

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDING
ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

3 December, 2019 (6.00pm – 7.30pm)

Present:

Representing Christian denominations and other religious dominations and beliefs (Group A):

Dr John Lester, Baha'i faith
Mr Om Dir, Hindu
Mr Kamal Siddiqui, Sunni Muslim
Mr Peter Feinson, Baptist
Mrs Jenny Fox, Salvation Army
Mrs Dawn Ladbrook*
Mr John Smailes, Evangelical Free Church
Mr Atta Ullah Issah, Ahmadiyya Muslim
Ms Wendy Brice-Thompson, Roman Catholic
Mr Luthaneal Adams, Pagan Federation

Representing the Church of England (Group B):

Mrs Stephanie Ellner, Church of England
Mrs Marlene Wylie, Church of England*
Mrs Ruth Everett, Anglican

Representing teachers (Group C):

Mrs Clare Beech

Representing the Local Authority (Group D):

Councillor Gillian Ford
Councillor Stephanie Nunn
Councillor Judith Holt

Professional advisers:

Julia Diamond-Conway
Deborah Weston

Michelle Morgan – Clerk

**Chair's
Initials**

Observers:

Ms Kathryn Everitt – Ardleigh Green Junior

Ms Terry Riches – Upminster Junior

*indicates for part of meeting

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Mrs S Ellner (Chair) welcomed all to the meeting and for the benefit of those new to the group, introductions were made. It was noted that Ms M Wylie had sent her apologies that she would be arriving to the meeting late.

Apologies for absence were received from Saddhabhaya, Mr N Mubashar, Mr B Smith and Mrs K Fanning.

It was noted that Mr S Narwal, Mr T Mahmood, Rabbi L Sunderland, Pastor A Peter, Mrs S Freeman, Mrs L Linton, Cllr P Crowder and Cllr T Lewal were not in attendance but no apologies for absence had been received.

2. NEW OR SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Chair welcomed Ms K Everitt and Ms T Riches, both RE subject leaders who were observing the meeting. Members also welcomed Mr Atta Ullah-Issah who was representing the Ahmadiyya Muslim faith in the absence of Mr N Mubashar.

3. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

Mrs D Weston referred to the current terms of reference which state that the term of office of the Chair is for 2 years although if decided, the group could ask the Local Authority to amend these terms. Members were advised that the term of office of the Vice Chair was also for 2 years.

Members were invited to put themselves forward for the role of Chair and Vice Chair. Cllr G Ford (Group D) expressed an interest in the role of Chair and Mrs W Brice-Thompson (Group A) as Vice Chair.

Mrs D Weston stated that it would be ideal to have 2 different groups represented in the roles of Chair and Vice Chair.

Members elected Cllr G Ford as Chair of SACRE and Mrs W Brice-Thompson as Vice Chair for a 2 year term of office until the first meeting of the autumn term 2021. Cllr G Ford agreed to chair the remainder of the meeting. Formal thanks were passed on to Mrs S Ellner (former Chair) and Dr J Lester (former Vice Chair) for their time in service especially, more

recently in the successful organisation of the exhibition and competition linked to the BBC's Year of Beliefs.

4. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 16 MAY 2019 AND MATTERS ARISING

4.1. The notes of the meeting held on 16 May 2019, were agreed as a true record subject to the amendment that Mrs J Fox had sent her apologies in advance of the meeting and that the Commission for RE report had been, rather than would be, published (page 4).

4.2. Matters arising from the minutes (not included elsewhere on the agenda) were noted as follows:

4.2.1. Letter of congratulations (minute 4.2, refers): Mrs J Diamond-Conway reported that to the best of her knowledge there had been no letters sent to schools congratulating them on their results when they had achieved higher than the national average. Members agreed to refer back to this when next reviewing school outcomes.

4.2.2. Year of Beliefs Art display (minute 5, refers): It was noted that Frances Bardsley Academy for Girls had been approached to facilitate a session for parents to view the exhibition.

4.2.3. HSIS Termly update (minute 5, refers): It was noted that not all Members had received the termly HSIS report and therefore the clerk agreed to redistribute.

Action: HGS

4.2.4. Resource catalogue (minute 6, refers): Mrs D Weston agreed to share the link to the resource catalogue via GoogleDocs.

Action: Mrs D Weston

4.2.5. NASACRE Conference (minute 7, refers): Mrs J Diamond-Conway agreed to share any resources from the NASACRE Conference.

Action: Mrs J Diamond-Conway

4.2.6. Membership (minute 11.1, refers): Members noted that approval had been received from the Diocese for Mrs W Brice-Thompson to become the Roman Catholic representative on SACRE.

Mrs J Diamond-Conway reported that she had attempted to contact Rabbi L Sunderland to discuss his representation however had not been successful. Members agreed that it was important to ensure that the Jewish Community were represented and as the Rabbi had not attended, nor sent apologies for over 3 meetings, it was agreed that Mrs J Diamond-Conway would contact the Board of Deputies to request a new representative.

Action: Mrs J Diamond-Conway

5. LOCAL UPDATES

Members acknowledged receipt of the local updates report. There were no questions raised.

6. AGREED SYLLABUS

Mrs J Diamond-Conway referred to the previous meeting, where Members had agreed not to make a decision regarding the future syllabus as more guidance was required regarding available resources and assessment. Members acknowledged that significant focus within the New Ofsted Framework regarding the need to demonstrate a broad and balanced curriculum and that inspections would now include a 'deep dive' into foundation subjects which might include RE. As a result, subject leaders would need to be able to articulate effectively the intent, implementation and impact of their curriculum. In the most recent survey, teachers had therefore requested to retain the current curriculum which, although fairly complex, was now embedded. Alternatively, Members were advised that the decision could be made to look at a new, simpler curriculum which might be easier to explain however would mean that teachers would have to start afresh.

Teachers present urged caution, explaining that staff were currently confident with the current curriculum in place and that although minor changes would be welcomed by staff it would be an incredible amount of work to put in place a whole new curriculum at a time when there were already a significant number of changes being introduced as a result of the new framework. Teachers reiterated that the aims and intent within the current syllabus were strong. Members agreed therefore to wait to gain more feedback following Ofsted Inspections and review next actions in the spring term.

Action: HGS

Mrs J Diamond-Conway reported that the RE training scheduled by HSIS over the autumn term had been welcomed; other boroughs had not been

so proactive in supporting subject leaders. Training dates for the spring term were available on the portal and teachers were encouraged to attend.

7. NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN EDUCATION

Members noted that the National Updates document had been circulated with the agenda. Mrs J Diamond-Conway reported that she would welcome any response with regards to the following areas:

- How SACRE could improve the recruitment of trainee teachers of RE;
- What response SACRE Members had with regards to the Welsh consultation; and
- How could SACRE members use and promote the new online resource – Discovering Sacred Texts.

Mrs D Weston reported that one of the greatest challenges was to increase the number of secondary RE teachers who were specialists in the subject as currently 53% of RE was taught by teachers with no postgraduate level qualification in the subject; this ultimately would impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' learning and understanding. However Mrs D Weston was pleased to report, that partially helped by the introduction of a bursary, the recruitment of RE teachers had improved significantly over the previous year. In response to a question, Mrs D Weston confirmed that a number of these trainee teachers were based in London and therefore would possibly look to teach in Havering.

Cllr Judith Holt arrived.

Members agreed that it would be beneficial to put together a document which encouraged trainee teachers to come and work in Havering.

Action: Mrs D Weston/Mrs J Diamond-Conway / Chair

Members asked if secondary RE teachers had access to a termly meeting like their primary colleagues. It was noted that it was often more complex to cover classes in secondary schools however that having an annual session might be more accessible if appropriate notice was given. Mrs D Weston explained that in the past, she had held a Youth SACRE Conference which had enabled staff in attendance to have their own sessions; this might be an option for secondary and primary colleagues. Mrs R Everett explained that she might be able to support with contacting secondary colleagues as a result of contacts in her role.

8. ANNUAL REPORT

Members received and agreed the annual report; there were no questions.

9. YEAR OF BELIEFS

Members were invited to look at the top 42 entries from the school competition in order to identify the top three.

First prize – Arwen

Second prize – Nevada

Joint third prize – Olivia Scarlett and Niyah

It was noted that there had been over 150 entries in total which had been deemed a great success. Moving forward, Members acknowledged that schools required more notice to contribute to and attend such events as numerous risk assessments and other reports had to be completed in advance. Thanks were passed onto the Frances Bardsley Academy for Girls and Havering Library for exhibiting the work.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr K Siddiqui agreed to send his identified errors within the syllabus with regards to the Sunni Muslim faith to the Chair and Mrs J Diamond-Conway.

Action: Mr K Siddiqui

Dr J Lester provided all members with a leaflet on 'The Shrine of the Báb in Haifa' and on the 'Week of Prayer for World Peace 2019-2020.'

11. DATES OF MEETINGS IN THE NEXT ACADEMIC YEAR

The Chair agreed to circulate dates of the remaining meetings of the 2019-20 academic year.

Action: Chair

The meeting closed at 7.30pm.