MINUTES OF THE SPRING TERM MEETING OF THE STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE) HELD ON 27 JUNE 2018 AT HARLOW SYNAGOGUE

(10:00 am – 11:50 pm)

Present: Ms R K Sahota (Chair)
Ms S Khan
Rabbi I Shillor
Mr P Wallis (NUT Representative)

Also present: Ms S Pradhan, Head of RE, Eastbury Community School (Borough Consultant for RE)
Miss J Day, Minute Clerk

MINUTES – PART 1

658 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr P Fing and Mrs J Hoepelman. Mr R Turner, Local Authority Representative, was unable to attend.

659 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2018 were confirmed as a true record.

Arising therefrom the members:

659.1 Membership of SACRE (Minute no. 652.1 refers)

were informed that SP would ask Robert Turner about filling the vacancies for primary and secondary headteacher representatives.

660 FEEDBACK FROM CURRICULUM MONITORING

660.1 Members were informed that the policy and legal framework for RE was being reviewed and a report was due to be produced later this year. SP agreed to circulate the interim report when it is available. This will include a vision for RE, such as why RE matters and should there be a more fixed curriculum for RE in all schools. It was noted that the increase in academies is affecting the role of SACREs.

660.2 Members reported back on curriculum monitoring which they had conducted by visiting secondary school websites.

a) Sydney Russell School – RS

No information on the website about the secondary school RE curriculum, also SMSC not mentioned. RE not included in exam results report. Also RE not mentioned in the school’s latest Ofsted report. Although this is a successful school, it appears that RE provision has been slight for a long
time. SP agreed to contact the school to enquire about its RE provision.

b) **Robert Clack School – SK**

There was a clear RE syllabus for year groups 7 – 11 with topics set out. This appears to be in tune with the Barking and Dagenham Agreed Syllabus. Year 9 introduces religions outside the main six, years 10 and 11 include more focused coverage of Christianity and Islam, and philosophical debates. However, SMSC was not mentioned. The school offers RE at GCSE. SP would like to arrange to visit the Robert Clack RE department.

c) **Jo Richardson Community School – IS**

Information about SMSC was found on this school’s website, it appears to be embedded in the curriculum. There wasn’t much detail, just lists of topics for each year group which came from the Agreed Syllabus. No mention of Christianity or Judaism. RE has 1 hour per week in Key Stage 3 and is optional in Years 10 and 11 where it can be taken as a GCSE subject. Exam results appeared good. Members noted that some schools enter the whole cohort for GCSE while others only enter groups of students who have chosen RE as an option. Members felt that more RE should be provided as it is a core subject. It is not about worship but learning about religions – perhaps it should be re-named Religious Studies to change parents’ perceptions.

d) **Eastbrook School – PW**

RE is compulsory in Key Stage 3 and optional in Key Stage 4. 81 students took RE at GCSE, which was 60% of the cohort. Members wondered how the school chooses which pupils take the GCSE – does the school choose or is it pupil choice? Are pupils being prevented from taking exams unless schools are confident that they will be successful?

661 **PROGRESS OF THE NEW SYLLABUS/LAUNCH OF THE NEW CURRICULUM**

Robert Turner was not present, so members could not receive an update on the request for funding to buy in a new syllabus package or a date for launching the new curriculum for Barking and Dagenham.

662 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

662.1 **RE Teaching**

It was suggested that schools should be asked how many RE qualified teachers currently teach the subject. It was felt that it was mainly taught by non-specialist staff who lack in depth subject knowledge, especially in primary schools. SP suggested that Year 7 could be a transition year to ensure that pupils catch up on the knowledge which they should have acquired by the end of Year 6 – not all primary schools cover what is expected by Year 6.

662.2 **Sikhism Advice for Schools**

RS reported that Barking Gurdwara have appointed a young man specifically to help schools with Sikhism issues. He can speak in assemblies and can also be contacted with any questions about matters which affect Sikh pupils, e.g. carrying the kirpan. Members agreed this was a good idea and SP could
circulate his contact details to schools if he agrees. Members would like to see other religions offering something similar.

[Post meeting note: the Sikh advisor for Barking Gurdwara is presently not available for health reasons. Contact details will be available when he returns.]

**DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

It was agreed that the next meeting should be held on Tuesday 13 November 2018, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm. PW advised that the unions’ conference room at Barking Town Hall was available for this meeting.