had been looking into the contribution that the teaching of RE can make to building a strong, healthy society and promoting good community relations. If RE wasn’t taught in schools where would it happen?
- Members were interested by the references in the framework to bullying, suggesting that this might be something for SACRE to think about as it required a sensitive approach. The emphasis on valuing all faiths and fostering understanding, tolerance and respect was very much welcomed.
- It was pointed out that the Religious Education Council had done a lot of work on dealing with extremism, however, the challenge was where and how to access support.
- The only Merton school to have received an Ofsted inspection under the new framework was Melrose.
- There was a link between the Ofsted framework and the Teachers’ Standards.

Next steps were agreed as follows:

- i. There would need to be a read across from the new framework to the new Agreed Syllabus.
- ii. SACRE to send the revised Agreed Syllabus to Merton’s Academies and Free Schools, in case they wished to follow it.

Finally PK thanked KSa for her very interesting and useful briefing.

8 Date and place of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 3 February at 7.15pm at the Islamic Community Centre, 116 Morden Road, Morden SM4 5AX.

Agenda items will include:

- RE Quality Mark
- Visits policies
- Feedback from the sub-committee
- SACRE Annual Report

The meeting closed at 7.30pm

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