

**OXFORDSHIRE
STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

Agreed actions from SACRE meeting, 5th March 2018

Minute no	Action	Who?	When by?
1.	Write to members who have not attended meetings recently.	C Mathew	In advance of June meeting
4.	Circulate draft annual report for comments.	B Moore	ASAP
4.	Provide guidance on observance of Ramadan in schools for circulation.	S Ramzy	ASAP
5.	Circulate Right to Withdraw questionnaire for information.	B Moore	In advance of June meeting.
6. ii	Circulate proposed amendments to SACRE constitution.	B Moore	End April
6. iii	Provide ideas for establishing teacher networks, to B Moore.	R Cohen	ASAP
6. iii	Provide feedback on draft letter to headteachers, to B Moore.	All members	ASAP
6. iii	Provide suggested quotations for letter to RE co-ordinators, to B Moore	J Webster	ASAP
6. iii	Write to RE co-ordinators	B Moore	End April
6. iv	Provide information for website.	Faith group representatives	End April
6. vi	Provide any further suggestions for making contacts with teachers.	All members	ASAP
7.	Include website link to Refocus	H Batten	ASAP
8.	Progress arrangements for open teacher meeting.	B Moore	Ongoing
9.	Research accurate data on RE provision.	B Moore & N Fancourt	Report to June meeting
10.	Provide advice on ways to communicate with schools.	H Hibbert-Biles	ASAP
12.	Provide regular updates on agreed actions.	B Moore	As available

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**Minutes of the Oxfordshire SACRE Meeting
At County Hall, Oxford, on Monday 5th March 2018 at 4.00 pm**

Present: Committee A: World Faiths, Christian Denominations
M = Member Ruth Cohen (M)
SD = Standing Deputy Sheikh Ramzy (M)
Chandra Vadivale (M) & Sathaya Vadivale (SD)

Committee B: Church of England
Helen Norman (M)
Christine Price-Smith (M)
Carol Worthington (M)

Committee C: Teacher representatives – absent

Committee D: Local Authority
Cllr Bob Johnston (M)
Cllr Charles Mathew (M) – Chair
Cllr Glynis Phillips

Co-opted Members
Shahin Bekhradnia (M)
Nigel Fancourt (M)
Margaret Godden (M) & John Webster (SD)
Helina Taghavi (M)

Local Authority Officer - absent

In attendance: Helen Batten (Clerk)
Bill Moore (Advisor to SACRE)

Visitors: Cllr Jamila Azad - OCC
Rae Hancock – Cherwell School
Cllr Hilary Hibbert-Biles – OCC Cabinet Member
Jackie Holderness – Christ Church Cathedral
Lucie Strange – Be.Space

Apologies: Susan Grenfell (M – committee B)
Catherine Hayward (OCC officer)
Lyn Moore (M – committee C)
Martin Wellings (M – committee A)

1 Introduction

- CM welcomed everybody to the meeting, and introduced visitors.
- Apologies tendered were accepted.
- CM recommended contacting members who have not attended meetings regularly, to encourage their input, and it was agreed to do this before the next meeting.

Action: CM to contact members as appropriate.

2 Purpose of meeting

The purpose of the meeting, to push forward actions that will support schools in Oxfordshire with the provision of RE, was agreed.

3 Reflection

CM spoke of the importance of RE in an increasingly troubled world. However, while religious thought is arguably the basis of all good things, it has also led to some bad things so it is therefore crucial that SACRE continues to support high quality RE provision for all children. Members endorsed this sentiment.

4 Minutes of 27th June 2017 & matters arising

- (i) Minutes which had been circulated were approved as an accurate record.
- (ii) Matters arising, not otherwise covered, were considered:
 - **SACRE annual report:** (item 5): The draft 2016-17 report will be available within the next few weeks.
Action: BM to circulate draft report for comments.
 - **Advice for schools on observance of Ramadan:** SR reported that guidance for schools is now available from the Muslim Council. This will be circulated for information and distributed with the SACRE annual report.
Action: SR to provide guidance for circulation.

5 Meeting with the RE Commissioner, 6th November 2017

Notes of the discussion with Dr Joyce Miller had been circulated. Attendees agreed that this had been an interesting and helpful meeting, and thanked Steve Beegoo for planting the idea. Further points were discussed:

- To ensure support from schools, SACRE activities will need to be accessible with meeting arrangements that work for teachers. We should not assume that schools will automatically want to engage, and will need to work in a way that actively encourages it. It might be helpful to consider adjusting SACRE membership to ensure good representation for all schools, and further advice on the best way to approach academies would be helpful.
- Further clarification was requested about specific inclusion of RE in teacher training. BM advised that this has been identified as a major area requiring improvement, and it is anticipated that this will be a strong recommendation in the final Commissioners' report to government.
- A teacher noted that withdrawal from RE lessons actually happens extremely rarely. The importance of good communications between schools and parents was acknowledged, as the best means of preventing this situation, and it was agreed that this is an area where SACRE can directly support schools. BM advised that further university research is being completed on these aspects and relevant material will be circulated. **Action: BM to circulate right to withdraw research questionnaire.**

6 Strategic development of SACRE

BM, CM and HB provided updates on previously agreed activities.

(i) **OCC links**

- BM had developed a good working relationship with Catherine Hayward, although her other commitments limit capacity to become involved with SACRE work. School partnership groups and the primary and secondary heads' associations have been identified as the best ways to pursue contacts with individual schools and further advice is awaited on how to move this forward. HHB suggested that there may also be potential to adjust some staffing arrangements to better enable officers to attend SACRE meetings, and she will look at any possibilities.
- The SACRE budget has been reduced from £7,500 to £6,000 with an additional small amount available for hosting events. Discussion is ongoing to see if there is any scope to increase this, although this will depend on demonstrating the vital role played by SACRE.
- There are some ongoing challenges due to SACRE having no physical base within OCC. This can hamper routine enquiries and meeting organisation, although good links with County Hall staff help with practical matters.

(ii) **Increasing SACRE membership**

- Actions are ongoing to fill gaps in faith groups representation.
- The need to ensure good representation from schools was recognised, but this also needs to be manageable. BM suggested that, following the academisation of many schools, it may now be the right time to look at amending the SACRE constitution to set out requirements by school-type to ensure wider representation. Further points were made by teachers:
 - ~ We should look at how SACRE can also support schools in the private sector, that may not be aware of its existence.
 - ~ We should not assume that the schools within a single academy trust will work in the same way, or always share information effectively.
 - ~ We should keep union representation, which is open to all members.

Based on this discussion, a proposed way forward will be circulated for comment.

Action: BM to circulate proposed alterations to SACRE constitution.

(iii) **Meeting organisation**

- It was agreed that the 4.00 pm start time is generally more convenient for most members, and to continue this in future wherever possible.
- It was agreed that holding regular SACRE meetings in schools is of limited value to SACRE and to the schools in question. Although it may be easier for travel by car, it is impossible to reach many venues outside Oxford by public transport. It is also important to maintain the close connection with OCC and visibility of SACRE within the Authority. It was therefore agreed to keep the regular programme of SACRE meetings at County Hall.
- It was suggested that to engage schools in SACRE, events will need to provide the effective support they need. We need to be realistic about what we can achieve. RC suggested that the best approach will be to look at supporting clusters of schools, and facilitating teachers to set up their own networks, as is currently happening very successfully with Early Years.

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Action: RC to provide some further thoughts on a suggested way forward that will best support teachers.

- A draft letter to headteachers had been circulated. It was suggested that this should be more explicit about spiritual development within the context of collective worship. More clarity about schools' legal obligations would also be helpful, as well as an explanation of what SACRE can do to help meet them. BM asked for comments to be provided by email. **Action: All members to provide feedback to BM on the draft headteacher letter.**
- A separate communication to RE co-ordinators will also be prepared, to include more information about practical support from SACRE. It was suggested that this could be based on selected quotations from different viewpoints. **Action: JW to provide suggested quotations; BM to prepare letter to RE co-ordinators.**

- (iv) **Database of faiths:** All groups were asked to provide the following information:
- *Main faith centres in Oxfordshire, or surrounding counties.*
 - *Name of person to contact for further details about visits or arranging speakers in school;*
 - *Suggestions of useful websites which will build up a directory of online resources.*
- Action: All groups to provide information to BM and HB by end April.**
- (v) **Website:** Some updating of the RE page on the OCC website has been completed, but there are a number of restrictions which will make it hard to achieve exactly what we want. Using information requested, work will continue to develop this into a better tool to support teachers.
- (vi) **Teacher networks**
- Whilst recognising that SACRE has very limited capacity to run events, it can facilitate and promote teachers setting up their own support networks and possible funding to support this work is being investigated.
 - It was suggested that a specific programme to capture new teachers, linking with the universities in Oxford, would be an effective approach that SACRE could undertake and this idea was welcomed. BM requested all members to provide any further ideas by email. **Action: All members to provide suggestions for ways that SACRE can work directly with teachers.**
 - A teacher event will be planned, to be discussed under agenda item 8.

7 REFocus newsletter

The January 2018 newsletter had been circulated. It is flagged from 'Schools News' which goes into every school office weekly by email. It was agreed to also link it from the website. **Action: HB to include REFfocus link on website.**

8 Open meeting for teachers

It was agreed to focus on presenting a teacher event in one district only, and a successful formula can be repeated in a different area in 2019. An evening event in the south of the county will be organised, to take place at a school venue during the week commencing 9th July. The event will require a clear purpose to be set out. Teachers suggested that more information about the purpose of SACRE would be helpful, as well as opportunities to meet faith group

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representatives and raise questions. The 'Teachmeet' format is popular and successful and could be replicated. **Action: BM to progress arrangements as discussed.**

9 NATRE information on 'non-compliant' secondary schools

Information about RE provision had been circulated. BM explained that there are some errors in the data, which can also be misleading because RE is often delivered under humanities. It was agreed that a clear understanding of the situation would be helpful to inform future actions to support schools. **Action: BM and NF to look at how to obtain accurate information from schools about RE provision.**

10 Member contributions

- CW advised that her book, *A window on Christianity*, which aims to draw together thinking on religious literacy will shortly be published, and details of this will be circulated.
- RH will be speaking at the Association of University Lecturers in RE conference in May, and will provide a report of the event.
- It was suggested that the SACRE membership represents a huge resource of experience and knowledge, which could be put to use through providing ambassadors to schools to inform student discussion, although it may well prove impractical to develop such a programme. This is an idea which could be progressed through teacher networks.
- MG advised that the Humanists now have links with Balliol College and will be looking at hosting school visits there.
- HHB confirmed that she will continue to do everything possible to support the work of SACRE. A first action will be to discuss school communications with the Schools Forum. **Action: HHB to advise on how best SACRE can communicate with schools.**
- On behalf of the meeting, CM thanked HHB for attending and for her offer of practical support.

11 Next meeting

The next meeting will take place at County Hall on Monday 11th June 2018 at 4:00 pm.

12 Close

Members considered how this meeting had moved SACRE forward. It was generally agreed that the meeting had include a lot of member input and ideas and had been generally progressive. It will be important to ensure that the current momentum is maintained before the June meeting, and all actions agreed will be followed up. **Action: BM to provide updates on agreed actions.**

CM thanked all members and visitors for their attendance and input, and closed the meeting at 6:00 pm.