



Barnet Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 8th November 2023 at 5pm

Virtual Meeting

MINUTES

Constitution and Attendance

GROUP A: Christian denominations other than the Church of England and principal religions represented in Great Britain	Present/Apologies /Absent	GROUP B: Church of England	Present/Apologies /Absent
Mrs Vicky Golestaneh (Baha'i)	Present	Ms Sue Watts (London Diocese)	Present
Ajantha Tennakoon (Buddhist)	Absent	Rev Robin Sims- Williams (London Diocese)	Present
Mrs Catherine Salinger (Free Churches)	Present	Maria Constantinou (Diocese of St Albans)	Present
Mrs Mary Karaolis (attending on behalf of Very Revd AC Damiano: Greek Orthodox Church)	Present	Anthony David (Diocese of London)	Absent
Mr Sury Khatri (Hindu)	Present		

Mrs Veena Bedi (Hindu)	Apologies		
Dr Mukal Shah (Jain)	Absent		
Vacancy (Jain)			
Rabbi Mark Goldsmith (Jewish)	Absent		
Vacancy (Jewish)			
Vacancy (Sikh)			
Vacancy (Sikh)			
Nicola Santamaria (Roman Catholic)	Present		
Norah Flatley (Roman Catholic)	Present		
Vacancy (Salvation Army)			
Vacancy (Salvation Army)			
Mr Mark Leach (Methodist)	Absent		
Mr Martin Wellings (Methodist)	Absent		
Nuzhat Akhtar (Muslim)	Absent		
Gohar Akhtar (Muslim)	Absent		
Panos Fellas (Humanist)	Present		
GROUP C: Teachers Associations, including representation from Academy Schools	Present/Apologies /Absent	GROUP D: Local Authority, including elected Councillors LA	Present/Apologies /Absent
Mr Kevin McSharry (Chairman & ASCL)	Present	Agnes Slocombe (L.A.)	Present
Vacancy		Cllr Humayune. Khalick	Absent
Vacancy		Cllr Danny Rich	Absent
Dr Alan Shaw (NAHT)	Absent	Cllr Lachhya Bahadur Gurung	Apologies
Ms Sandra Teacher	Apologies	Cllr.Linda Lusingu	Absent
Sally Giovanelli (Danegrove Primary School)	Present	Cllr.Nagus Narenthira	Apologies
Jack Robertson (NEU)	Apologies	Cllr Ella Rose	Apologies
		Cllr Joshua Conway	Absent
<u>Other</u>		<u>Co-opted non-voting members</u>	
Maria Gabrielczyk – Clerk	In attendance	Jan McGuire Independent RE Advisor to Barnet SACRE	Present
		Mr Neil Marlow Chief Executive and Director of Education and Learning	Apologies
		Katie Dawbarn representing Neil Marlow	Present
		Jennifer Brodtkin	Present
		Reuben Thompstone	Absent

1. **Apologies for absence**

The Chair welcomed everyone present to the SACRE meeting.

Apologies were received and accepted from: SandraTeacher, Cllr. Nagus Narenthira(Mayor of Barnet), Cllr Ella Rose, Cllr Lachhya Bahadur Gurung, Veena Bedi, Neil Marlow and Jack Robertson.

Katie Dawbarn was attending to cover Neil Marlow's Agenda item.

2. Membership and welcome

A warm welcome was extended to Sue Watts (LDBS – Church of England), Panos Fellas (Humanist) and Maria Constantinou (Diocese of St Albans-Church of England).

The Chair informed that Jayne Pavlou, Jerry Cohen had resigned. Louise Yarwood had retired from BELS and her successor was Jennifer Brodtkin. The Chair thanked them all for their contribution and support to the Barnet SACRE.

The Chair asked everyone to introduce themselves.

3. Minutes of the 14th June 2023

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.

Matters arising

It was suggested that the Choir does all their singing at the start of the next event and then parents are free to take their children home.

4. Development Plan

The Development Plan was shared with SACRE members. The lowest grades were for Collective Worship and Determinations. Both of which were referred to SACRE to provide guidance and support.

NASACRE sent out a newsletter suggesting that SACRE looks at their Development Plan to see where the SACRE is at, where it is going and what the focus going forward should be. There are clear criteria that SACRE need to meet that fit the Annual Report, so they have to be aligned.

There are a few points for the SACRE to work on. The SACRE is waiting for the new guidance document for the Standards of Collective Worship being written by NASACRE/AREIAC. Once these are received the SACRE can review them and will put the necessary training in place to support schools. The Determinations advice will be dealt with at the same training session. The website needs to be stronger and work is being done on it. The syllabus is under full revision. A list of acronyms used will be provided. **ACTION:**
JMcG

5. Statutory responsibilities including:

ASC: Agreed Syllabus: Update

Jan updated SACRE on the formal ASC Agreed Syllabus progress. The Agreed Syllabus and formation of the ASC should take place every 5 years. There was a slide presentation to update the SACRE on the ASC progress with of the Barnet Agreed Syllabus with discussions around the Census Data for 2021. The ASC team of writers are in the process of rewriting the syllabus, which is driven by national changes and the census data from

2021. The team are at an early draft stage. There are certain things that need to remain in the syllabus by law. Other things are decided as a SACRE, and these become law for the next five years. The RE curriculum and the religions that will be covered, including the time spent on RE will be decided and agreed by our Barnet SACRE/ASC members. The team are designing a sequential curriculum covering ages 4-19.

It was agreed to use the Ann Taves project that covers her six Big Questions: the 6 threads Reality, Origins, Knowledge, Situation, Goal and Path. The syllabus will focus on those 6 questions.

The Agreed Syllabus has been financially supported by the Farmington Institute, Culham St. Gabriels Trust and Barnet LA.

The SACRE/ASC were asked to consider carefully the wording that will be incorporated into the final document. Where it states *"must be covered"* that is law and where it states *"recommend to cover"* that is not law, but guidance.

The Agreed Syllabus and accompanying documents will need to keep true to the Ann Taves work. In addition, the team needs to decide which world religions to cover. Teachers need to be given guidance. The team needs to reflect the changing religious and secular diversity of the UK and the world in its approach. The content must be broadly Christian by law. Barnet schools must recognise diversity and this must reflect the fact that some pupils come from non-religious backgrounds.

Q. Where do the percentages provided, fit in?

A. Where it states *"must"*, then legally this will need to be delivered by schools. The ASC team will continue to listen to the local community with regards to the religions and non-religions reflected within the locality.

Q. If too much content, or religions are put in, then not a lot will be covered and not covered in depth.

A. The curriculum writing is based on the Big Questions of Ann Taves and states that it includes child led learning, providing an opportunity for discussion for everyone. It would enable pupils to lead a discussion from their worldview perspective and for every child to contribute.

Q. Is there a breakdown of the Christian denominations in Barnet in the 2021 Census?

A. There is ONS data from 2021, but the breakdown does not go into the denomination aspect. Local churches and groups will be mapped out by Jan, so that pupils are aware of what denominations they can see. **ACTION: JMcG**

The contextual part needs to be meaningful for children and young people and it needs to be reflected somehow. It was agreed to create a Barnet Statement around the contextualisation. This will be an action for next term. **ACTION: JMcG**

Q. Must 50% of the syllabus relate to the Christian faith? If so, how will a Muslim teacher in class do that?

A. A lot is down to the interpretation of the law. In predominantly Muslim areas, parents could withdraw their children from RE. A school can request that other forms of education (determinations) are put in place. Barnet does not have this situation, but there is still the option to withdraw. Barnet ASC hopes that the Agreed Syllabus based on Ann Taves will be inclusive of all children.

The SIAMS Inspection Framework can be used for contextualisation, as it is important to have direction. SIAMS is for church schools. Jewish schools have Pikuach and Catholic

schools have a Section 48. Learning needs to be memorable, meaningful and purposeful for the children.

The major religion in Great Britain is Christianity. There is no reference to the percentage in the Education Act. It is up to the LA to decide how to interpret that further. Barnet has a diverse community and it wants the new syllabus to be as inclusive as possible, for every child and every school.

Ann Taves is a Professor Emeritus based in California, USA, and is respected in the whole religious studies community. She has taken an interest in what Jan and the team are doing and is editing some of the team's work. She is impressed by the idea of SACRE and that Barnet is helping to write this curriculum.

Q. How much time is allocated for RE in the syllabus?

A. A discussion was had by the ASC/SACRE around the importance of having a realistic amount of time for schools, and adequate time to teach the Agreed Syllabus to a high level.

There was a brief discussion around the length of RE lessons and whether it was productive to have a whole hour for the younger year groups. RE is a compulsory subject, and it is a statutory duty to teach RE in schools. Early Years can be taught as an integrated subject, but it must be taught, as it is a statutory duty.

Each school has its own different pressures. Schools are facing challenges to fit everything in a school week. When putting together the curriculum a balanced view needs to be taken. There is flexibility around the delivery of the curriculum with a percentage taken up around eg. events and festivals.

It is not statutory for Nursery pupils to cover RE specifically, but Reception pupils have to. RE must be delivered through timetabled weekly lessons and the recommendation is that it is a minimum of 30 minutes per week. **ACTION: ASC to continue to discuss and agree the time allocated in the document.**

6. Collective Worship statutory responsibilities including:

Jan informed that she is waiting for guidance on CW which is coming from NASACRE and AREIAC.

Jan reported that no formal complaints or withdrawals have been brought to the attention of SACRE. Anything that does come up is handled and resolved quickly to avoid escalation.

7. Links with other bodies

The Barnet SACRE has good links nationally and locally - with the Diocese/Interfaith /NASACRE/REC/AREIAC and NATRE and regional Hubs.

Jan informed of the court ruling on Humanist SACRE membership. The SACRE membership reflects the communities in Barnet, and we have had a Humanist representative for many years. When members leave and there are vacancies, the LA Link Lead looks to associations and the local community for the best person to come and sit on the SACRE. Members need to fill the 4 groups for quoracy for voting.

Data from REC and NATRE around examination analysis shows that there has been an increase of 0.3% in RE GCSE from last year. Barnet is still waiting to compare the results.

Thirty percent of pupils got the highest grades (7-9) with RE being among the top four subjects of the high scoring subjects. There has been a decrease in A level results by 3.5%. There is a recruitment challenge for RE teachers in secondary schools. A bursary from the government was given to new trainee teachers of £10K from 2024. The importance of RE and disadvantaged children was noted, as those that take RE get high grades.

Jan shared website details of www.re-hubs.uk where SACRE members can attend free training. SACRE members can also receive free training to enable them to be registered on the website as a recognised speaker in schools.

The Barnet ASC Ann Taves team is partly funded by Culham St Gabriels, who provide free training courses. Barnet SACRE has two Farmington Scholars – Sally and Sophia. There is a termly newsletter from NASACRE. AREIAC is also in conversation with Ofsted.

8. Borough of Barnet/ BEL's: SACRE's own arrangements (statutory responsibilities) including:

Jan and Kevin again thanked Neil for the support Barnet SACRE receive from him and from Barnet Council. Additional funding has been received to cover the SACRE ASC syllabus work.

It was suggested that the ASC should aim to complete documents to fit the proposed dates: The Draft ASC will go to Cabinet on 26th February 2024, to the Children's Partnership Board in March and for full Council approval on 18th June 2024.

BELS keep the SACRE website page updated by Nick Birr who is the communications lead.

National changes – The focus is on attendance. In Barnet it is better than national, but not back to pre-pandemic levels yet. The Progress 8 score is the second best in the country and the Attainment score is the third best in the country.

Ofsted – To date there have been 45 inspections and 29 in non-faith schools. Only one non-faith school had a deep dive in RE. Ofsted tend to steer clear of RE in faith schools. Queenswell Junior School had the deep dive in RE. Jan has already liaised with the RE Lead at Queenswell Junior School.

Q. How is Barnet supporting schools around the Gaza/Israel conflict?

A. Neil Marlow is the single point of contact for this. There is a lot of advice and guidance being sent out to schools. A resources pack has been put together by the EP and the Prevent officers. This supports community cohesion. The EP is also running training sessions on trauma and providing individual support and advice to schools. Neil Marlow is meeting with secondary and primary Heads to see what additional support they need.

Displacement of families – There have been 44 requests and Barnet are accommodating the request in school places. The LA is working with both communities. The schools appreciate the support that has been put in by Neil Marlow and his teams.

Q. What is BELS view on assessments at the end of KS1?

A. BELS cannot have a view, it is for the schools to decide themselves. Teachers need to know where the pupils are at with their learning. The end of Key Stage assessments are important, including the formative learning. Some schools are ordering optional SATS papers.

Jan informed that the ASC is a legal entity and the ASC drives the dates for the completion of the AS documents and formal meetings with the LA; this will need to be discussed with NM. **ACTION: JMcG**

Annual Report – Jan requested that the data on examinations, Ofsted inspections and any other relevant data is provided by the LA for the completion of the Annual Report that she hope to have formally agreed in January 2024. . **ACTION: LA to collate and share the data with Jan for the Annual report.**

9. AOB

There were no items to discuss under AOB.

10. FUTURE DATES

Meeting dates for 2023-2024

- Wednesday – 6th March 2024 at 5-7pm (virtual meeting)
- Wednesday – 12th June 2024 at 5-7pm (in person – Hendon Town Hall)

The meeting closed at 7pm

Chair of Barnet SACRE:

Date: