

**Minutes of the SACRE meeting held on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2022 (5.00pm-7.00pm)  
Held at Abbotsbury Primary School, Morden**

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

Waleed Ahmad (WA) – Ahmadiyya Muslim Association  
John Carter (JC) – Humanism  
Ziah Khan (ZK) – Wimbledon Mosque, Sunni Islam

**Group B – Church of England (SDBE)**

Jane Savill (JS)  
Andrew Williams (AW)

**Group C – Teacher Associations**

Ro Maybury (RM) – NAHT

**Group D – Local Authority**

No attendees

**LA Adviser**

Keith Shipman (KS) – Merton Education Inclusion Manager

**Others**

Jan Angel, Deputy Head, Abbotsbury Primary School  
Helen Sia, Personal Social, Health, Economic and Relationships Lead, cover teaching RE,  
Abbotsbury Primary School

Ann Oliver (AO) Clerk

See Appendix A for a full list of Merton SACRE members as at the time of the meeting.

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The following documents were circulated prior to the meeting:

- Item 3 – Final minutes of the 7th October 2021 meeting
- Item 8 – NASACRE new format for SACRE Annual Reports (From Sept 2021)
- Item 12 – NASACRE report, Still Standing

ITEM	ACTION
<p><b>1</b>      <b><u>Welcome and apologies for absence</u></b></p> <p>Apologies for absence were accepted from Rachael Norman (RN), Geetha Maheshwaran (GM), Councillor Sally Kenny (SK), Debra Beale (DB), Councillor Hayley Ormrod (HO), Councillor Laxmi Attawar (LA) and Mike Freedman (MF).</p> <p>The meeting was not quorate, as no Group D Local Authority members attended. Social distancing remained in place.</p> <p>There were several absences and five apologies, so the meeting was not quorate in the matter of meeting decisions, actions or votes.</p> <p>Keith Shipman welcomed everyone to the meeting, and thanked Rowena Maybury, Head Teacher at Abbotsbury School, for hosting the meeting. He reminded council members that at the Autumn meeting, they had agreed to look at RE in practice in schools: RM had kindly organised a presentation.</p> <p>Everyone introduced themselves to the meeting host, to Deputy Head Jan Angel and to PSHER Lead Helen Sia, to Mr Ziah Khan from Wimbledon Mosque, deputising for Saleem Sheikh, and to AO, replacing Elizabeth Nassé, who had left Wandsworth Governor Services.</p> <p>JC was taking over from former Humanist representative Audrey King, who had served on Merton SACRE since the 1980s. The council was very grateful to Audrey for her contribution over the years. The Mayor of Merton, Councillor Mike Brunt, formerly Chair of Merton SACRE, had visited Audrey to present her with a letter thanking her for her long service to schools: Audrey had also been a school Governor since the 1960s.</p> <p>Shortly after the meeting, Merton SACRE heard the sad news that Audrey King had died, at the care home in which she was resident, on February 9<sup>th</sup> 2022. KS said he would inform members of the funeral arrangements as soon as these were known.</p>	
<p><b>2</b>      <b><u>Agree Chair of meeting, from executive committee</u></b> (JC and AW were present)</p> <p>Andrew Williams was agreed as chair of the meeting.</p>	
<p><b>3</b>      <b><u>Head Teacher and Staff presentation on RE at Abbotsbury School</u></b></p> <p>Staff members Deputy Head Jan Angel and Helen Sia, deputising for RE subject leader Firuza Khan, gave a presentation on RE across the school.</p> <p>KS had suggested questions for the presentation to address, so the SACRE members could gain an overview of the religious mix at Abbotsbury, what the children learn at each Key Stage, what works well in RE, how useful the current syllabus is and what the key challenges are.</p> <p>The school had created document packs containing examples of RE work from Years 1, 4 and 5 to show typical RE curriculum progress and skills progression. RM explained that the school uses the Merton Agreed Syllabus for all subjects. It has been developing these since 2019-20 to ensure quality, appropriateness and key objective coverage: the objectives, criteria and key actions for RE were included in the pack. A breakdown of the different faiths represented among the children at the school had also been included.</p>	

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KS asked if the open discussions children have around religious beliefs arose from the school ethos, or if this was something learned during RE lessons.

RM said it was a combination of both things, as the ethos of the school focuses on the children's ability to get on with, respect and support one another, beginning at Nursery stage. In RE, this co-operative approach means that the children are able to talk from their own experiences, with a very high level of mutual respect. She said they are very interested in one another's backgrounds, which comes across in the questions they ask. She said that although assemblies are not part of the curriculum, these also contribute to RE learning. During the pandemic period, more collective worship than usual had been held in the school hall, as the children were meeting in smaller groups. Some virtual assemblies had also been held by local churches during lockdown.

KS said it was probable that more collective worship in schools was happening now than prior to the pandemic, particularly in secondary schools, due to the facility for remote all-school services, something that had not existed before.

AW said that collective worship was missing completely in a lot of schools, except in Church of England schools, where it had a formal status and was taken seriously. Most schools simply held an assembly.

KS said that regarding the final question on the "RE at Abbotsbury" sheet, regarding Key Challenges, one of the key jobs of SACRE was supporting the teaching of RE, and he asked if the school would like to make any points regarding their experiences.

HS said that in her experience as a teacher across four Year Groups, the children found some units difficult to access. She thought that some resources might be pitched too high, and that more online resources would be helpful.

RM recalled that at a recent SACRE meeting, feedback from the Hindu community had been that the teaching material was poor because it didn't take account of the diversity within Hinduism. This had also been mentioned at a school meeting. She said it might be helpful to offer resources recognising diversity within religions, including Christianity.

JA agreed that faith representatives did sometimes say teaching materials did not represent a religion effectively. This was helpful, because the school needed resources to be accurate, appropriate and pitched at the right level, as most teachers were non-specialist.

KS asked AW where teachers could find reliable and representative online resources which are about a faith.

AW said that Mike Freedman had an excellent website about teaching Judaism. He also recommended BBC Bitesize for KS 1 and 2, which has many good video players.

KS said this might be a challenge for SACRE to think about in partnership with RE training consultant Penny Smith-Orr, as it needed to create links back from schools to verify whether each faith group thinks it is represented accurately in their resources.

KS said that a further comment in the Key Challenges was that some of the units are too long or too complicated. It would be useful to know which, as the syllabus was due to be renewed. If SACRE wanted to look at diversity within faiths, it would have to take a decision on the structure of the units.

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HS said that even though RE had been taught during this the Covid lockdown, she found she often had to go back to revise basic facts on certain RE topics before any theological analysis or philosophical discussion was possible. The children had six weeks to cover a topic, and without a grounding or basis the class was unable to attempt Attainment Target 2 objectives.

KS said the third Key Challenge point was related, as it had been about the length of scriptural stories, meaning that the stories themselves, rather than their implication, became the focus.

ZK asked if it had been possible for the children to go on trips to religious buildings, and that the school would be welcome to visit Wimbledon mosque, which was open.

JA said Covid had made this impossible, but that the school hoped to start trips again soon.

AW asked if any parents exercised their right of withdrawal.

RM said that Jehovah's Witness families tended to withdraw children, but not from all trips, and sometimes not from the entire religious curriculum.

JS said it seemed from the packs that the children liked and were interested in RE. RM said they were, and KS said this was partly because of the diversity and religious mix in the community, which made the children curious about and interested in one another. He said the community had changed over time, but as children grew up with different set of views from their parents, it helped parents fear changes in society less.

RM said the atmosphere in school was very different from that on the street, and that the children knew the school's expectations of the way they behaved towards one another were quite different from expectations they might meet outside school.

KS said that unfortunately it was hard to capture evidence of such tolerance to show to parents and inspectors.

RM said that Merton Education Partner Kate Sheraton had brought Merton's Teaching and Learning Advisor for Equalities, Alison Cramp, to see the school as an example of diversity done well.

JS said it was good news that the Borough wanted to use Abbotsbury as an excellent example, and this was perhaps something the school could highlight to Ofsted in the event of an inspection.

The presentation ended, and the SACRE members thanked the school leaders and children for their excellent work.

#### 4 **SACRE membership admin – membership updates**

KS reminded members that SACRE was currently being chaired by an executive committee (AW, JS, JC and DB) in the absence of an elected Chair.

ZK reported that Saleem Sheikh (representative for Islam from before 2016) had resigned, due to ill health. The nominee for his replacement is Farrukh Ahmed.

Action: AO will check with WGS if EN was able to progress interest from a prospective candidate from the Roman Catholic church. (*There is a new nominee, Clare Bennett*)

AO

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ITEM		ACTION
	<i>from Sacred Heart Primary in New Malden).</i>	
	The Clerk will send KS the contact details for both new nominees.	AO
5	<b><u>Approval of minutes of previous SACRE meeting 7.10.21</u></b>	
	As the meeting was not quorate, the minutes could not be agreed. The members read through the minutes to establish which Actions were complete. Acting Chair AW signed the minutes pending agreement: they would be held by AO and brought to the Summer SACRE meeting on 05.07.22.	AO
	<u>Actions</u>	
	Page 2	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Done, Farrukh Ahmed will attend in place of Saleem Sheikh.</li> <li>• Done, NASACRE logins had been circulated to all members.</li> </ul>	
	Page 4	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask Primary and Secondary Heads and RE coordinators for feedback about the syllabus in the Autumn term – this would be discussed at Item 9.</li> </ul> <p>KS had asked RE teachers about the syllabus. The feedback said that RE units were too long and too detailed, though KS said that was a response that might be expected from most schools.</p>	
	Page 5	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equalities review of syllabus and the ASC (Agreed Syllabus Conference) review – these would be discussed at Item 9.</li> <li>• Interfaith dialogue project – identify Abbotsbury Pupils to take part.</li> </ul>	
	<p>RM said this would be worth doing, so SACRE could see the faith make-up of the school, but Abbotsbury was currently in the middle of its third Covid hotspot. KS asked RM to let SACRE know when the Covid situation had improved. <i>Carried forward.</i></p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinstate the 6<sup>th</sup> Form project in 2022-23 with a new cohort.</li> </ul>	RM
	<p>KS and AW will discuss recruiting new 6<sup>th</sup> formers from a Merton secondary school in June for a September 2022 start.</p>	KS/AW
	Page 6	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add current SACRE membership to each set of minutes: Done</li> <li>• Ask Secondary heads if a school would be willing to host the spring term meeting, with a presentation on RE: KS said he had reversed the Spring and Summer meetings, so SACRE would meet at Rutlish School on July 5<sup>th</sup>.</li> </ul>	
6	<b><u>Matters arising from meeting on 7.10.21 not completed or covered elsewhere</u></b>	
	<p><b><i>Action: KS to contact Saleem Sheikh (current Vice-Chair) to see if he will be able to attend meetings once they return to being held in person. See above, FA to replace SS.</i></b></p>	
	<p><b><i>Action: JS/EN to check whether a password is needed for members to access NASACRE website materials. The password had been recirculated.</i></b></p>	
	<p>JS said she thought Mike Brunt would return after the Council elections in May.</p>	
	<p>KS pointed out that as several teaching unions had merged, there were fewer</p>	

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	<p>representatives from this sector. He could meet RE teachers to see if any might want to join SACRE.</p>	
7	<p><b><u>Update on schools/education, RE Co-ordinators' meetings</u></b></p> <p>KS said that after the last meeting, SACRE had taken a proposal to the Attain Schools Partnership, about funding a half-day RE training session in conjunction with Roehampton. Attain did not agree funding, so KS met with Penny Smith-Orr and Ewan Morrison to plan the next RE Co-ordinators' training session. The subjects were the synagogue, with a virtual tour, and knowledge-based information about Hinduism. The Clerk would circulate these PowerPoint resources with the meeting minutes. Feedback from participants had been very positive. The meeting had been virtual and was held after school. 17 primary leads attended, an improvement on past attendance.</p> <p>The SACRE members discussed training uptake from Merton secondary schools. Only Raynes Park, Ricards and Rutlish used the SACRE syllabus. The two Harris Academies say they refer to the SACRE syllabus, but also have their own. JC said it was sometimes difficult to detect the influence of the syllabus in academies.</p> <p>KS said that all Merton secondary schools taught RE at GCSE. At Harris Morden it was an option but at Harris Merton it was obligatory. Due to differences in school management systems, it was difficult to assess the exact numbers of pupils studying RE, though JS said that Merton were quite well ahead of national data on numbers achieving GCSE RE.</p> <p>KS said there was certainly a higher takeup than expected of University RE courses from Merton. Harris Wimbledon went only as far as Year 10 at present, and SACRE did not know its plans.</p>	AO
8	<p><b><u>NASACRE new annual report framework – reviews of RE provision, collective worship and teacher training</u></b></p> <p>The previous SACRE meeting had discussed the new NASACRE framework for future SACRE Annual Reports, particularly how SACREs evidenced the quality of RE.</p> <p>KS tabled a document summarising the outcome of a meeting with Rachel Bowerman, Merton's new Head of School Improvement, to discuss what Merton SI could do to inform SACRE about the quality of RE. RB had looked at the structure of the RE syllabus and at the Ofsted criteria. She thought that a school survey would not currently be appropriate, due to the Covid situation.</p> <p>She had made some suggestions, (page two of the document) regarding actions for Merton SACRE spanning the Spring, Summer and Autumn terms in 2022. KS asked the members if they thought these fulfilled what SACRE wanted to know about the quality of RE.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Spring term</u> – Merton School Improvement to identify cohort schools to be invited to be part of SACRE monitoring programme. These would be mostly primary schools. Academies could be invited to join.</li> <li>• <u>Summer term</u> – Merton School Improvement to develop a self-evaluation</li> </ul>	

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template in collaboration with participating RE subject leaders or Heads of Department; consultation with head teachers to seek their agreement for implementation of a rolling programme of self-evaluation reports to SACRE.

- Autumn term – Submission of self-evaluation reports to SACRE. Report presentation (presenting schools to be decided) by Heads/RE leaders and by discussion of RE curriculum, teaching and resources. Inclusion of student voice, virtually or by a small group of secondary pupils.

Benefits to schools might include the development of staff leadership and self-evaluation skills, fluency in presentation and confidence in promoting school RE capability to Ofsted.

The SACRE members asked RM if she might find it useful to be involved in this kind of programme. RM said that depended on how stressful it would be to find and put together the required information. She noted that the document used the expression “Deep dive”, which she thought was reminiscent of the type of language used by Ofsted, so likely to discourage schools from participating.

KS said the new Ofsted framework required school Middle Leaders to be able to talk about their subject and impact of their subject. RB had tried to build the chance for schools to try this out in the programme, so if RE were picked as a deep dive during an inspection, the school would benefit.

The SACRE members agreed it would be very useful to invite Secondary school pupils to attend the presentation to talk about RE teaching and lessons.

WA asked what participation numbers would be required to make the exercise meaningful.

KS said the programme would require quite a high number to give SACRE a sense of how RE was being taught in schools.

RO suggested that the members could go in groups of two or three to visit schools in pairs, and feed back to the programme. A crib sheet could be devised for the process, so everyone was working to established parameters. All council members said they would be willing to visit schools.

KS asked the members to consider how to get the academies involved.

ALL

KS said that as the review also covered collective worship, members might visit schools at a time when collective worship was being held. He also said that in discussion with secondary school head teachers, he has heard that online collective worship means has meant a lot more thematic discussions about moral issues occurring with teachers in classrooms. KS said this was really interesting, and it would be interesting to find out how beneficial it has been. The increase in online capacity also meant the potential to create an assembly based around a festival or particular type of worship, and if this was of sufficient quality, invite other schools to join remotely. The SACRE members agreed that this was a very good idea.

KS said that unfortunately SACRE could not sign this initiative off, as the meeting was

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11	<p><b><u>NASACRE administration</u></b></p> <p>NASACRE Annual Conference, Birmingham, May 23<sup>rd</sup> 2022 – KS said that Merton SACRE usually sends a member. The Members agreed to look at their diaries and feed back availability to the Clerk and KS.</p> <p><u>Westhill/NASACRE awards 2022-23</u> – these are awarded for innovation from SACREs. The Clerk would circulate the link once more. The closing date is March 31<sup>st</sup>.</p> <p><u>Training</u> – KS recommended that members sign up for some online training with NASACRE at <a href="http://www.nasacre.org.uk/online-training">www.nasacre.org.uk/online-training</a>. Courses cost £20, though the Spring course, Self-evaluation of your SACRE (15th March 2022, 7-8pm) is free.</p> <p>JC recommended NASACRE Worldviews training with Dr Ruth Flanagan, who in a session on 10.02.21 had taken a psychological approach regarding personal bias and differences of view, teaching how people work, before going on to discuss worldview. The seminar organised by NASACRE took place on 10/11/21. The content was based on Ruth Flanagan’s paper “Worldviews: overarching concept, discrete body of knowledge or paradigmatic tool”, available at <a href="https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40839-020-00113-7">https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40839-020-00113-7</a></p> <p>JC has a PowerPoint by RF for anyone would like it.</p>	<p></p> <p>ALL</p> <p>ALL</p> <p>ALL</p>
12	<p><b><u>Any other business</u></b></p> <p>i). NASACRE’s review, “Still Standing”, had been circulated. KS said that on page 5, SACREs are asked to consider a number of questions regarding what SACREs should do as a consequence of the conclusions in the review, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How effective are SACREs?</li> <li>• Does the membership reflect the local community? (KS would say yes regarding Merton SACRE, and also that the Committee has a strong partnership with the LA, ensuring necessary funding is in place.)</li> <li>• Should other organisations, such as local museums, school governing boards and parents’ groups, universities, training hubs and other providers, be linked to SACREs? Inviting the local Academies to join might be an example.</li> <li>• Might the syllabus audit toolkit outlined in Appendix 4 be a good way of looking at whether there is sufficient worldview in the syllabus?</li> <li>• Does the syllabus pick up on the changing landscape of religious belief in Britain? Question 5 on page 5 addresses this question.</li> </ul> <p>KS said the last question in particular would be a challenge for Merton SACRE. As the Committee was not quorate, no decision could be made, but the question would be carried over to the next meeting. As background reading, JC recommended Andrew Copson’s “Secularism: A Very Short Introduction” and Stephen Law’s “Humanism: A Very Short Introduction”.</p> <p>ii) JS Wished to express SACRE’s thanks to former clerk Elizabeth Nassé for all her help and commitment. All members signed a card which AO would pass on via Wandsworth Governor Services.</p>	<p></p> <p></p> <p>AO</p>
13	<p><b><u>Dates of 2022/23 meetings: -</u></b></p>	

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ITEM	ACTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2022, 5pm at Rutlish School</li><li>Date for Autumn meeting – TBC: JS said the SACRE would need to know what the LA’s meeting dates were, to ensure Councillors were able to attend. She would speak to a councillor and follow this up with KS.</li></ul> <p>The meeting ended at 18.50pm.</p>	JS

Chair of Merton SACRE.....

date.....

SACRE membership is on the following page: -

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## Appendix A - Merton SACRE members as at 8th February 2022

Group	Name	Initials	Title/organisation	Start date
<b>A</b>	Ms Kamontip Evans	KE	Buddhism	6.7.21
	VACANCY		Free Churches	-
	Ms Geetha Maheshwaran	GM	Hinduism	Pre-2016
	Mr John Carter	JC	Humanism	6.7.21
	VACANCY		Islam	-
	Mr Mike Freedman	MF	Judaism	Pre-2016
	VACANCY		Roman Catholic Church	-
	Mr Ajaib Singh Bahra	ASB	Sikhism	Pre-2016
	Mr Waleed Ahmad	WA	Ahmadiyya Muslim Association	4.10.16
<b>B</b>	Mrs. Jane Savill	JS	Church of England	10.10.17
	The Revd. Andrew Williams.	AW	Church of England	10.10.17
	Ms Rachael Norman	MC	Church of England	11.2.20
<b>C</b>	Ms Debra Beale	DB	NUT	21.2.17
	Ms Ro Maybury	RM	NAHT	6.7.21
<b>D</b>	Cllr Laxmi Attawar	LA	Councillor	Pre-2016
	Cllr Hayley Ormrod	AL	Councillor	30.5.18
	Cllr Sally Kenny	MB	Councillor	6.7.21

**Groups****A - Christian, Other Faiths & Beliefs****B - Church of England****C - Teacher Associations****D – Local Authority**