

**OXFORDSHIRE
STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

***Minutes of the Oxfordshire SACRE Meeting
Tuesday 27th June 2017 at County Hall, Oxford at 2.00 pm***

Present: Committee A: World Faiths, Christian Denominations

M = Member
SD = Standing Deputy

Steve Beegoo (M)
Ruth Cohen (M)
Sheikh Ramzy (M)
Dick Wolff (M)
Martin Wellings (M)

Committee B: Church of England

Carol Worthington (M)
Christine Price-Smith (M)

Committee C: Teacher representatives

Lyn Moore (M)

Committee D: Local Authority

Cllr Charles Mathew (M) - Chair

Co-opted Members

Margaret Godden (M)
Helina Taghavi (M)
John Webster (SD)

Local Authority Officer

Sara Carey

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

Visitors: Samantha Cragg – Oxford Schools Chaplaincy
Sam McKavanagh – Larkmead School

Apologies: Jamila Azad (committee D)
Shahin Bekhradnia/Darayus Motivala (M/SD – Co-opted)
Nigel Fancourt (M- Co-opted)
Susan Grenfell (M – committee B)
Catherine Hayward/Tim Vinall (Local Authority officers)
Emily Hoyland (SD – committee C)
Bob Johnston (committee D)
Fraser Long (M – committee A)
Helen Norman (M – committee B)
Nick Wood (M – committee A)

1 Introduction

- CM welcomed everybody to the meeting, and introduced visitors.
- Apologies tendered were accepted.
- CM drew attention to a recent racial attack in Oxford it was agreed to record SACRE's revulsion towards this incident.
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2 Purpose of meeting

The purpose of the meeting, to improve RE provision in Oxfordshire schools, was agreed.

3 Reflection: CW provided a reflection, the text of which is appended to these minutes.

4 Minutes of 6th March 2017 & matters arising

- (i) Minutes which had been circulated were approved as an accurate record.
- (ii) Matters arising, not otherwise covered, were considered:
 - **OCC Cabinet Member for Education** (item 2): CM reported that Cllr Steve Harrod has now been replaced in this role by Cllr Hilary Hibbert-Biles, who hopes to join the November meeting.
 - **Working group with Bucks SACRE** (item 4): BM explained that 'Religious literacy' is now a term in common use and the purpose of the working group will be to ensure an appropriate definition that may be wider than that currently understood. It was agreed that SB, CM and SR will join with BM to move this discussion forward, in collaboration with Bucks SACRE, from September.
 - **NASACRE Big Survey** (item 8): BM reported that input from members has been used to create a survey response reflecting the diversity with Oxon SACRE.

5 SACRE Annual Report 2015-16

- The draft report which had been circulated. Members thanked BM for his work and approved the report for publication.
- Discussion followed about the wide disparity in exam entries. It was suggested that this is in part a reflection of the way schools view the subject, teacher availability and the fact that the short course is no longer included in performance tables. Members noted that full course entries have increased since 2014 and expressed the hope that increased emphasis from the new Ofsted leadership will now encourage schools to promote RE as an option.

6 Strategic development of SACRE

A presentation entitled *A Successful SACRE* had been circulated. BM asked members to reflect on how these principles can be used to develop our work.

- (i) **Increasing SACRE membership**
 - Some new members have recently been appointed and efforts to fill vacancies will continue. Consideration can also be given to further co-options and any changes to the constitution that may be beneficial.
 - A particular concern is the lack of representation from the teaching organisations although a number of other members are also teachers. The financial pressures faced by schools which make it difficult to cover teacher absences for day-time meetings were acknowledged but it was also agreed

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that insight from the teaching profession is an essential element of SACRE. As well as focussing on filling teacher gaps, consideration will also be given to any changes in meeting arrangements that will make it easier for working teachers to attend.

(ii) **Teacher networks & events**

- Following previous discussion about more general meetings for teachers focussed around their needs in school, it was agreed to re-schedule the 6th November meeting to a 6pm start. This would then be opened to all teachers as an opportunity to interact with the RE Commissioner. A working group comprising SB, RC, CM and BM will move these arrangements forward.
- BM recommended developing this into regular teacher meetings, ideally in local clusters to continue self-support, following an initial meeting in March 2018. Funding from OCC to support this activity will be explored.

(iii) **Links with OCC:** Although pressure on budgets is acknowledged, members were concerned by the general lack of OCC support for SACRE, which is a statutory responsibility. It will therefore be necessary to raise the profile of SACRE and ensure that its purpose is understood. CM and BM will continue to do this in communications with the Cabinet Member and officers to ensure that SACRE's needs remain in view.

(iv) **Meeting organisation:** It is recognised that no arrangement will suit all members. In discussion, the value of visits to schools was acknowledged although this needs to be well-managed to ensure that both SACRE and the school receive something positive. There is also a strong argument for continuing to meet at County Hall so that SACRE remains visible to the Authority.

(v) **Faith community contacts:** Members were asked to look at the information from their group on the OCC website at: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/religious-education and submit any further details or amendments for publication.

(vi) **Website:** BM will liaise with OCC regarding improvements to the SACRE website page.

7 SACRE contribution to SMSC & Prevent

BM presented information showing how SMSC (spiritual, moral, social & cultural) aspects of education support all learning, and an important part of SMSC is about children understanding their own identity, history and culture. SACRE should therefore be looking at how it can support schools in providing meaningful discussion that reduces the threats of grooming and radicalisation. Discussion raised the following points:

- We should be concerned about the potential prevent of free speech in the interests of 'equality. We must ensure that we recognise differences and do not seek to impose a false unanimity. RE should be a safe space where different views can be expressed and explored constructively. We need to ensure that children know it is ok not to agree and equip them to manage disagreements.
- We should be leading resistance to the use of "British values" as a term. It is not helpful and many schools struggle to present this concept appropriately. We should

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encourage schools to ask the right questions about what it means to be British and to emphasise that all faiths and groups contribute to our society.

- The 'implicit curriculum' of a school, the way that its values are modelled in daily life, is extremely important and is a powerful way to make progress.

8 Commission on RE

As discussed, it is intended that an RE Commissioner will attend a meeting with teachers in November.

9 Diocese conference feedback

- DW reported a very enjoyable and useful event, attended by approximately 60 RE teachers and school leaders. Links to further information provided will be circulated.
- SB suggested that formal endorsement of the conference would help to raise the profile of SACRE.
- DW also suggested that SACRE should investigate holding a similar event in future.

10 Member contributions/AOB

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.

11 2017 -18 meeting schedule

SACRE meetings will take place at County Hall as follows:

- Monday 6th November 2017, 6.00 pm: Meeting for teachers with RE Commissioner (to be confirmed).
- Monday 5th March 2018, 2.00 pm
- Monday 18th June 2018

12 Close

Members considered how this meeting had moved SACRE forward and how progress will be continued before the November meeting. It was generally agreed that the meeting had been constructive and had agreed a number of key actions to move forward with activities that have been under discussion for some time. It will be important to complete all actions to maintain momentum and ensure the success of planned developments.

CM thanked all members and visitors for their attendance and input, and closed the meeting at 4.10 pm.