

MERTON STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

**Minutes of the SACRE meeting held on Tuesday 9th February 2021 (6.00-7.15pm)
Held remotely because of Covid-19 restrictions**

Present Group A – Christian, Other Faiths & Beliefs

Mike Freedman (MF) – Judaism

Group B – Church of England (SDBE)

Rachael Norman (RN)
Jane Savill (JS)
Andrew Williams (AW)

Group C – Teacher Associations

Not represented

Group D – Local Authority

Cllr Mike Brunt (MB)
Cllr Laxmi Attawar (LA)

LA Adviser

Keith Shipman (KS) – Merton Education Inclusion Manager

Others

Elizabeth Nassé (EN) Clerk

The following documents were circulated prior to the meeting:

- Feedback for Merton SACRE from RE coordinators meeting
- Draft Merton SACRE annual report 2019-2020

ITEM		ACTION
1	<p><u>Protocol for holding the meeting remotely</u> All agreed that because of ongoing Covid-19 restrictions the meeting should be held remotely. The meeting was held with video, using Microsoft Teams.</p>	
2	<p><u>Apologies for absence</u> Apologies for absence were accepted from Debra Beale and Hayley Ormrod. Standing apologies (because of difficulties accessing online meetings) were accepted from: Audrey King (AK), Saleem Sheikh (SS) and Waleed Ahmad (WA). WA attempted to join but was unable to make the link work. Members discussed possible alternative dial-in options for subsequent meetings if they need to remain online.</p>	
3	<p><u>Welcome and introductions</u> MB welcomed everyone to the meeting. The meeting was not quorate.</p>	
4	<p><u>Election of Chair</u> Deferred to the next quorate meeting.</p>	
5	<p><u>SACRE membership admin</u> KS reported that Headteachers didn't currently have capacity for joining SACRE as union reps. KS added that he had asked Jane McSherry (Merton's Assistant Director for Education) to identify possible union reps from the Merton Teaching Forum; this will be followed up. Ongoing actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MB/EN to follow up on the potential Buddhist rep and follow up with the Archdiocese – no progress made since the last meeting. • KS to follow up on union representation with Jane McSherry. 	MB/EN
6	<p><u>Minutes of previous SACRE meeting – 3rd November 2020</u> The minutes of the meeting held on 3.11.20 were reviewed for accuracy. The minutes will be recommended for approval at the next quorate meeting. Action: MB to send EN an electronic signature for signing of previously approved minutes.</p>	KS
7	<p><u>Matters arising from the meeting 3.11.20 not completed or covered elsewhere</u> Action: KS to share Merton equality data with SACRE members. KS confirmed that he had sent this out after the last meeting but would recirculate it if members request it. Action: Update the syllabus or produce a supplementary document which addresses any issues identified by the review. No updates required to date.</p>	MB/EN

ITEM

8

Update on schools/education – lockdown, RE, collective worship and faith group online materials (GM, MF)

ACTION

Online materials

MF reported that the Synagogue had made a video presentation for schools and will offer online support and Q&A sessions for pupils. The two-hour presentation includes a tour of the Synagogue and is split into sections, presented by different members of the Synagogue.

The materials won't be publicly accessible; schools will be invited to join scheduled sessions. Initially the provision will be offered to schools that have visited the Synagogue over the last 7-8 years. MF added that presenters of the online resources would undertake training on delivery in the near future.

KS suggested that the resources could be shared more widely and offered to send a letter to all Merton schools and RE leads when suitable.

Members agreed that the online resources would remain a useful alternative for schools that are unable to visit post-pandemic.

MB suggested that some of the resources could be viewed at the next SACRE meeting and thanked MF and his team for producing the materials.

Actions: KS to let schools and RE leads know about the resources and MB/EN/MF to add an agenda item for viewing a section of the presentation at the next meeting.

KS
MB/
EN/MF

Update from schools

KS reported that following reopening in September, schools are now closed again except to vulnerable children and those of key workers; the numbers attending are up by a third from the first lockdown. In some primary schools 50% of pupils are attending. Numbers are not as high in secondary schools.

Primary schools are offering a blend of direct teaching and online learning. More children now have devices and data to use at home, but accessibility still remains a problem for some. Secondary schools are running full timetabled lessons online.

It is hard to assess attainment and progress during lockdown as it is unknown how much parental intervention there has been.

The planning and delivery of blended learning has increased teacher workload and hours worked. Staff are also having to cover for colleagues who are isolating. It has been a really challenging term.

Safeguarding remains robust – families who are not engaging with home-learning are checked on regularly, including through home visits. KS commended the work that schools are doing in very challenging circumstances.

ITEM

ACTION

Feedback for Merton SACRE from RE coordinators meeting report
KS invited comments/questions on the report.

JS asked how students will be assessed given that SATs, GCSEs and A' Levels will not be taking place.

KS replied that the DfE had recently run a consultation on assessment and exams; it is likely that outcomes will be based on a combination of testing and teacher assessment. The exam elements may be compulsory for Years 11 and 13; Year 6 is more likely to be based on teacher assessment.

Primaries may focus more on the wellbeing of pupils rather than formal academic assessment this year. Some schools are introducing screen-free days, to address this.

JS commented that this was the case where she is a governor - in September pupils were supported to relearn behaviour needed to learn in the classroom environment following the prolonged period at home. RE and whole school learning will need to address wellbeing on the return to school and beyond.

RN commented that the content of the report resonated with what she had found in schools. Recent Education Endowment Foundation research and findings from Ofsted visits indicated that the current emphasis should be on engagement rather than the curriculum. Consequently, RE curriculum time has reduced and schools are having to be more creative and strategic about teaching the subject, for example using whole-school learning about BLM.

KS added that much of RE is about discussion, which has been particularly difficult to facilitate in the circumstances. History and English, for example have been adapted more easily than RE.

KS highlighted that the report indicated that some schools were using the 'Discovery Curriculum' - a standalone RE resource, which does not need specialist teaching, but which also does not follow the locally agreed syllabus; some areas of the syllabus may be missed.

RN asked if the agreed syllabus referenced the 'Discovery Curriculum'.
KS replied that it didn't, but the agreed syllabus did include links and references to many resources.

MB asked which schools had bought into the service and suggested that Merton's school improvement partners may need to address this with individual schools; KS agreed that schools are legally bound to abide by the agreed syllabus and SACRE would need reassurance that this is happening in schools buying into the 'Discovery Curriculum'.

BLM will be revisited by RE coordinators when lockdown has eased.

MB asked whether more pupils were withdrawing from RE during lockdown than when schools were fully open.

KS replied that this was not generally the case but since the last meeting one school had experienced the withdrawal of a group of pupils from one faith group. This had occurred in the past (with the same cohort) and interventions were, and remain, unsuccessful. RN added some secondary schools had asked whether pupils who need to catch up in core subjects can temporarily withdraw from RE.

MERTON STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

ITEM

ACTION

KS highlighted that many Headteachers are providing daily online collective worship; this could provide more opportunities for bringing children together in the future.

MB added that schools/SACRE should reflect on the positive practices that have arisen over the year and consider whether they should continue post-pandemic.

MB asked KS to thank RE coordinators for their feedback.

9 SACRE annual report 2019-2020

Members noted the draft annual report and the sections within it including: -

- The Faith dialogue project
- Change of the Constitution to reflect SDBE requirement for 3 representatives
- RE Coordinators meetings
- Determinations
- BLM
- Presentation by the LADO
- Ofsted reports – no direct reporting on RE
- Exams – no data for GCSE and A' levels because of Covid.
- Membership

KS/AW highlighted the Faith dialogue project as a key area of work and reported that the students that had taken part had found it fascinating. Unfortunately, because of Covid restrictions the project could not be completed, but the first sessions demonstrated that it could be done successfully.

KS/AW suggested that the project should be run again, keeping the same places of worship and introductory and concluding arrangements but aiming for a more diverse group of 6th Form students. AW/KS agreed to run another project and that it should be developed in the summer term, ready for an early start in the next academic year.

MB suggested that SACRE should seek brief feedback from the 2019-2020 participants to promote the next project.

Actions:

- **KS to seek feedback from some of the participants of the Faith dialogue project.**
- **MB to update the introduction to the annual report (highlighting the Faith dialogue project).**
- **EN to check membership page.**
- **Members to submit comments on draft to KS**
- **To be finalised for approval at the next quorate meeting. Add agenda item.**

KS

MB

EN

All

MB/EN

MERTON STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

ITEM	ACTION
<p>10 <u>Any other business</u> MB suggested that SACRE should consider continuing with some online meetings.</p>	
<p>11 <u>Date of next meeting:</u> - • Tuesday 6th July 2021 – possibly at the Council Chambers depending on Covid restrictions and availability – KS to enquire. Time of meeting 6pm if online or 7.00pm if in person.</p>	KS
<p>Action: 2021-22 draft meeting dates to be agreed at the summer term meeting – MB/EN to add agenda item.</p>	MB/EN

Chair of Merton SACRE..... *Arshad Helli*.....

date..... *7/10/21*.....

final DRAFT