

**Minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2015 (7.15 – 9.40pm)**

**Present: Group A – Christian, Other Faiths & Beliefs**

Peter Kendrick (PK) – Chair

Ajaib Singh Bahra (ASB)

William Doris (WD)

Mike Freedman (MF)

Audrey King (AK)

P K Lom (PKL)

Saleem Sheikh (SS)

**Group B – Church of England**

Colin Powell (CP)

Rev Kate Tuckett (KT)

**Group C – Teacher Associations**

Neil McManus (NM)

**Group D – Local Authority**

Cllr Gilli Lewis Lavender (GLL) – *arrived 7.40pm*

**Co-opted**

Asad Malik (AM)

**LA Adviser**

Keith Shipman (KSh) – Merton Education Inclusion Manager

**Others**

Colin Perry (Lay Buddhist)

Lisa Rønsholt (Humanism)

Leo Hanmer (Clerk)

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**ITEM**

**1 Apologies for absence**

Received from:

Kaye Seamer

Cllr Imran Uddin

**2 Introductions and welcome**

**ACTION**

ITEM		ACTION
	<p>PK welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Saleem Sheikh and his colleagues at Morden Islamic Cultural Centre for hosting the meeting and providing refreshments.</p> <p>The following new members of SACRE were also welcomed: <b>Ajaib Singh Bahra</b>, representing Sikhism; and <b>Rev Kate Tuckett</b>, representing the Church of England. All present then introduced themselves in a “tour de table”.</p>	
3	<p><b>Election of Chair and Vice Chair</b></p> <p>At this point LH took the Chair.</p> <p>She invited nominations for the role of Chair. Peter Kendrick was nominated by AK and seconded by SS. Having established that there were no further nominations, and that PK was willing to stand, LH invited all members to indicate whether or not they were in favour of electing PK via a show of hands. <b>PK was duly elected Chair by a unanimous vote.</b></p> <p>PK resumed the Chair and invited nominations for the role of Vice Chair. Saleem Sheikh was nominated by AK and seconded by PKL. Having established that there were no further nominations, and that SS was willing to stand, PK invited all members to indicate whether or not they were in favour of electing SS via a show of hands. <b>SS was duly elected Vice-Chair by a unanimous vote.</b></p>	
4	<p><b>Minutes of the last meeting</b></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2014 were agreed subject to the addition of a clarification that AM had joined SACRE as a Co-opted member.</p>	
5	<p><b>Matters Arising</b></p> <p><b>a</b> <u>Item 3(a): Membership</u>: Church of England membership had been increased with the appointment of Rev Kate Tuckett. However, Lillian Zwarts had subsequently resigned, resulting in a renewed vacancy. Ajaib Singh Bahra had been appointed as the new representative of the Sikh Community. Efforts were still ongoing to recruit a representative of the Hindu Community.</p> <p><b>b</b> <u>Item 3(b): Schools Places of Worship booklet</u>: Preparation of the booklet was still in progress.</p> <p><b>c</b> <u>Item 3(d): RE Quality Mark</u>: Members indicated that they would find it helpful to know more about this. KSh explained that it was available as an opportunity to recognise high quality RE in schools, and therefore the question arose as to whether it was something that Merton SACRE should be promoting to its schools. CP commented that it was being used in Southwark, where it was regarded as useful preparation for the statutory Section 48 inspections as it helped in the drive to raise standards and it had the added benefit of being externally validated. KSh also reported that it was being piloted by the Harris Academy in Croydon. It was generally accepted that working towards the award was a comfortable and affirming process which placed no new burdens on schools and was a good way of providing evidence for Ofsted.</p> <p>Against this background members agreed that steps should be taken to promote the opportunity to Merton schools. It was also suggested that it might be helpful if someone from a school that had already achieved the Quality Mark could be invited to give a presentation to Merton Headteachers. <u>Keith Shipman undertook to take the necessary action.</u></p> <p><b>d</b></p>	<p>AK</p> <p>PK</p> <p>KSh</p>

ITEM	ACTION
<p><u>Item 5: Visits to Schools and Buildings:</u> PK was reminded that he had undertaken to email the 2 policies to SACRE members. SS requested a hard copy of both documents. <u>Peter Kendrick undertook to take the necessary action.</u></p>	PK
<p><u>Item 6: Agreed Syllabus refresh:</u> In response to a member's question it was confirmed that no further guidance would be coming from the DfE following its response to the recent review published by the Religious Education Council and the associated Curriculum Framework.</p>	
<p><b>6 Update on the Agreed Syllabus refresh.</b> PK reminded members that although work on updating the primary syllabus had progressed thanks to the efforts of Rachel Clarke (RC) who had attended the previous meeting, the colleague who had been appointed to undertake the secondary refresh had unfortunately pulled out for personal reasons. Following the 14 October meeting the sub-Committee delegated to oversee the process had commissioned Keith Field (KF) to revise the secondary content. PK explained that KF was an Education Consultant who had worked with, among others, Kingston and Croydon. PK had met with him and had provided him with the material already produced by RC. KF had hoped to have completed his work by now but in the event he had not been able to make it available in time for this meeting.</p> <p>In discussion a number of issues were raised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NM pointed out the need to bear in mind the Government's proposals to develop new GCSEs as well as the ongoing lack of clarity about how schools will measure progress at KS3. KSh informed members that his colleague Kate Saksena was responsible for these issues within Merton local authority and he undertook to feed these points back to her. It was also suggested that KSh ensure that there was some liaison between Kate Saksena and Keith Field. <u>Action: Keith Shipman.</u></li> <li>AK asked when the new syllabus was likely to be ready, and suggested that it might be necessary to amend the timescale. She also pointed out that many locally agreed syllabuses now put Humanism on an equal footing with major religions, and suggested that consideration be given to taking a similar approach in Merton. Other members expressed an interest in knowing which authorities had taken such steps. AK agreed to forward details. <u>Action: Audrey King.</u></li> <li>Members pointed out that there were at least 2 aspects to any decision about enhancing the profile of a particular faith or belief. So, for example, taking the case of Humanism there was the policy aspect of whether it should be given increased prominence; and also the practical aspect of how this might be done.</li> <li>Members were concerned that if a policy decision was to be taken, there would need to be prior discussion. It was also noted that there could be a risk of overloading, particularly given the proposed GCSE reforms.</li> <li>The section on Hinduism was in danger of being overlooked as Hinduism was currently not represented on SACRE. It was therefore agreed that when it was ready the draft syllabus should be sent to the relevant contact at the Hindu temple in Effra Road, Wimbledon. GLL also offered to make contact with the Hindu temple in Burlington Road as it was in her Council ward. She undertook to send them the draft syllabus as well as the draft places of worship booklet. <u>Action Gilli Lewis Lavender.</u></li> </ul>	KSh
	AK
	GLL

ITEM	ACTION
<p>The following next steps were agreed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. It was noted that it was some time since there had been a <u>meeting of the sub-Committee</u>. It was therefore agreed that once Keith Field had completed his work on the secondary syllabus the sub-Committee should reconvene to review the whole package, and to consider the position of Humanism. The current membership of the sub-Committee consisted of AK, PK, KS and KSh. NM also expressed interest in attending the next sub-Committee meeting. The sub-Committee would then report back to the next SACRE meeting.</li> <li>ii. The issue of whether or not to raise the profile of Humanism should be an agenda item for the next meeting.</li> <li>iii. In the meantime it would be helpful if further information/evidence could be provided as follows:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek Keith Field’s views on the matter. Peter Kendrick undertook to do this.</li> <li>• Look at other syllabuses to see what is written down and what it looks like in practice.</li> <li>• See whether there is anything useful coming out of local SACRE annual reports.</li> </ul> </li> <li>iv. In due course consideration would need to be given to publicity for the launch of the revised syllabus.</li> </ol>	<p>Sub-C/ttee</p> <p>Next meeting</p> <p>PK</p> <p>Next meeting</p>
<p><b>7 Lord Nash Letter</b></p> <p>A copy of a letter dated 7 January 2015 from Lord Nash, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Education had been circulated in advance of the meeting.</p> <p>KSh explained that it had been sent to Directors of Children’s Services. It was noted that it contained a summary of the role of SACREs and local authorities in supporting RE teaching in schools; and also highlighted the role of schools in promoting British values, suggesting that SACREs were well placed to contribute to this work. The letter concluded with a paragraph acknowledging that most SACRE members give their time and expertise voluntarily, and expressing thanks for that input.</p> <p>KSh also said that Yvette Stanley, Merton’s Director of Children’s Services, would like to meet representatives of Merton SACRE to hear their views about the letter.</p> <p>In discussion the following points were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was interesting how the letter linked the teaching of RE and the promotion of British values even though it wasn’t the role of SACREs to do the latter.</li> <li>• It was also interesting that the letter signalled the DfE’s intention to review SACRE annual reports to identify good practice and ensure that all SACREs were fulfilling their statutory duties.</li> <li>• SACREs are independent and are there to provide advice to local authorities on RE in a local context.</li> </ul>	

ITEM	ACTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The letter covered the role of SACREs in supporting the RE curriculum but much less was said about collective worship. KSh explained that where the latter was concerned the role of SACRE was to determine whether applications from schools to vary the requirement for collective worship were appropriate.</li> <li>• One member urged a degree of caution over the references to the promotion of British values, expressing the opinion that the events in Birmingham had created a problem for the Government, and resulted in a knee-jerk reaction. SACREs appeared to be a convenient place to park the matter.</li> <li>• Another member took the view that while the Government was marginalising RE within the school curriculum it was also looking at RE as a way of solving its problems.</li> </ul> <p>At the end of the discussion the following was <b>agreed</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. KSh undertook to update the Director of Children’s Services – and perhaps suggest she holds an annual meeting with SACRE members.</li> <li>ii. PK, SS and KS would attend the meeting with Yvette Stanley.</li> </ul>	<p>KSh</p> <p>PK, SS &amp; KSh</p>
<p><b>8 Reflections on the Paris bombing and advice from SACRE to schools.</b></p> <p>KSh suggested that in light of the recent events in Paris and the requirements placed on schools to safeguard pupils from radicalisation it might be useful to reflect on SACRE’s role.</p> <p>In discussion the following points were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NM questioned whether there was an established link between the study of religion and radicalisation; and whether there was an expectation that SACREs would have expertise in this area. KSh explained that Merton had done two pieces of work in the past on radicalisation and on community cohesion which had concluded that RE had a key role to play in developing children’s understanding of other faiths.</li> <li>• Members felt that there were genuine concerns about what children could talk about safely, and a fear that anyone with “fundamental” beliefs could be linked to terrorism.</li> <li>• CP asked whether Merton had a policy on radicalisation, and reported that Lambeth had already put one in place which had been welcomed by schools who were using it as a springboard for discussion.</li> <li>• KSh also reminded members of the Government’s “Prevent” strategy. Although Merton was not itself a Prevent borough, it shared a Prevent Officer with other boroughs. KSh reported that the Office concerned would be willing to attend a SACRE meeting. Members agreed it would be useful to hear what he had to say and to see if he thought SACRE had a role to play.</li> </ul> <p>The following next steps were <b>agreed</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. CP would make a copy of Lambeth’s policy on preventing radicalisation available</li> </ul>	<p>CP</p>

ITEM		ACTION
	<p>to other members of SACRE;</p> <p>ii. KS would invite the Prevent Officer to attend the next meeting.</p>	KSh
9	<p><b>Visitors and Buildings booklet for schools</b></p> <p>PK reminded members that the booklet was being updated. He had received a number of contributions. Anyone who had not yet provided information was invited to send PK their contribution.</p>	All
10	<p><b>Annual Report</b></p> <p>A copy of the current draft had been circulated to SACRE members and more copies were tabled. KS, who had drafted the report, explained that its main function was to describe the work that had been undertaken by SACRE. He summarised the content and for their part members highlighted some drafting errors.</p> <p>Key observations about the content included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SACRE’s monitoring of Merton schools’ Ofsted reports had revealed that SMSC had been highlighted as a strength in 9 out of 14 schools.</li> <li>Merton’s 2014 GCSE results in RE had been impressive, both in terms of students opting for RE and their success rates. The number of entries had increased from the 2013 level and was now double the national average. The A-C pass rate was also well above the national average, and higher numbers of Merton students were achieving A* (16.5%) and A (24.3%) grades than was the case nationally. Members agreed that this was very encouraging.</li> <li>At A level the picture wasn’t quite as good. Entries had dropped from the 2013 level of 41 to 34 and, although the pass rate was 100%, a lower percentage of students were achieving A*-B grades.</li> </ul> <p>It was suggested that further thought should be given to how more students might be encouraged to study RE at A level.</p> <p>By way of next steps it was <b>agreed</b> that members would email any detailed comments to KSh by 9 February so that he could finalise the report and get it submitted to NASACRE.</p> <p>It was also <b>agreed</b> that the final version of the report should be sent to all Merton schools.</p>	
11	<p><b>Nomination for SACRE AGM</b></p> <p>PK reminded members that the 2015 NASACRE Annual Conference and AGM would be taking place on Thursday 21 May in Birmingham. It would be a full day event with a Keynote Address as well as some workshops. The cost per delegate was £90. The Local Authority would pay this fee and the travel costs for 2 Merton SACRE members to attend. Both Saleem Sheikh and Asad Malik expressed their interest in attending.</p>	
8	<p><b>Date and place of next meeting</b></p> <p>The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 9 June at 7.15pm at the Khalsa Centre, 95 Upper Tooting Road, London SW17 7TW.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The meeting closed at 9.40pm</i></p>	