

**PORTSMOUTH STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING held on Wednesday 18 November 2009 at
4 pm at St Cuthbert's Community and Children's Centre, Hayling Avenue,
Portsmouth.

Present

GROUP A REPRESENTATIVES

Geoff Wheeler, Baptist Union
Ruth Guyer, Judaism
David Lewis, The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
Peter Davies, The Fellowship of Independent
Evangelical Churches
Marilyn Leggett, The Salvation Army
Christine McMillan, United Reformed Church
Mrs Ephrat Miller-Foroughi, Bah'a'i Faith
John Lance, South Hampshire Humanists
Syed Aminul Haque, Islam

GROUP B REPRESENTATIVES

Lillian Weatherley, Church of England
The Reverend Trevor Reader, Church of England

GROUP C REPRESENTATIVES

Beverley Millsom, Special Teacher Representative
Paula Withers, Priory School
Alan Matthews, Headteacher, St Jude's Primary School

GROUP D REPRESENTATIVES

Taki Jaffer, PCC and Portsmouth Interfaith Forum
Councillor David Horne, PCC
Councillor David Stephen Butler, PCC

CO-OPTED REPRESENTATIVES

Sue Ganter, Interfusion

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Georgina Mulhall, RE Advisor to Portsmouth SACRE
Teresa Deasy, Democratic and Community Engagement, PCC

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

The Reverend David Power of St Cuthbert's Centre

24 Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

Apologies for absence were received from the following – Sarah Hanley of Portsmouth College, Gemma Self of Somers Park Primary School, Roger Bentote of the Teachers' Liaison Panel, Gill Parmee of Newbridge Junior School, Celia Axton of St Edmund's Secondary School, Emily Fletcher Church of England representative replacing Brian Hay, Patrick Quirke of Milton Cross School, Sue Vigar-Taylor representing the Buddhist Faith.

25 Minutes of the Meeting held 12 June 2009 (AI 2)

(TAKE IN MINUTES)

The minutes of the meeting were agreed as a correct record.

26 Matters Arising (AI 3)

(a) Minute No. 22 (c) – Clive Erricker, Hampshire RE Advisor

It was reported that the minutes should be amended to read that Clive Erricker would be retiring at the end of the summer.

The Clerk was reminded to write to Clive on behalf of the SACRE offering him best wishes for his retirement and thanking him for the work that he had done with the Portsmouth SACRE.

(b) Minute No. 23 Date of Next Meeting

It was reported that the date of the next meeting should read November and not October.

(c) Minute No. 22 (b) – Youth Representation on the SACRE

Sue Ganter advised that the reference to involving Year 6 students in the Portsmouth SACRE was incorrectly reported and it was agreed that this paragraph should be deleted from the minutes.

With regard to the action note for Georgina Mulhall to approach the Council of Portsmouth Students, Georgina reported that she had been in touch with David Hart who would be approaching the Council of Portsmouth Students to enquire whether any students might be interested in becoming members of the SACRE.

27 Response to Questions on RE in Schools by Sarah McCarthy-Fry MP and Diana Johnson MP (AI 4)

(TAKE IN LETTERS FROM SARAH MCCARTHY-FRY MP AND
DIANA JOHNSON MP)

The Chair referred members to the letters of response, which were attached with the agenda. He reminded members that Sarah McCarthy-Fry had been invited to attend the last meeting of the SACRE to respond to questions put to her. Unfortunately she had to pull out of the meeting at short notice, as she

had been moved to a different ministerial post following the government reshuffle. The new minister Diana Johnson MP, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools, had sent a letter of response to Teresa Deasy.

Georgina Mulhall commented that it was unfortunate that Sarah McCarthy-Fry had been unable to attend the meeting, as it would have presented an opportunity for the SACRE to show how RE is being taught in Portsmouth.

Lillian Weatherley advised that she had recently attended two national meetings regarding the teaching and learning of RE and delegates had been given to understand that the RE guidance would be shelved, especially with the prospect of a general election next year.

RESOLVED that the letters of response be noted.

28 GCSE Results (AI 5)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Georgina Mulhall reported that this year the number of entrants for a GCSE qualification in RE had fallen slightly compared to 2008.

With regard to the full course in RE, she commented that there had been an improvement in line with national trends, but overall attainment in RE remained below the national average.

With regard to the short course, Georgina commented that the general picture was one of an improvement in attainment. However, as with the full course, attainment was below the national average for both males and females.

Georgina referred SACRE members to the trend charts, which she would be submitting to the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) with the Annual Report.

In response to a question from Taki Jaffer regarding the inclusion of Islamic studies, Beverley Millsom confirmed that Islamic Studies was one of the modules. Ruth Guyer asked about the short course. Georgina Mulhall explained that it was likely that this course was generally taken by less able pupils, as it was a more manageable course.

Paula Withers explained that 58% of pupils this year would be taking RE at GCSE. This was an increase on last year and it was hoped that results would be better.

29 Annual Report (AI 6)

Georgina Mulhall circulated copies of the SACRE Annual Report to be presented to QCDA.

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Georgina advised that the report format was slightly different from last year. It was a very comprehensive report which took sometime to compile. The report in its current state had been approved by Mike Johns, for submission to

QCDA. The report was a very positive reflection of what was being done in Portsmouth with regard to the teaching and learning of RE.

Lillian Weatherley commented that no data in relation to standards and achievement was collected. She asked whether a questionnaire had been sent to schools asking for data. Georgina Mulhall mentioned that with the appointment of the Hampshire County Council RE Inspector, the county would have the capacity to send questionnaires to schools. However, Portsmouth City Council did not have the same resource and as the provision of data on standards and achievement was not compulsory, she had not been allocated the time to provide this data.

ACTION

Georgina Mulhall to find out whether we can provide data on standards and achievement for next year's Annual Report.

Geoff Wheeler commented on the difference between the number of schools offering courses in RE and the number of schools that entered pupils for GCSE in the subject. Georgina Mulhall offered the explanation that this might be due to the fact that courses had been offered i.e. the provision had been made, but pupils might not have taken the exam.

ACTION

Georgina Mulhall to check these figures with Mike Johns before despatching the final report to QCDA.

RESOLVED(1) That the SACRE express their thanks to Georgina Mulhall for producing the report;

(2) That the report be noted and be despatched to QCDA.

30 GCSE Conference (AI 7)

Georgina Mulhall explained that this course had taken place at Portsmouth College in previous years. For the past couple of years the venue had been changed to South Downs College and, apparently, no Portsmouth pupils had attended.

Paula Withers agreed to be the Portsmouth SACRE Link Officer to this conference and undertook to advertise the conference to all Portsmouth pupils.

SACRE members expressed their thanks to Paula for taking this on commenting that being involved in this conference was very good for the profile of the SACRE.

Discussion then turned to the reasons why Hampshire County Council had taken over the organisation of the conference. Georgina Mulhall undertook to find out more information on this from Judith Lowndes at Hampshire County Council and to enquire whether the Portsmouth SACRE could assist with the conference and if there were any plans to stage the conference in Portsmouth

in future.

31 RE Twilights (AI 8)

Beverley Millsom reported that for the last four years Georgina Mulhall had organised RE Twilight sessions for RE teachers. These sessions were aimed primarily to enable RE teachers to talk about schemes of work and to share good practices etc. Last week Taki Jaffer and his daughter had attended one of these sessions and had given a very interesting talk about Islam.

Ruth Guyer had also attended a session and had given a very interesting talk on Judaism. On behalf of the SACRE, Beverley expressed her thanks to Ruth, Taki and his daughter for their contributions.

Georgina Mulhall commented that these sessions involving faith representatives had proved very interesting and informative for pupils. She added that she was going to produce a video showing Ruth Guyer doing a Shabbat meal. Ruth had been very popular as a visitor to schools, which was a good reflection of the demand and need for faith representatives to become involved in RE class work. She appealed for other faith representatives to offer to be videoed for presentations to schools, to visit schools or to provide artefacts for the faith boxes.

Beverley Millsom commented that visits by faith representatives to schools were a good way of promoting SACRE within schools.

On behalf of the SACRE the Chair expressed his thanks to the faith representatives who had participated in these sessions commenting that it was very exciting and appeared to be well worth doing. He expressed his thanks to Georgina Mulhall for taking this forward.

32 Local SACRE's Networking Meetings (AI 9)

The Chair reported that the Networking Meetings of the local SACRE's had now been in operation for almost two years. Representatives from the following SACRE's attended – Hampshire, Southampton, the Isle of Wight, Bournemouth and Portsmouth. For the first year, Southampton had hosted meetings and Portsmouth had taken over for the second year. Now it was the turn of Hampshire County Council. The last meeting was held on Monday 5 October in Winchester.

At the October meeting the Delegates had spent time working on agreeing protocols between SACRE's. Updates were received from the SACRE's attending. Pat Hannan, the new Hampshire RE Professional Advisor had attended the meeting.

Other items discussed included raising the profile of SACRE's and community cohesion – it was confirmed that SACRE was responsible for monitoring community cohesion and the matter of funding for cohesion was questioned.

The next meeting would be held in March 2010.

Discussion then turned to the agreed syllabus and Georgina Mulhall was

asked to give an update. Georgina explained that the writing groups had met recently, with the first meeting being in early October. This meeting had been attended by Advanced Skills Teachers, SACRE representatives (Peter Davies had represented Portsmouth) and the RE Inspector had also attended.

At that meeting they had looked at various aspects of the syllabus, which needed to be examined. With regard to revising the agreed syllabus, it was believed that the methodology would be the same but the writing groups would be feeding in experience from the teaching of the syllabus.

A further four meetings would be held between now and the end of the summer term and it was planned to launch the revised syllabus at the end of the autumn term.

33 NASACRE Recruitment and Training Programme: Cohort 6

The Vice Chair reported that he had attended a preliminary meeting in London on Wednesday 23 September to discuss ways to develop NASACRE's recruitment and training programme. This was designed to build SACRE's capacity following receipt of funding from the Department of Children, Schools and Families.

The idea was to obtain funding to put together a training course for potential Group A SACRE members. NASACRE had so far carried out two pilot courses: one in Manchester and one in London. The idea was to expand these courses.

The purpose of the September meeting was to update the SACRE representatives from around the country on what had been achieved so far.

The training courses would cover two days and would incorporate visits to schools and was especially helpful for those who were not used to visiting schools. The Vice Chair added that NASACRE would be contacting SACRE's in future with a view to organising further suitable training courses.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

34 RE Boxes Update (AI 11)

Georgina Mulhall advised that she had revised the RE catalogue and the local Faith Directory during the summer holidays. She distributed copies of the Faith Directory and the catalogue of RE boxes.

Currently 27 schools were participating in the use of RE boxes. Georgina added that she had taken over as the point of contact for schools to request boxes. This had previously been carried out by the Library Service but, due to changes in that service, it had been considered more appropriate to transfer this responsibility to Georgina. An advantage of this was that any income from the RE boxes would be accrued by the SACRE. Georgina proposed to spend this income on generating a further six boxes, adding that this would amount to no more than £300.

SACRE members considered this proposal and took a vote on it in

accordance with the agreed SACRE voting protocol. It was unanimously agreed to expand the number of boxes.

Trevor Reader added that he could provide more artefacts for the Church of England boxes and asked Georgina to let him know her requirements. Georgina Mulhall appealed for more artefacts from all the faiths represented on the SACRE.

RESOLVED that Georgina Mulhall be authorised to spend no more than £300 on a further six boxes for RE. The funds that have been generated since new schools have subscribed to the service.

Christine McMillan asked how expenditure on RE boxes was being tracked, as the SACRE did not manage its own budget. Georgina explained that she had produced a spreadsheet to track expenditure, which was then agreed with Mike Johns as the budget holder.

Beverley Millsom commented that it would be helpful if, at the end of the school year, schools could be sent a list of boxes that are available to enable them to select the ones that they would require for the next school year. Georgina Mulhall undertook to do this.

35 Faith Directory (AI 12)

Georgina Mulhall reported that she had updated the Faith Directory and distributed copies to SACRE members. She added that the new directory had been distributed to schools in September along with the RE Boxes catalogue.

(TAKE IN FAITH DIRECTORY)

36 School Visits (AI 13)

The Vice Chair reminded SACRE members that it had been agreed at previous meetings that members should undertake to visit schools to observe RE lessons. He added that he had, to date, not been able to arrange a visit himself. However, he had spoken to Paula Withers of Priory School prior to this meeting and had now arranged to observe one of her RE lessons. He would be observing a lesson when a Buddhist Nun would be visiting the school to participate in RE lessons.

The Vice Chair urged SACRE members to visit schools, commenting that their role was to observe and to enjoy RE lessons and not to monitor them.

Taki Jaffer reported that he had made two attempts to visit St Edmund's, without success. On the first occasion the visit had been cancelled due to an Ofsted visit and then he had not been able to contact the person in question. Paula Withers and Beverley Millsom extended an invitation to Taki Jaffer and any other SACRE members to visit their schools.

37 Planning Preparation and Assessment (PPA) Concern (AI 14)

Georgina Mulhall explained that there had been a concern in Portsmouth that

the responsibility for RE lessons had been handed over to the PPA cover staff.

RE was the only subject, apart from Personal Health and Social Education (PHSE), where teachers have the opportunity to find out more about their pupils. Therefore, it was very important that RE was taught by somebody who had been given training in "Living Difference". Georgina added that this was a problem both in Hampshire and nationally. She added that to address this problem in Portsmouth, it would be appropriate for the Chair of SACRE to write to all Headteachers. Lillian Weatherley added that it might be worth mentioning the very important role that RE had to play with regard to community cohesion. This was agreed.

RESOLVED that the Chair be authorised to write to the Heads of infant, junior and primary schools on behalf of the SACRE.

38 The Jewish Way of Life Exhibition Update (AI 14)

Ruth Guyer reported that she had attended a very successful meeting at the City Museum with Hannah Ashley of the Jewish Way of Life Exhibition, Georgina Mulhall and Richard Cooper of the Synagogue. It had been a very useful and productive meeting.

The exhibition would be launched on Thursday 1 July with a reception evening to which all SACRE and Haifa Friendship Committee members would be invited. The Lord Mayor would also be invited to open the exhibition. The idea to hold an official launch of the exhibition on 1 July would allow it to be open for the general public on the Friday and the weekend before its official opening for schools. It was also proposed to allocate the time period 16 to 20 July for viewing by the general public.

The exhibition opening hours would be from 10.00 am to 5.00 pm each day. The school sessions would be from 10.00 am to 11.30 am and from 12.30 pm to 2.00 pm. Therefore, after 2.00 pm on each day the exhibition would be open to the general public.

Ruth explained that the museum would provide a marquee in the grounds, which could be used for various exhibitions or speakers.

The activities room, in which the exhibition would be held, was provided with a whiteboard and a screen. Ruth suggested that this could be used to project photos of Haifa, which was a very attractive city.

Richard Cooper, a member of the Synagogue Association and a specialist in local Jewish history, would produce a leaflet giving a brief résumé of the history of the Portsmouth Hebrew Congregation. This could be available for anyone attending the exhibition to take away with them.

Gareth Brettell of the City Museum would be advertising the exhibition to all schools in the area sending out mail shots in January and May 2010. There was potential for 20 to 40 schools to visit the exhibition. Georgina Mulhall has had AST time commissioned to support this work.

Ruth Guyer mentioned that members of the synagogue would be working as volunteers at the exhibition. She appealed for volunteers from the SACRE, particularly to help on Fridays, as this was the Jewish Sabbath.

Alan Matthews suggested that Ruth could be invited to attend the Primary Headteachers' meetings to promote the exhibition.

ACTION

Georgina Mulhall to liaise with Ruth Guyer to arrange for her to attend the Primary Heads' meetings.

Lillian Weatherley mentioned that when the Jewish way of Life Exhibition had been held in the Isle of Wight there had been significant support from the Jewish communities in Portsmouth and Southampton. She believed that the Jewish community in the Isle of Wight might be quite keen to reciprocate and to help with the Portsmouth exhibition.

ACTION

Lillian Weatherley to publicise the Portsmouth exhibition at the Isle of Wight SACRE.

39 Any Other Business (AI 15)

(a) Interfusion

Sue Ganter explained that the Executive Committee of Interfusion had taken the very difficult decision to disband the organisation. This was because, as reported at the previous meeting, interfusion had been unable to find any funding to enable it to continue to exist. Interfusion would be holding a small celebration to celebrate the success of Interfusion and to mark its closure. The funding for the celebration would be provided by NASACRE.

Very supportive emails from organisations all over the country had been received commenting on how impressed they were with the work carried out by Interfusion since its inception.

On behalf of Interfusion, Sue Ganter expressed the group's thanks to the SACRE for the support that they had given. Interfusion offered their support for future youth involvement in the SACRE.

The Chair expressed his thanks to Interfusion for their contribution to the SACRE.

40 Dates for Next Year's Meetings (AI 16)

SACRE members noted that the dates for next year's meetings were as follows:

- Wednesday 24 March 2010 at 4.00 pm at Redwood Park School
- Wednesday 23 June 2010 at 4.00 pm at the Training Centre, City of Portsmouth Girls' School

- Wednesday 17 November 2010 at 4.00 pm at The Civic Offices.

The meeting concluded at 6.10 pm.

TD/CB
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7 December 2009