MINUTES OF THE SPRING TERM MEETING OF THE STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE) HELD ON 20 JANUARY 2015 AT EASTBURY COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

(1:30 pm – 2:40 pm)

Present: Mr P Fing Ms S Khan
Reverend L Hillier Ms R Sahota
Mrs J Hoepelmann
Alderman F Jones

Also present: Ms J Dyson, Director’s Representative
Ms S Pradhan, Head of RE, Eastbury Comprehensive School (Borough Adviser for RE)
Miss J Day, (Minute Clerk)
Ihtisham and Priya – Junior SACRE members (item no. 551)

MINUTES – PART 1

551 INTRODUCING JUNIOR SACRE MEMBERS

Members welcomed Ihtisham and Priya who had been appointed as the Eastbury School representatives on the new Junior SACRE. The student representatives gave a presentation including:

- The application process which led to their appointment.
- The aims of the committee, including the collection of information about RE teaching in different schools, and pupils having input into teachers’ planning.
- All Heads of RE will be invited to bring pupils to attend the first meeting on 12 March 2015.
- A questionnaire about RE lessons will be circulated and the results will be compiled to help impact on learning.

Members asked why the students had applied to join the committee. They replied that they were interested in learning about different cultures and religions, which leads to better understanding in the community. Exploring different religious views can also affect the understanding of your own religion. They were excited about the new project which could become something amazing.

SACRE members asked to receive the results of the questionnaire. They invited Junior SACRE members to ask them any questions and they offered their help if required.

Members thanked Ihtisham and Priya for giving such an interesting talk.

552 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was agreed that Janet Dyson should lead the meeting in the Chair’s absence.
Apologies for absence were received and accepted as follows:

- Councillor S Ashraf
- Dr Beheshti
- Reverend R Gayler
- Reverend Y Gooljary
- Mr J Sowerby
- Mrs B Stanley-Hunt

The following members were absent and apologies had not been received:

- Mr M Nicholson
- Reverend S Myers
- Councillor J White

The members welcomed Ms R Sahota, Sikh Representative, to her first meeting.

553 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 October 2014 were confirmed as a true record.

554 MATTERS ARISING NOT ON THE AGENDA

554.1 Summer Term meeting (Minute no. 550 refers)

Mr Fing reported that the Hindu temple at Stratford would not be available for the Summer Term meeting due to building work taking place. Members agreed to consider another venue later in the meeting.

555 UPDATE ON WORK WITH SCHOOLS

Shareena Pradhan gave the following update on work which had been done with schools since the last meeting:

555.1 Junior SACRE meeting planned for 9 December 2014 postponed until 12 March 2015 due to clashes with individual schools’ commitments.

555.2 Primary schools’ training for RE Quality Mark held on 13 January 2015 was very successful. RE co-ordinators were trained how to follow the assessment criteria when preparing their applications for the different levels of the Quality Mark. A primary networking group session is now being planned.

555.3 The Primary networking group has arranged training on 10 February 2015 to discuss the implementation of the Agreed Syllabus and the development of effective schemes of work.

555.4 Meeting to be held with heads of RE from Dagenham Park and Jo Richardson Schools on 25 February 2015 to discuss their application for the RE Quality Mark award. The award celebrates the good work on RE which is being done in schools.

555.5 First meeting of Junior SACRE to be held on 12 March at Eastbury School, with invitations being sent to heads of RE from the Eastbury student chair. Heads of RE to be invited to complete a questionnaire on Religious Education in their schools.
555.6 Draft document for Religious Education visits was presented. Members were asked to help provide information about other local places of worship which can be added to the document. The members agreed that this was a very useful document, linking modules in the Agreed Syllabus to the local area.

555.7 Schools will be invited to take part in a religious art competition – winning pieces of work will be included in the educational visits document.

555.8 Planning to begin for Barking and Dagenham borough schools’ conference to be held in the Summer Term 2016. Workshops to be run for teachers of all key stages. Lyn Hillier suggested contacting London Borough of Redbridge for information about conferences which they have organised.

Members were very pleased to note the amount of work which has been done with schools so far.

556 ANALYSIS OF GCSE AND A LEVEL RESULTS

Members received an analysis of GCSE and A Level results for RE in 2014.

556.1 Policies on entry for GCSE RE vary from school to school, depending on the statutory and optional provision of RE in Key Stage 4. It is not clear if schools are offering the short course for RE because short courses are no longer recorded in school performance data tables.

556.2 40% of students took the full GCSE, which was close to national levels. Over three quarters achieved grades A* - C, slightly above national figures. Barking Abbey and All Saints schools did particularly well (93.9% and 82.8% respectively). All Saints has a big cohort with most pupils taking RE GCSE. Achievement of A*/A grades was in line with national levels. Three schools had no entries for the full course GCSE – Eastbrook, Sydney Russell and Jo Richardson.

556.3 School governors should satisfy themselves that the statutory requirements for RE provision were being met at Key Stage 4, and that the overall proportion of pupils being entered for accredited courses in RE was appropriate. Schools should be making suitable arrangements for RE now that short courses are not included in school performance. Governors should also consider whether grades achieved by pupils in RE are sufficiently good.

556.7 Seven schools entered students for A Level in Religious Studies. A total of 75 students in the borough took the exam, with Barking Abbey, Robert Clack and All Saints Schools entering the biggest groups. Numbers were small at the other schools. Members asked if teaching was shared by the schools, and they were informed that this occurred in schools which were part of consortium arrangements. In 6 schools 100% of students achieved A* - E. All Saints had the highest percentage of A/A* with 33%, compared to 25.5% national figures.

556.8 Members asked if academies counted in the borough’s figures. They were informed that academies are required to provide RE, and their results are in the public domain.

556.9 The results will be presented in the SACRE annual report. The accuracy of the A Level data will be checked before publication because there appeared to be an error in Eastbury School’s figures.
ANNUAL REPORT

Janet Dyson informed members that the draft report was being prepared and would be emailed to them for their comments. The final report will be presented to the council before being circulated to schools and NASACRE.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

558.1 Members received copies of a recent letter from Lord Nash, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools. The letter was triggered by events in a small number of Birmingham schools which were considered at risk of radicalising students. Shaheena Khan had attended a conference where representatives from the Birmingham schools had spoken about what had happened. Lyn Hillier added that a recent no notice inspection at a community school had begun with the question on what the school was doing about radicalism.

The Minister wished to emphasise the importance of good teaching and the role of SACREs and local authorities. Attention was also drawn to the new guidance for all schools on their responsibility to actively promote fundamental British values.

Financial incentives are being offered to attract high quality RE teachers with detailed subject knowledge and expertise. The Minister highlighted the contribution of SACREs in developing appropriate RE syllabuses and supporting schools on the effective teaching of RE. Janet Dyson agreed to write to Jane Hargreaves with the annual report setting out how the Barking and Dagenham SACRE is fulfilling its role.

558.2 Members were informed that there were changes to GCSE including increased content on philosophy and ethics.

558.3 The following DfE documents were provided for information:

Improving the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils;

Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools

Members were pleased to note the amount of attention that RE was receiving nationally.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Members asked the clerk to send a letter on their behalf to the Junior SACRE representatives to wish them luck with the new project and to offer their help if needed.

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Members agreed to hold the Summer Term meeting as follows:

Tuesday 2 June 2015, 1:30 pm at Eastbury Comprehensive School