

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)
Town Hall, Romford
Thursday 9 May 2013 (7.00pm – 8.45pm)**

**Representing other
Christian and religious
denominations
(Group A)**

Mrs Pamela Coles
Dr John Lester
Mr Kamal Siddiqui
Mrs Christine Seymour
Mr Kevin Walsh

**Representing the
Church of England
(Group B)**

Mrs Susan Freeman

**Representing the
Teaching Profession
(Group C)**

Mr Keith Shurlock

**Representing the
Local Authority
Councillors
(Group D)**

Pam Light

Councillor Wendy Brice-Thompson (co-optee), Mr Daniel Hugill (Secondary Advisor) and Mrs Judith Payne (HSIS – Primary Advisor) were also present.

64. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE & NEW OR SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Paul Rochford, Paul McGeary and Gillian Ford, Mrs Alison Seaman, Mrs Anne Masters, Ms Linda Munday and Mr Nick Hills. There were no substitutions.

The Chairman welcomed Mr David Weston who was attending his first SACRE as a representative of the Buddhist faith.

65. MINUTES & MATTERS ARISING:

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2012 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

Councillor Wendy Brice-Thompson asked whether the clerk had been able to make any progress in connection with non-attending members. In response, the clerk said that this had not been possible and that, as a consequence he would be having discussions with the Chair and Vice Chair after the meeting to see whether there was a better way to manage membership and attendance.

66. PRESENTATION BY MR ALAN BRINE AN OFSTED HMI:

The Chairman welcomed Mr Brine to the meeting and informed those present that he would be providing members with an overview of the position of RE at a national level in order that Havering SACRE would have a better understanding of what was happening across the country – especially since the introduction of the e-Bacc and the rapid expansion of academies.

Mr Brine began by saying that there had been no RE inspection in Havering for some time. He mentioned Broughton Secondary School which had been awarded the RE

Quality Mark for the excellence of its RE provision. He said that there was much that was good and there were pockets of excellence across the country. He thought that there were RE teachers who contributed enormously to the mental and spiritual development of pupils, but he also warned about the trend away from having dedicated RE lessons and informed SACRE that it had – in a good many instances – been relegated to philosophical and morality elements in the generalised PSHE classes of a growing number of schools.

He explained that RE faced an uncertain future in education above KS1 and 2 as the government moved further away from keeping it distinct and academies sought to shape their own curriculums to deliver what they considered the education system needed to provide – and this was being done with very little (if any) accountability or scrutiny.

Certainly there was now (with the demise of the QCA) no central organ to promote good practice nationally and so, whilst many schools (increasingly confined to voluntary controlled schools) continued to pursue the teaching of RE, many others were losing a sense of its importance and he could see growing apathy and indifference among staff and pupils alike – though curiously, when pupils were challenged about whether the loss of RE was a good or bad thing, he had noticed that their indifference was largely due to poor teaching which they considered was uninspiring and irrelevant, though many conceded that they would be interested if the subject was taught in a challenging and imaginative way. He felt that this would be a critical area which needed to be developed.

On the other hand, he said he knew of young teachers who were prepared and able to deliver this, but who found their efforts frustrated because of the lack of support in the school and the lack of support from either the government or from a national body.

Mr Brine said that he didn't want to leave a too negative impression because there were positive developments as well: He mentioned the growing influence of the All Party Parliamentary Group, the use of "ambassadors" (older pupils interacting with younger forms to share their faith) in Redbridge which had been note-worthily successful and the importance of teaching Spiritual/Moral/Social and Cultural (SMSC) values. He encouraged SACRE to consider co-opting a representative of Havering's academies and even to explore the possibility of setting up a "junior" SACRE formed from older pupil school representatives which could sit alongside SACRE and pursue issues among pupils.

He concluded by saying that the future of RE was important because the country was culturally so diverse that a failure to address the differences and explore the similarities in a positive manner was essential to dispel stereotypes and reduce tensions borne out of misunderstanding and ignorance. He felt that in order to ensure social cohesion, teachers needed to be taught how to engage with other faiths and pass that onto their students in a positive manner.

The Chairman proposed a vote of thanks for Mr Brine and said that she felt there was much for SACRE to think about over the coming months and that decisions being made now would impact and shape religious education for years to come.

67. UPDATE ON SCHOOL ACTIVITY:**Primary:**

Mrs Payne reported that at the January Primary RE co-ordinators' meeting, Stephen Pett, a member of the RE Today Services Advisory Team, explored Hinduism and Christianity. Co-ordinators improved their subject knowledge and learned about a variety of engaging strategies for learning about - and from - these two religions.

Resources and ideas supporting creative, visual, active and enquiry-based learning were shared. This session had been well received by 30 co-ordinators.

Secondary:

Because of the fact that the secondary phase of education in Havering was now predominantly Academy based, Mr Hugill deferred a report at this time.

68. NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN R.E.:

Mr Hugill stated that Mr Brine had covered most of what he could report. He added that the RE Council was still in the process of reviewing the curriculum. He said that despite what Mr Brine had told SACRE, secondary schools could follow any Agreed Syllabus if they chose to.

Councillor Light asked whether it could be possible to find out what the academies were doing. She was informed that the education service would only know if the academy requested a havering syllabus. There was no requirement for academies to tell the education service anything, but Mr Hugill and the Chair would write to the academies to see what they were doing – especially at KS 3 – and whether a link could be made which might lead to dialogue and which might even lead to having an Academy representative on SACRE at some point in the future. An opening with the academies could lead to reintroducing the Michael Edwards' award more generally into the secondary phase.

69. DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT:

This was before SACRE in its bare form – primarily the statistics. It needed the Chairman's foreword and there were some corrections to be made and one or two changes to be made. The clerk said that all these elements could be addressed over the next week or two and that the final draft would be presented to SACRE at its meeting in June. If accepted, it would be published on the Council's web-site and be presented to Council. It could be disseminated in other ways – certainly it ought to be sent to all Havering schools.

70. THE MICHAEL EDWARDS' AWARD:

The Chairman stated that the ME award ought this year to be contested by secondary schools as it had just been presented to Ravenscourt School (Special Needs school) and had previously been awarded to Hacton (Primary phase).

Because most of Havering's secondary schools were now academies, there was clearly a problem. Had members any suggestions? Mr Hugill proposed a direct approach this year to the Sacred Heart School and, there being no other proposals, this was accepted for 2013.

71. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

Dr Lester informed those present that the Interfaith Newsletter was available.

Mr Hugill proposed that, in the wake of Mr Brine's earlier statement about "Ambassadors" he would contact the London Borough of Redbridge to find out more about it and see whether this could be applied within Havering schools.

Mrs Payne said that she would follow-up on Mr Brine's suggestions.

Mr Shurlock announced that he had accepted the position of Principal at a school in Bangladesh and that he would be taking up this appointment in August. This being the case, he was stepping down from membership of SACRE, but before he left, he would see whether the Head of another school – who had already expressed an interest in the work of SACRE – would be prepared to take over.

On behalf of SACRE, the Chairman thanked Mr Shurlock for all his support, wished him well in his new appointment and said she welcomed his thoughtfulness in trying to provide a successor to represent the ASCL.

72. FUTURE DATES:

Members were reminded that the external visit would take place on **6 June 2013** at the Church Hall, situated on the first floor of **Nelmes United Reformed Church, Nelmes Road, Hornchurch RM11 3JA** commencing at **6.30pm**. It would be an opportunity to discover what was involved in the Humanist approach to faiths and the world. She thanked Mrs Seymour for arranging this visit.

The clerk invited members to decide on a date for the Autumn Term meeting (which would be held at the Town Hall and would involve the elections for the Chair and Vice Chairmanship (previously held on 11 October 2011). Members settled on **Wednesday 9 October 2013** and the clerk confirmed the start time would be **7.00pm**.