

**Hackney SACRE Minutes**  
**Wednesday 11 February 2009 at 6.30pm**  
**held at the offices of the Learning Trust, 1 Reading Lane.**

**Attendance:**

Councillor Saleem Siddiqui in the Chair

Group 1: Mary Ludlow (Group Chair), Rabbi Isaac Sufrin, Revd. John Taylor, Sheikh Yasar Zaman

Group 2: Jean Funnell (Group Chair), John Fyson.

Group 3: Joyce Berry, Sandra Hall (Group Chair), Dame Anna Hassan, Ron Keating, Sheena Merchant, Lynette St Cyr-Caesar

Group 4: Cllr Luke Akehurst, Cllr Matthew Coggins, Karl D'Cruz, Cllr Harvey Odze, Cllr Saleem Siddiqui (SACRE Chair)

Apologies were received from Dympna Brotherton, David Pollock, Brenda Humphreys, Ralph Bergman JP, Jean Millham.

Members learned that Dympna Brotherton and Jo Robinson, are still unwell  
Karl D'Cruz is to send best wishes to Dympna Brotherton and Jo Robinson on behalf of SACRE members.

Karl D'Cruz apologised that he had been unable to co-ordinate the previously scheduled SACRE meeting due to a protracted illness. He thanked members for their concern and their cards, emails, phone calls, and texts. He was better now and felt that member's prayers and good wishes had helped to sustain him.

**2. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

The minutes were agreed as a true record.

**3. URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items.

**4. MEMBERSHIP OF SACRE**

The Buddhist representative, Jo Robinson, has sent her regrets that due to ill health she is unable to continue as a member of SACRE.

Towards the end of the meeting, Karl D’Cruz announced that to his great regret he had to communicate to members that Dame Anna Hassan was stepping down from SACRE. He went on to say that Dame Anna has been a tremendous support to, and spokesperson for, RE and SACRE, hosting events at Millfields and being on key working groups like the one which produced the SACRE Collective Worship recommended approach. Above all she had led a school which had become a beacon of good practice for RE, Collective Worship, and SMSC. Karl D’Cruz said that Hackney schools generally, and Millfields and SACRE would be poorer for her leaving. He thanked Dame Anna personally and on behalf of Hackney SACRE.

Dame Anna responded by saying that she had always been convinced of the place RE, collective Worship and SMSC in schools. She had enjoyed being on SACRE and congratulated Karl and SACRE for their efforts on behalf of RE. In concluding she confided that her experience indicated that where schools were declared to be failing, it would invariably be found that they had become ‘RE & SMSC-free zones’.

## **5. COMMUNITY COHESION**

It was noted that the description under Item 5 on the agenda for this meeting should read: “The new duty on schools to promote Community Cohesion was been introduced in the 2007/08 academic year.”

With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, Jean Funnell, Sheena Merchant and Karl D’Cruz, drew attention to key points in the Community Cohesion papers bound in the SACRE agenda.

Several members felt that because it was such a useful summary, the presentation should be reproduced in full in the minutes as a SACRE ‘aide memoir’.

The Community Cohesion PowerPoint presentation:

Community Cohesion is embedded in the Children’s Plan

1. What is the new duty to promote community cohesion?
2. And how does RE contribute to this duty?

- The new duty to promote community cohesion was introduced in Sept. 07
- It will be included in Ofsted inspections from Sept. 08

### **What is meant by community?**

Four dimensions are defined by the DCSF:

1. The school as community
2. The wider community within which the school is located
3. The UK community
4. The global community

### **What is meant by community cohesion?**

Working towards a society in which:

- There is a common vision and sense of belonging by all communities
- The diversity of people’s backgrounds & circumstances is appreciated and valued

- Similar life opportunities are available to all
- Strong & positive relationships exist & continue to be developed in the workplace, in schools & in the wider community

**Cohesion is therefore about:**

- how to avoid the corrosive effects of intolerance & harassment
- how to build a mutual civility among different groups
- ensuring respect for diversity, &
- a commitment to common & shared bonds

**How do schools contribute?**

Schools' contribution to promoting community cohesion can be considered from three broad perspectives:

1. Teaching, learning and curriculum
2. Equity and excellence
3. Engagement and extended services

**1. Teaching, learning & curriculum**

Opportunities across the curriculum to:

- promote shared values
- value differences eg culture, religion, ethnicity
- discuss issues of identity & diversity
- be aware of human rights, apply & defend them
- challenge prejudice, discrimination & stereotyping
- develop skills of participation & responsible action,

Enrich pupils' understanding of community & diversity through:

- visits to places of worship & meetings with members of different communities
- assemblies which involve members of the local & wider community

**2. Equity and excellence**

- To ensure equal opportunities for all to succeed at the highest level possible
- Striving to remove barriers to access & participation in learning & wider activities
- Working to eliminate variations in outcomes for different groups

**3. Engagement & extended services**

Partnership activities with parents & community:

- mentoring schemes
- community groups playing a role in school & encouraging pupils to make positive contribution locally
- ensuring that the pupil voice is heard & able to effect change
- multi-agency working eg social care & health professionals, religious groups engagement with parents

**Evaluating CC - Ofsted characteristics of 'Good':**

- The school has a clear understanding of what is required to promote community cohesion, based on a sound analysis of its own community and learners' needs;
- There is an effective strategy for engaging with the local community;
- Learners have regular opportunities to participate in the community and are active in working with others from different ethnic, religious, non-religious and socio-economic backgrounds;
- The school's teaching and curriculum are used effectively to increase pupils' understanding of the UK and global communities, help pupils learn about and understand others, value diversity and promote shared values;
- Positive interactions between all learners and staff are successfully encouraged.

*Guidance on the duty to promote community cohesion 2007, states:*

“Local authorities, religious or non-religious organisations, SACREs & other voluntary & community organisations have an important role in supporting schools to discharge the duty to promote community cohesion.”

### **How does RE and collective worship contribute to community cohesion in Hackney?**

- the revised units of work engage children with aspects that help them to develop a sense of personal identity & an awareness of what it means to be a good citizen in a pluralist society
- planned opportunities, integral to the scheme of work, for engaging with members of faith communities, in the classroom or on a visit to a place of worship

At Key Stage 2:

- What does Shabbat teach about responsibility & relationships?
- How does the life of Guru Nanak teach about respect & equality?
- How does learning about the mosque help us to understand community?

The role of the RE subject leader:

- promote visits & visitors - one RE visit each year for each class
- keep an RE handbook with contact details for places of worship & recommended RE visitors
- ensure regular & prominent displays relating to the RE curriculum
- keep evidence of RE trips & of pupil, helper, host, feedback
- monitor the impact of visits & visitors on pupils' achievement and enjoyment evaluate impact & report to SMT

Collective Worship:

- explore themes which are of a 'broadly Christian character' and inclusive
- use prayers, quotations, songs, stories which are from religious traditions, as well as material from a secular tradition which have a spiritual dimension
- establish a routine & expectation of time & stimulus for reflection & response

The 'Ofsted update' (agenda page 27), said of Community Cohesion: That the role that RE in promoting community cohesion was a major focus of the Ofsted subject survey during the 2007/08 academic year. Ofsted found that in just over 6 out of 10 primary schools visited community cohesion was good or better, while 8 out of 10 secondary schools were making a good or outstanding contribution. In the overwhelming majority of cases, RE was making a significant impact on pupils' understanding of, and attitudes towards, religious and cultural diversity. Pupils recognised two aspects of RE as important.. First, RE provides much of knowledge and understanding essential to an appreciation of diversity and the impact of faith on people's lives. Second, RE provided a 'rare' opportunity to express opinions and explore ideas/matters relevant to community cohesion.

## **6. DCSF & RE COUNCIL – UPDATING ADVICE ON RE**

Jean Funnell and Karl D'Cruz updated members on the progress being made by the REC/DCSF group charged with revision of the RE guidance in Circular 1/94. The briefing paper included in the agenda papers, lists the aims of the new draft non-statutory guidance on RE and summarises the revision timetable. The new guidance is expected to 'clearly set out the role and duty of local authorities in supporting their SACREs'. The consultation period is expected to be from April/May 2009 to July 2009.

Cllr Harvey Odze asked that Cllr Siddiqui and Karl D'Cruz raise at all levels that Hackney SACRE would not wish the support that it currently receives in Hackney to be reduced.

**Action: Cllr Siddiqui & Karl D'Cruz**

## **7. IMPLEMENTING THE NEW AGREED SYLLABUS**

Lynette St Cyr-Caesar and Karl D'Cruz reported on the training day for primary RE subject leaders held on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2009 at the Suleymaniye Mosque in Dalston, Hackney. The theme for the day was Community Cohesion, focusing on visits and visitors. A new unit of planning in the SACRE RE scheme of work was also launched. The title of the unit is the big question – 'How does learning about the Mosque help us to understand community?' Lynette and Karl pointed out that it is important to note that the question - and unit - are framed in such a way as to help all, not just Muslims, to understand the concept of 'community'.

Each session/lesson of the unit has a sub-question, for example, 'What are Mosques like and what are they used for?' A DVD accompanies the unit. It was carefully edited to ensure that the unit was subdivided into small teachable units.

Lynette and Karl took members through the unit using the DVD and printed materials. It begins with the building of the first Mosque of the Muslim community (featured in the DVD) – with the sub-question: 'What do Muslims learn from the story about the first mosque in Madinah?'

The unit also shows how young Muslims grow up within the Muslim family and community learning about the Muslim culture and faith. Karl D'Cruz pointed to the teachers' notes which state that non-Muslim children should not be asked do the

Muslim prayer positions because the point of RE is not to mimic what people in different religions do, but to **understand** them. In Islam, the 'intention' (niyah) of the believer, which is essential to prayer (salah), cannot be mimicked.

Lynette told us about her Deputy Headteacher observing her teach this unit and she remarked that the pupils thoroughly enjoyed the lesson – they were even humming some of the chants from the DVD. When asked by the Deputy Headteacher why it was successful lesson, Lynette that it was because of good teaching. She went on to tell the Deputy Head that the RE unit enabled her to be a good Religious Education teacher.

Cllr Siddiqui, who said he had attended the launch at the Suleymaniye Mosque, led members in expressing their appreciation for the authenticity of the planning, and thanked the curriculum development group for their professionalism in preparing the new unit of work.

## **8. REVIEW OF THE PRIMARY CURRICULUM**

### **Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum**

Sir Jim Rose had been commissioned by the Government to lead an Independent review of the primary curriculum. The summary in the agenda was from his interim report. The final report is due to be published in April 2009. Karl D'Cruz drew attention to the legal place of RE in the curriculum and what the interim report said about the subject.

Karl D'Cruz drew member's attention to the **QCA** 'RE Update', Autumn 2008, circulated with the agenda which provided a summary of how RE related to the review.

## **9. SACRE ANNUAL REPORT – ACADEMIC YEAR 2007 – 2008**

Karl D'Cruz tabled the draft SACRE annual report for the year 2007 - 2008 and drew attention to the legal duty to produce an annual report.

Karl reminded members that each year SACRE invites a member of TLT, or one of its own members, to analyse the GCSE results. Last year Martin Burford (TLT Assistant Director, Learning & Standards) provided the analysis. This year he had asked Ronald Keating (Cardinal Pole Deputy Head and former Haggerston Head of RE), to lead the analysis. Ron and provided the following report:

"The statistics examined for this report are the latest available, i.e. for the examination season summer 2008 and are compared to those for the previous year (shown in brackets).

We are pleased to note that there is an increase in entries for both the Short and Full Course in Hackney. As a percentage, this shows greater commitment to making GCSE accreditation possible according to the guidance of the Agreed Syllabus at this Key Stage within the LA. It is also becoming clear that schools who might have tried

to by-pass their statutory obligation in providing religious education at this level have reconsidered their curriculum offer. However, we must not be complacent about the considerable demands placed on schools to deliver a broader curriculum and the need for SACRE to monitor and intervene to assist statutory compliance.

The local authority average result for the short course was 60.8% A\*-C in 2008 which represents a slight fall in standards from last year but is well above the national average for the same course. However, the full course results for A\*-C was 60.1% showing a significant and welcome improvement. We would wish to congratulate all departments, pupils and their teachers for this commendable result. Particularly notable in this success is Our Lady's RC Girls who have scored considerably higher than girls nationally and even higher than the national average for all pupils.

We note the significant achievement at the C/D borderline, which indicates that pupils are being helped to gain a GCSE in which they might otherwise have a lower grade. However, at the top end, we note that A\*s are not so evident across the piece and teaching to the most able needs attention. It is likely that SACRE will have to address this strategically."

The following observations were made by SACRE members:

- 433 pupils in Hackney non-denominational community schools were entered for a RS GCSE in 2008 compared with 530 last year. The dip in numbers is explained by the closure of Homerton Boys School;
- Of the 4 non-denominational schools, 3 submit the majority of their Y11 cohort for a RS GCSE: Clapton Girls, Haggerston Girls, Skinners Girls;
- Those schools entering the majority of their Y11 cohort for a short course in 2008, attained percentages of A\* - C grades which were above the national average. Specifically, Clapton Girls 65.7% and Haggerston Girls 63.7% compared with national average for all pupils of 53.7% and compared with the national average for girls of 60.4%;
- Clapton Girls and Haggerston Girls schools gain percentages of B grades in the short course that are above the national percentage for girls;
- Results well above average, 87.3%, were gained by Clapton Girls, which entered 32% of its cohort for the full course.
- One school which enters the majority of its Y11 cohort for the full course RS GCSE attained percentages of A\* - C which were significantly below the national average (Skinners – 49.5% A\* - C compared with national average of 72.5% all pupils and 77% girls).
- SACRE is mindful that these national examination figures include faith school entries, where RS traditionally secures a greater timetable allocation and higher status than in community non-denominational schools.
- Nationally RE now has over 470,000 entries for GCSE and is the biggest non-compulsory GCSE subject.

Ron's comments and those of other SACRE members are reproduced in the SACRE annual report.

The Chair asked members to communicate suggested additions, amendments, and/or corrections to the draft report to Karl D'Cruz, SACRE Adviser, by 2 March.

Cllr Odze asked if it would be possible to include the figures of Yesodey Hatorah in the future. Karl D'Cruz said that he would ask the Learning Trust's Research and Statistics department for these figures.

Cllr Odze also asked for a list of abbreviations to be inserted at the back of the report for people who are not familiar with abbreviations to refer to.

**Action: Karl D'Cruz**

## **10. INFORMATION ITEMS:**

### **UPDATES: QCA, OFSTED, & NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SACREs**

#### **New QCA Documents**

QCA documents to be available soon will include 'SACREs and Community Cohesion: the 2008 annual analysis of SACRE annual reports, focussing on community cohesion; also, a report 'exploring Muslim contributions to scientific thinking and discovery and its impact on current scientific thinking.

#### **Assessment of RE**

The QCA is working to provide more effective assessment approaches. A new model of assessment for the Key Stage 3 curriculum has been developed and is currently undergoing trials. RE is taking part in this trial. Assessing pupils progress (APP) - embeds Assessment for Learning (AfL).

#### **The Future of QCA**

The QCA will move its offices to Coventry in 2009 and will become the QCDA - Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency.

#### **Agreed Syllabus revisions**

QCA advises LAs and SACREs to delay Agreed Syllabus revisions until after the shape of the new primary curriculum was settled.

#### **OFSTED Update**

Ofsted findings on Community Cohesion were reported during agenda item 5. Members were urged to read the update carefully regarding the direction Ofsted HMI were attempting to lead RE.

#### **SACRE News (National Association of SACREs)**

NASACRE news was contained in the attached newsletter. Karl D'Cruz had made references to it at several points during the meeting and especially during item 5 on Community Cohesion.

## **11. FUTURE MEETINGS**

### **Dates for SACRE meetings**

Members agreed the following dates for SACRE meetings:

19 May 2009; 14 October 2009; 18 November 2009; and, 10 February 2010.

Cllr Siddiqui thanked everyone for attending the SACRE meeting.

The meeting ended at 9.00pm