

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

**24 February 2025**

The meeting took place at the Safeguarding Academy

Present

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

Wendy Brice-Thompson, Roman Catholic  
Jenny Fox, Salvation Army  
Dr John Lester, Baha'i faith  
Peter Feinson, Baptist  
Tariq Mahmood MBE, Sunni Muslim  
John Smailes, Evangelical Free Church  
Barry Smith, United Reformed Church

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

Ruth Everett

### **Co-opted Member**

Sidra Naeem

### **Professional adviser:**

Julia Diamond-Conway

Michelle Morgan – Clerk, Havering Governor Services

## **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

T Mahmood MBE welcomed all to the Safeguarding Academy. Thanks were passed on by Members for such a warm welcome.

In the absence of the Chair, JL agreed to Chair the meeting and would be referred to as the Acting Chair.

Apologies for absence had been received from Dawn Ladbrook, Karen Van Coevorden, Cllr Tumilty, Stephanie Ellner, Mr Siddiqui, Corinne Simmons, Cllr Taylor and Kathryn Everitt.

Absence from the following Members was noted: George Prinn, Om Dhir, Sansar Narwal, Pastor Aloysious Peter, Nasir Mubasher, Luthaneal

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Adams, Katheryn Everitt, Terry Riches, Bal Degun, Cllr McArdle and Cllr Ruck.

It was noted that the meeting was not quorate as there were no members from group C or D, in attendance.

## **2. NEW OR SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

There were no new or substitute Members in attendance. It was agreed to inform new Members that they are able to send representatives to the meeting if they were unable to attend.

**ACTION: HGS**

## **3. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR**

As the meeting was inquorate, the election of Chair and Vice Chair were deferred to the autumn term.

**ACTION: HGS**

## **4. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 5 DECEMBER 2024 AND MATTERS ARISING**

4.1. The minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2024 were received and agreed subject to the amendment of Julie Child's surname. SACRE Members agreed to make the recommendation to formally approve the minutes at the next meeting.

**ACTION: HGS**

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

4.2.1. Youth SACRE (Minute 8, refers): JDC advised that Newham were running their Youth SACRE differently from previous years, with mini projects being run in different secondary schools across the borough. Newham SACRE had confirmed that Cllr Taylor would be welcome to go and visit these in action. If Cllr Taylor were interested, JDC would pass on the relevant details. HGS would contact Cllr Taylor to advise.

**ACTION: HGS**

4.2.2. Annual report 2023-24 (Minute 7, refers): The Havering SACRE Annual Report 2023-24 had been shared with the DfE and NASACRE.

- 4.2.3. Membership (Minute 10, refers): RE advised that the Diocesan Board of Education was currently reviewing SACRE membership. RE confirmed that she would continue to support Havering SACRE until new members had been identified.

## 5. UPDATE ON SCHOOL ACTIVITY

JDC explained that due to changes to contract, JDC had less contact with the schools and therefore was not in the position to provide an update on school activity. In the future, this item would come from a member of Group C. Further clarification was given, that the CPD (Continuous Professional Development) sessions offered to teachers were now national, where teachers would benefit from input from an expert of the specific subject area and also the opportunity to network with colleagues from all over the country. In addition, there was time allocated for local network discussions. JDC would, however, be leading 1 day of training on 18 March 2025 for Havering RE Subject Leaders.

## 6. NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

SACRE Members referred to the article 'Windows into Buddhism' and reflected that there was no representative from the Buddhist faith on SACRE or the Interfaith Forum.

The best practice work of the Wolf Institute was highlighted, where high quality CPD and resources were available for schools, especially secondary level.

Concern was shared by the Acting Chair regarding the data provided about the limited number of RE training hours included in teacher training. JDC stated however, that when she first started as an RE Advisor back in 2024, the majority of RE Subject Leaders were very early in their teaching careers, whereas this had shifted to more experienced teachers.

Referring to the quality resources and links included within the report, it was agreed that JDC would see if it could also be uploaded onto the HES portal, so that teachers were also able to access the same information.

**ACTION: JDC**

## 7. OFSTED PRESENTATION

JDC gave an Ofsted update presentation titled 'Deep and meaningful? Religious Education subject report' following the publication of the report published in April 2024. A copy of the presentation would be shared with the minutes.

**ACTION: HGS**

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JDC advised that the report had been discussed in depth with Subject Leaders across the 2024 summer term. The content of the report had not been of significant surprise, as the HMCI annual report in 2023 had shared some concerns about the teaching of RE. It was highlighted that Ofsted had also shared concerns about other subject areas.

Questions and discussion as a result of the presentation were as follows:

- The sample of schools used during the research for the report was very small, although a full range of types of school had been used.
- It was suggested by a SACRE Member, that with the National Curriculum, there was not enough time to teach RE in depth. JDC explained that it was important to get the balance right. Schools could evidence that they were teaching enough of the substantive knowledge, so pupils understand world views and the world of religion, but some elements had to be left out, so that there was time for more in depth discussion. It was hoped, therefore, that pupils had the skills to help them to understand other beliefs. It was also highlighted that RE was not part of the National Curriculum; teachers followed the local Agreed Syllabus. However discussion was ongoing regarding a national content standard curriculum. JDC stressed that the local Agreed Syllabus, agreed by SACRE, did allow for breadth and depth of learning. The syllabus contained units of learning, from EYFS to KS4, however these were just suggestions.
- A SACRE Member highlighted that that report did not discuss the benefit of people from different faiths going into schools; the opportunity to do so had reduced over the years and although some schools welcomed this interaction, some showed no interest. It was agreed that hearing directly from visitors from different faiths would supplement pupils' learning. It was however acknowledged that the purpose of the report had been more about how RE was taught and valued in schools as a subject, and that high quality RE would of course include such visitors under the 'ways of knowing' element.
- A SACRE Member reflected what the outcomes would have been if the questions asked of the small sample of schools, had been asked of schools within Havering. JDC responded that when RE Subject Leaders had experienced 'deep dives' the Ofsted feedback had been largely positive. It was noted that the report did also capture areas where RE teaching was working well, and that every subject would have strengths and weaknesses.

- It was questioned if the teachers of RE were better suited to have a neutral stance with regards to faith. JDC explained that teachers had to be able to teach about a number of religious and non-religious world views such as humanism and atheism also.
- It was further questioned whether, to provide the broad and balanced curriculum, fewer religions should be covered to allow more time for discuss and reflection. To a certain extent, RE Subject Leaders had discretion, however the curriculum should be inclusive, so significant religious communities within the local area should be included.
- SACRE Members discussed religious festivals, and agreed that pupils' learning should include wider events across a number of faiths. The example was given of celebrating Harvest Festival as there was also Shavuot, the Jewish Harvest Festival.

## 8. SECONDARY SCHOOL OUTCOMES MONITORING

SACRE Members had received a report detailing the number of hours of RE teaching per year group and the GCS results of the secondary schools in Havering. SACRE Members were asked to consider the percentage of hours against the results gained and identify where there might be concerns, and therefore more information could be requested.

It was highlighted that the data provided was dependent on the person who filled it in and at some schools, RE might be classed as Philosophy and Ethics, as an example. The forms may also have been filled in by an RE Subject Leader or someone from the admin team, who may have a different understanding of the time allocated.

It was agreed that SACRE Members would analyse the data individually and bring back their findings to the next SACRE meeting for discussion. R Everett advised that she was already working directly with Frances Bardsley and therefore SACRE Members could focus on the other secondary schools in Havering.

**ACTION: SACRE Members / HGS (for the agenda)**

## 9. WORKING PARTY UPDATE – PRIMARY RE CONFERENCE

As there had been no update since the previous meeting, working party members agreed to meet on 15 April 2025 at 1pm at the Salvation Army in Romford. All SACRE Members were welcome to attend the meeting, however the following confirmed their availability:

S Naeem / J Lester / T Mahmood / J Fox

After further discussion, it was agreed that the event should focus on inviting Year 4 or 5 pupils. Dates were proposed as either 5 June 2026 or 10 June 2026.

#### **10.DETERMINATION PROCESS**

JDC confirmed that Newham SACRE was happy for Havering to use their determination process as long as Newham was credited on the form. SACRE Members agreed. HGS would share this recommendation with the LA.

**ACTION: HGS**

#### **11.SCHOOL WEBSITE MONITORING**

It was agreed for SACRE Members to complete the remaining website audits from Years 1 and 2 before allocating out Year 3 schools in the summer term. A copy of the audit, along with the remaining schools, had been shared with the meeting papers. R Everett advised that she would complete the audits previously allocated to M Wylie, who had since left Havering SACRE.

#### **12.ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

S Naeem encouraged SACRE Members to attend the next Interfaith Forum, which was taking place on Wednesday 26 March 2025 at Elbrook House, Harold Wood. The theme of the event was 'How does our creed care for the community?'

#### **13.DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

SACRE Members agreed a provisional date of Thursday 19 June 2025 at 6pm for the summer term meeting. The potential venue would be the Romford Evangelical Church.

B Smith and R Everitt sent their apologies in advance for this date.

In order to be quorate, HGS would check with S Ellner and K Van Coevorden if they could attend before confirming with the group.

**ACTION: HGS**

The Acting Chair thanked everyone for their time.

The meeting closed at 8.15pm.

Chair.....

Date.....

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