

Minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2015 (7.15 – 10.00pm)

Present: Group A – Christian, Other Faiths & Beliefs

Peter Kendrick (PK) – Chair

Ajaib Singh Bahra (ASB)

William Doris (WD)

Mike Freedman (MF)

Audrey King (AK)

Saleem Sheikh (SS)

Group B – Church of England

Joanne Powell (JP)

Rev Kate Tuckett (KT)

Group C – Teacher Associations

Neil McManus (NM)

Group D – Local Authority

Cllr Laxmi Attawar (LA)

Cllr Abdul Latif (AL)

Cllr Imran Uddin (IU)

Co-opted

Asad Malik (AM)

LA Adviser

Keith Shipman (KS) – Merton Education Inclusion Manager

Others

Harbans Mehta (President, Khalsa Centre)

Greg Wilford (South West Londoner)

Leo Hanmer (Clerk)

| ITEM | ACTION |
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| <p>1 Apologies for absence Received from: Colin Powell</p> | |
| <p>2 Introductions and welcome PK welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Ajaib Singh Bahra and his colleagues at the Khalsa Centre (including Harbans Mehta, President of the Centre, also present at the meeting) for hosting the meeting and providing refreshments.</p> <p>The following new members of SACRE were also welcomed: Joanne Powell, representing the Church of England; and Cllr Abdul Latif, who had replaced Cllr Gilli Lewis Lavender as Merton Council’s nominee representing the Conservative Party.</p> <p>PK also welcomed Greg Wilford from the South West Londoner.</p> <p>All present then introduced themselves in a “tour de table” and the meeting was declared quorate.</p> <p>For the benefit of new SACRE members and members of the public PK explained briefly what SACRE does, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each borough/local authority has a SACRE which represents faiths and beliefs in the local area. • It works alongside the borough and advises it. • Its main role is to promote mutual understanding and to help children and young people to thrive in a multi-cultural society. • A key responsibility is to produce a locally agreed syllabus for the teaching of RE in schools as there is no National Curriculum specified for the subject. • Merton SACRE meets 3 times a year. | |
| <p>3 Minutes of the last meeting The minutes of the meeting held on 3 February were approved subject to the following amendment:</p> <p>Item 7 (Lord Nash Letter), bullet point 7 to read as follows: “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.”</p> <p>LH undertook to make the necessary correction and then to re-circulate the agreed version of the minutes.</p> | LH |
| <p>4 Matters Arising</p> <p>a <u>Item 5(b) – Schools Places of Worship booklet</u>: PK reported that work was still in progress to finalise the new edition.</p> <p>b <u>Item 5(c) – RE Quality Mark</u>: KS reported that this item would be going to the next meeting of Merton Headteachers.</p> <p>c <u>Item 8 – Prevent</u>: For the benefit of new members KS explained that Prevent is a national strategy aimed at preventing people being drawn into terrorism and addressing issues around radicalisation. An important part of the strategy is to raise parents’</p> | PK KS |

ITEM

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awareness of the risks their children face of being exposed to or influenced by those promoting extremism. To that end the Merton Safeguarding Board were preparing advice and information for parents which was due to be sent out before the summer holidays. It had also been hoped that the local Prevent Office could attend today's SACRE meeting to give a short presentation and answer members' questions. Although that had not proved possible it was now planned that he should attend the Autumn meeting.

Next meeting (Oct)

d

Item 9 – Visitors and Buildings booklet for schools: PK reported that this had been sent round. It had also been incorporated into the draft syllabus to show how visits to places of worship can support learning and to provide advice on how to plan and carry out visits.

At this point PK also referred to a further aspect of SACRE's work which was to provide guidance on visits to schools by members of SACRE. At present this had also been included in the main body of the syllabus, but PK asked for SACRE members' thoughts on whether that was the best place for it, or whether it would be preferable to include it as an Appendix. After a brief discussion it was agreed that it should become an Appendix to the main document.

It was also noted that the syllabus included a link to the Directory of Places of Worship mentioned under point (a).

Finally there was some discussion about whether the syllabus should include advice to Headteachers about receiving visitors. It was noted that schools could legitimately look to SACRE to recommend good people that schools could invite in to speak to pupils. And it was also agreed that Headteachers should explain the ground rules to any visiting speakers, including a reminder that schools are places for teaching not preaching, and that they should have the confidence to point out if any speaker was over-stepping the mark.

5 Membership update

Vacancies

PK reported that since the last meeting Kaye Seamer, who was the NAHT/SHA representative, had tendered her resignation. This left the following vacancies:

Hinduism
NAHT/SHA
NASUWT
Voice

It was pointed out that at the last meeting Cllr Lewis Lavender had offered to make contact with the Hindu temple in Burlington Road as it was in her Council ward. Since it was not known whether she had been able to follow this up it was agreed that the efforts to engage the Ghanapathy Temple in Effra Road should be maintained.

AK

As for teacher representation KS undertook to find out which teacher unions were represented in the borough. Members felt that it was important to have both a secondary and a primary representative of the teaching profession and that both teachers and Headteachers would be welcome.

KS

Attendance

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| | <p>It was noted that a couple of SACRE members had not attended recent meetings. LH pointed out that the constitution (which dated back to 2010) provided no guidance on how to deal with non-attendance or indeed how long a member's term of office should be.</p> <p>It was therefore agreed that PK, KS and LH should meet to review the constitution and if necessary to recommend ways in which it might be updated.</p> | <p>PK, KS & LH</p> |
| <p>6</p> | <p>Reports from Committees <u>Agreed Syllabus progress report</u></p> | |
| <p>A</p> | <p><u>Content</u></p> <p>For the benefit of new members the Chair explained that a key duty of SACREs was to review the locally agreed RE syllabus every 5 years. Merton SACRE was currently in the process of undertaking such a review, and much of the work had been delegated to a Committee which had in turn enlisted the help of third parties to assist with the rewriting which was needed in order to bring it up to date.</p> <p>In addition SACRE members had been asked to review the sections relating to their faith or belief and to take responsibility for any editing that was required.</p> <p>The latest draft of the syllabus had been emailed to members on 8 June. However, this had now been overtaken by a more recent draft, some hard copies of which were tabled for those present to share. Both versions showed tracked changes from the previous syllabus.</p> <p>PK also explained that in advance of publication a design team would ensure the document was proof-read and would check all cross references, but asked that members also check for spelling errors and other inconsistencies.</p> | <p>All members</p> |
| <p>B</p> | <p><u>Design</u></p> <p>Members were invited to comment on the presentation of the document, given its size. The following points were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the hard copy were split into 2 parts, say one part for the syllabus and a second part for the guidelines, there was a risk that they would become separated. • Most people would probably use the online version. • Even if the document was split into different parts it would still be hard to read as it was so densely packed with information. <p>There was general agreement on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The hard copy version should be printed as a single document. • The online version could be split into 2 separate sections sitting alongside each other. | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of coloured pages, for example to differentiate between the different key stages, would help readers to navigate their way through the document. • Use of text boxes or other changes to the layout would help to present the content more clearly. | |
| | <p>PK and KS undertook to feed these suggestions back to the design team.</p> | PK & KS |
| C | <p><u>GCSE feedback re KS3</u></p> | |
| | <p>NM briefed members on proposed changes he had made to the presentation of the KS3 material. The previous ordering of the units of work had appeared to be rather random. He was therefore proposing a more logical approach spread over the 3 terms of each year group. Members who commented on the proposed changes agreed they were an improvement.</p> | |
| | <p>NM also drew attention to a reference that he had added about the KS4 syllabus. Although this was not SACRE's responsibility as schools were required to follow a syllabus from one of the GCSE exam boards, he felt that in the interests of continuity it would be helpful to summarise the aims of the GCSE syllabus and the assessment objectives. The text had been extracted from a DfE document.</p> | |
| D | <p><u>Humanism</u></p> | |
| | <p>PK reported that following the request from AK at the last meeting that consideration be given to putting Humanism on an equal footing with the major religions he had contacted Keith Field (KF), a KS3 Education Adviser, who had had a look at the approach taken by other local authorities. KF had advised that any change along these lines was significant and would require further consultancy, with the associated cost implications. However, he did not have the capacity to take this on. If Merton did decide to move forward in this way there would need to be more work done to write the units of work – a task that could possibly be undertaken by a teacher.</p> | |
| | <p>AK suggested that a possible way forward – which would minimise the amount of work required and the cost – would be to adopt material from another local authority. AK also pointed out that given the longevity of the syllabus, if a decision wasn't taken soon there would be a wait of about 5 years before the next opportunity arose.</p> | |
| | <p>NM expressed the view that SACRE would need a thorough discussion of the principle of including humanism, and pointed out that Government guidance doesn't mention the issue of delivery. He suggested that it would be more appropriate to re-visit the issue prior to the next review of the syllabus.</p> | |
| | <p>MF agreed with AK that it would be good to include humanism. However, it was important to ensure that the material was high quality, and that it fitted in and harmonised with the rest of the syllabus content. This suggested that the job shouldn't be rushed, but that the necessary work should be undertaken prior to the next syllabus review.</p> | |
| | <p>KS agreed that discussion was needed about the principle as well as the practical issues of producing the relevant materials and incorporating them in a coherent way into the existing draft. He also underlined the fact that there would be cost and design</p> | |

| ITEM | | ACTION |
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| | <p>implications.</p> <p>MF wondered whether there might be some middle ground; for example, the current draft could include a statement of intent, then once the content had been drafted it could be published as an addendum. There was after all space in the KS2 and KS3 study units.</p> <p>NM expressed concern that to do as MF suggested would be to pre-empt SACRE's decision – after all there may not be unanimous agreement.</p> <p>It was therefore agreed that the matter be discussed in Committee.</p> <p>At this point, in response to an invitation from the chair, AM expressed interest in joining the Committee.</p> | <p>Committee</p> |
| <p>E</p> | <p><u>The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community (AMC)</u></p> <p>PK reported that AM had submitted a redraft of the Key Beliefs entry relating to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, and this had been incorporated into the latest draft of the syllabus.</p> <p>PK also explained that the AMC had co-opted status on Merton SACRE because although it had its UK HQ in Merton, Pakistan and some other Muslim countries had marginalised it from the main Muslim sects.</p> <p>It was also noted that the AMC had proposed several amendments to the Units of Work which covered Islam. Reacting to this, in discussion the following points were made.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SS stated that the AMC's beliefs should not be reflected in the section dealing with mainstream Islam. • AL felt that it was important that the syllabus reflected the principle of "teaching not preaching", and that each Unit of Work concentrated on the fundamentals of the religion concerned. He did not think it was appropriate to describe what different Mosques think or do in the main Unit of Work on Islam. • LA expressed the view that children did need to understand the differences within as well as between religions and she suggested that the AMC's views be covered in an Appendix, with cross references in the main section to indicate that there were different interpretations. She also pointed out that teachers too needed to understand the differences within religions in order, for example, to manage behaviour. <p>It was agreed that this was another issue for the Committee to address.</p> | <p>Committee</p> |
| <p>7</p> | <p>Feedback from the Chair & Vice-Chair's meeting with Yvette Stanley Due to lack of time discussion of this item was deferred.</p> | |
| <p>8</p> | <p>Reflections on the 23 March letter from the Chair of SACRE and the Director of CSF</p> | |

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

| ITEM | ACTION |
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| Due to lack of time discussion of this item was deferred. | |
| 9 Feedback from the NASACRE Conference on 21 May | |
| Due to lack of time discussion of this item was deferred. | |
| 10 Date and place of next meeting | |
| The next scheduled meeting would take place on Tuesday 6 October at 7.15pm. | |
| It was also agreed that there should be an Extraordinary meeting on Tuesday 21 July at 7.15pm to review the latest draft of the syllabus. | |
| Prior to that meeting the following actions would need to take place: | |
| i. AK and KS to review the coverage of Humanism in other syllabuses | AK & KS |
| ii. Meeting of the Committee to review progress on the draft syllabus. | Committee |
| <i>The meeting closed at 10.00pm</i> | |