

## **STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)**

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) held on Wednesday, 14 June 2023 at 4.30 pm at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

### **Present**

#### **Group A Representatives - One representative of each of the religions and other bodies listed in the SACRE constitution**

Baptist - Geoff Wheeler  
Evangelical Church - Pastor Chris Thomas  
Humanist - Barbara Spiegelhalter  
Muslim - Sheikh Fazle Abbas Dato  
Jewish – Michael Zeffert  
United Reformed Church - Christine McMillan

#### **Group B Representatives - Church of England**

Sue Bowen  
Revd Sam Duddles (Chair)  
Jane Kelly

#### **Group C Representatives - Six teachers representing the various key stages and an association recognised by the Authority for the purposes of consultation and negotiation**

None

#### **Group D Representatives - Four representatives of the Authority, at least two of whom shall be elected members of the Authority**

Taki Jaffer

#### **Also in attendance:**

Dr Muhammad Abbas Jaffer, Hon Secretary, Wessex Jamaat  
Zahra Asharia, Wessex Jamaat  
Naznin Houda, Wessex Jamaat  
Justine Ball, Professional Advisor  
Chris May, Hampshire Secondary Teaching and Learning Adviser for RE  
Karen Martin, Local Democracy Officer, SACRE Clerk

### **12. Welcome and Introductions (AI 1)**

The Hon Secretary, Dr Muhammad Abbas Jaffer, formally welcomed SACRE members and officers to the Al Mahdi Centre on behalf of the Wessex Shia Ithna Asheri Jamaat, noting that they had last hosted a meeting of the SACRE in 2015.

The Revd Sam Duddles, SACRE Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Sheikh Fazle Abbas Dato, Dr Muhammad Abbas Jaffer and the other representatives of the Wessex Jamaat present for welcoming the SACRE to the Al Mahdi Centre for its meeting.

### **13. Moment for Quiet Reflection (AI 2)**

The moment for quiet reflection was taken by Sheikh Fazle Abbas Datoo which included readings from the Qur'an in its original Arabic. He explained that in the Muslim lunar calendar this year 14 June is the 25<sup>th</sup> day of Dhulqa'dah, the 11<sup>th</sup> month in the calendar and that it is an important date. Sheikh Fazle went on to inform those present that the current mosque had been built with the environment in mind, it uses solar panels, a ground source heat pump and is a reserve for foxes, deer, snakes, and many other creatures. He asked that everyone, of faith or no faith, to take care of planet earth, reminding us that it is the only source of chocolate.

The Revd Sam Duddles, SACRE Chair, asked all those present to take a few minutes to reflect on these wise words.

### **14. NASACRE 30th Anniversary Award (AI )**

The Revd Sam Duddles, SACRE Chair, informed the SACRE that following its nomination to NASACRE, Taki Jaffer (Group D) had been recognised as a SACRE member who has made a significant impact in the Portsmouth area.

The Revd Sam Duddles presented Taki Jaffer with a certificate from NASACRE to commemorate the award which had been made as part of the organisation's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations. She also read a message of congratulation from Councillor Suzy Horton, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education:

*My entire career has been in Education; as a primary school teacher and deputy head, delivering teacher and teaching assistant training, and as a lecturer at Portsmouth University. I was also privileged to be the Chair of the Portsmouth SACRE between 2016 and 2021 where I saw first-hand the dedication of members of the SACRE to our wider community as well as to the important work of the SACRE itself.*

*In my current role as Portsmouth's Cabinet Member for Education, I have visited most of the schools in the city and understand the challenges they, parents and children face. I am a firm believer in facilitating positive change in schools, enhancing young people's learning, and empowering them to be in the driving seat of the decisions they make - and studying RE can help them achieve this. Through its support to schools, SACRE helps teachers create compelling learning experiences that are relevant to issues in our complex society, deepening pupils' understanding of faiths and beliefs through education and first-hand encounters with communities and people of faith, including through visits to places of worship.*

*For many years, Elizabeth and Taki have been front and centre of this work and I would like to thank them both for all their tireless effort, support and*

*dedication to the Portsmouth SACRE. I would also like to send my congratulations to Taki for his recent award from the NASACRE on the occasion of its 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.*

In reflecting on the achievements of the Portsmouth SACRE's achievements over the last 30 years, the Revd Sam Duddles noted that Elizabeth Jenkerson had also made a significant contribution in the Portsmouth area, as well as on other SACRE's and nationally over many years. The Revd Sam Duddles added that Elizabeth is not well, and that in her absence, she wanted to thank her for her considerable service to the SACRE, adding that she was keeping her and her family in her prayers.

#### **15. Apologies for Absence (AI 3)**

Apologies had been received from Elizabeth Jenkerson (Group A), Christine McMillan (Group A), sarah coote (Group A), Revd Ray Goddess (Group A), Samuel Hilsenrath (Group A), Rachel de la Rue (Group C), Kari Laing (Group C), Councillor Abdul Kadir (Group D), Councillor Asghar Shah (Group D), Councillor Benedict Swann (Group D) and Jessi Wilson, CoPS (Co-opted member)

Apologies had also been received from Fiona Kelly, nominated as Group C member (replacement for Rachel de la Rue, Primary Teacher representative Group C).

Debbie Anderson, Head of School Improvement also sent apologies due to an Ofsted inspection at one of the city's primary schools.

It was noted that Michael Zeffert was present as the nominated reserve for Samuel Hilsenrath (Group A).

#### **16. Declaration of Members' Interest (AI 4)**

There were none.

#### **17. Minutes of the Previous meeting held on 28 March 2023 (AI 5)**

It was noted that Jane Kelly had sent apologies for the previous meeting which had not been noted. It was agreed to amend the minutes accordingly.

**RESOLVED to agree the minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2023 as an accurate record, subject to this amendment.**

#### **18. Matters Arising from the minutes (AI 6)**

There were no items from the previous minutes arising from the previous minutes not considered elsewhere on the agenda.

## **19. SACRE Membership and Member Training report (AI 7)**

Justine Ball, Professional Advisor introduced the report which had been circulated with the agenda.

### **Membership Update**

It was noted that Rachel de la Rue, primary teacher representative (Group C) from Cottage Grove Primary School had resigned. The SACRE agreed to appoint Fiona Kelly, St Swithun's Catholic Primary School as primary teacher representative.

It was also noted that Samuel Hilsenrath, Jewish representative (Group A) has resigned. Michael Zeffert, present at the meeting was considering whether he can take on another commitment having previously served on the Hampshire SACRE for seven years.

The SACRE agreed to record its thanks to Rachel de la Rue and Samuel Hilsenrath for their support to the SACRE.

### **SACRE Allowances Policy and Procedure**

Justine Ball noted that it was important for SACRE representatives to be able to volunteer their time and effort without impediment or at financial cost to themselves. A copy of a draft Allowances Policy and Procedure had been produced by the Head of School Improvement and the Business Manager for Children, Families and Education Directorate.

Revd Sam Duddles explained the process by which SACRE members would be able to claim expenses in the future, including the importance of seeking permission from the Chair in advance. The Clerk clarified that it is likely this could be done at the beginning of each academic year.

Following questions from Taki Jaffer (Group D) and Geoff Wheeler (Group A), it was confirmed that claims will be made against the SACRE Budget held by the Council and that a more detailed description of the process for making claims could be added to the document.

The SACRE asked for its thanks be conveyed to Debbie Anderson, Head of School improvement and Rachel McKeever, Business Manager, for the work done to produce the Policy.

### **Membership Working Group**

Justine Ball noted that it was proposed that a small working group be established to help boost membership of the SACRE. The Chair added that it was important that the membership of the Portsmouth SACRE appropriately reflects the principal religious traditions or beliefs in our area and that it was intended that the group would brainstorm outreach and other methods to attract new faith and education representatives to the SACRE. The Revd Sam Duddles volunteered herself as a member of this group. Lacking other volunteers at the meeting it was agreed to send an email to all members seeking help with this short-term project.

### **Portsmouth Children's Safeguarding Partnership (PCSP)**

Justine Ball noted that the commitment for a SACRE member on the PCSP as outlined in the report. The Chair added that the representative sought was for a representative other than Anglican and that it was important for underrepresented groups to have a presence of the PCSP to act as a link between the Board and the community.

There were questions from members about the qualifications needed and it was noted that many SACRE members are already very busy and are often fully committed to other responsibilities.

### **Record of training**

The record of training, including the session run by Justine Ball on Living Difference IV, was noted. It was also noted that NASACRE will be running its annual training programme from September 2023.

### **The SACRE RESOLVED to:**

- a) **Offers its thanks to Samuel Hilsenrath, Jewish representative (Group A) and Rachel De La Rue, Primary Teacher representative (Group C) for their support to the SACRE.**
- b) **Appoint Ms Fiona Kelly, St Swithun's Catholic Primary School as Primary Teacher representative (Group C) to fill the Primary Teacher vacancy.**
- c) **Agree the DRAFT SACRE allowances policy and procedure subject to further detail relating to the process.**
- d) **Note that it is still seeking a small number of volunteers to form a Membership working group to help the SACRE recruit new members which appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions or beliefs in our area.**
- e) **Seek further information before nominating a named representative to the Portsmouth Children's Safeguarding Partnership (PCSP).**

### **ACTIONS:**

- i) Clerk to email all SACRE members asking for (say two) more volunteers to join Rev Sam Duddles on a Teams meeting to brainstorm new member recruitment avenues.*
- ii) Clerk to circulate further information about the PCSP to SACRE members.*
- iii) Clerk/ Head of School Improvement to ask whether the SACRE could nominate someone from the community rather than a SACRE member to the PCSP.*
- iv) Clerk to circulate NASACRE training programme 2023/24 when available.*

## **20. SACRE Monitoring Group report (AI 8)**

Justine Ball, SACRE Professional Advisor, introduced the report which had been circulated with the agenda. She informed the SACRE that the Monitoring Group had met on 24 May 2023 and that those present had

reviewed the Terms of Reference, considered the most recent Ofsted reports which mentioned RE, discussed teacher training and vacancies, explored national and local initiatives for RE, considered wider visits to Portsmouth mosques and Ramadan advice for teachers and then discussed the recent withdrawal from RE and Collective Worship survey completed in Portsmouth.

### **RE and Collective Worship Withdrawal Survey**

Justine Ball noted that 19 schools had responded to the survey and that no children were withdrawn from the whole of RE. She explained that very low numbers of children were partially withdrawn from RE and Collective Worship, that the schools knew the reasons for withdrawal and the reasons were varied but often due to the religious belief of the family. Schools were very positive about the support they receive for RE and Collective Worship and the Monitoring Group asked that the survey is repeated in the Spring term of 2024. She informed the SACRE that nationally the number of withdrawals for RE and Collective Worship seem much higher than in Portsmouth.

It was clarified that all families have a right to withdraw their children from part of all or RE and/ or Collective Worship. This is separate from the process whereby a Local Authority school can apply to the SACRE for an exemption from the requirement to provide Collective Worship that is "wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character" in respect of some or all the pupils in a school. A school would apply for this exemption in circumstances where, for example, their pupils are predominantly from non-Christian faiths. This does not remove the requirement to hold a daily act of Collective Worship.

It was noted that the Portsmouth SACRE has a Determination Policy which is available on the Council's website at: [DeterminationsPolicyupdated.pdf \(portsmouth.gov.uk\)](https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/determinations-policy)

### **Ofsted reports mentioning RE**

Justine Ball informed the group that there were a small number of Ofsted inspections in the local area recently but that there was only one Ofsted report that had specifically mentioned RE. The comments were very positive and especially so on the importance of visits to places of worship. It was noted by the group that RE can play a large role in the outcomes of an Ofsted inspection and that diversity within modern Britain is an important part of the Ofsted framework and is being noted by inspectors. She added that anecdotally, it was becoming clear that schools are more conscious of the costs of school visits.

### **Teacher training and recruitment**

Chris May informed the SACRE that few candidates are coming forward for training as RE or RS teachers and that this a national concern. It was noted that although there are not any secondary vacancies for RS specialist teachers in Portsmouth, Secondary schools generally are struggling to recruit across all subject areas. He explained that he had recently attended the Association of University Lecturers in Religious Education (AULRE) conference in Birmingham and there had been much discussion of these topics.

Chris May noted that UCAS (the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service in the UK) had recently sent emails to all third year students studying appropriate subjects encouraging them to consider teaching RS or RE as a career. He also noted that Culham St Gabriel's Trust and other national bodies are continuing their work in supporting training specialist RE teachers.

### **Mosque visits for teachers and Ramadan advice**

Justine Ball explained that a lunchtime visit to the Muslim academy in Buckland is to be set up with the help of some of the Group D Councillors. She noted that this would be a good starting point for other initiatives to encourage visits to other places of worship.

Sue Bowen (Group B) informed the SACRE that part of her job involves helping advise governing bodies on the recruitment headteachers to church schools. She explained that this process always involves asking candidates to perform an act of Collective Worship, usually based on a theme of the Christian values of the school. For the last six months however, they have been invited to use the theme of diversity and that as this has generated some very interesting results among the children, she will be continuing to use this theme.

Taki Jaffer (Group D) noted that when the links between religions are seen, like the overlapping circles in a Venn Diagram, very impressive outcomes can be the result. The Chair agreed, adding that diversity goes to all faiths and none.

### **The SACRE RESOLVED to:**

- a) **Note the findings of the Monitoring Group meeting.**
- b) **Ask for the withdrawal survey to be repeated in the Spring of 2024 and then be discussed at the Summer term SACRE meeting.**
- c) **Note that an initial meeting be set up to discuss widening visits to Mosques.**
- d) **Note that advice be provided to the Monitoring Group on Ramadan and support for schools for consideration.**

## **21. SACRE National and Local RE Matters report (AI 9)**

Justine Ball introduced the report which had been circulated with the agenda. She noted that from all the items and initiatives set out in the report it was clear that there is more joined up thinking in RE world than a few years ago. She highlighted the free training opportunities in the report, noting that these are available to teachers, governors and others. She specifically mentioned the Culham St Gabriel's Trust, NASACRE (training for SACRE members) and the new website RE Hubs.

Justine Ball noted that the SACRE can add information to the new RE Hubs website and that a link to the Directory of Places of Worship is already there. She encouraged SACRE members to take up the opportunity for training by RE hubs to become accredited speakers in schools. She noted that schools will be encouraged to use the website as a source of information and access

to accredited speakers. She is aware that RE Hubs has already worked with Humanists, the Jewish Board of Deputies and will be approaching mosques.

It was agreed to ask the Head of School Improvement to add information and a link to RE Hubs on the weekly newsletter for the Portsmouth Education Partnership (PEP). It was noted that the SACRE had submitted information about World Humanism Day (21 June) for inclusion in the newsletter.

**RESOLVED: To note the report.**

**ACTIONS**

**i) Head of School Improvement to submit information and a link to RE Hubs to the PEP newsletter.**

**22. Brief updates or notification of items to be brought to a future meeting (AI 10)**

The Clerk noted that the SACRE had approved a new Code of Conduct at its meeting in March 2023 and that this is being sent to all new members of the SACRE. It is intended that it will be brought to the first SACRE meeting of each academic year for endorsement by all members of the SACRE.

**ACTIONS:**

**i) Clerk to circulate a copy of the Code of Conduct in advance of the Autumn term meeting.**

**23. Date and venue of the next meeting (AI 11)**

The next meeting will take place at **4.30pm on Wednesday 1 November 2023.**

Mayfield School was suggested as a possible venue, with parking being made available at St Nicolas Church.

**Future dates:**

**Wednesday 20 March 2024 (venue to be confirmed)**

**Wednesday 12 June 2024 (venue to be confirmed)**

**Wednesday 6 November 2024 (venue to be confirmed)**

It was noted that it is intended that all meetings will take place at 4.30pm at a place of worship or school. If no venue is available, meetings will take place remotely on Teams.

**ACTIONS:**

**i) Chris May to contact Mayfield School about the potential to host the Autumn Term meeting scheduled for Wednesday 1 November.**

**ii) All SACRE members to consider offering a venue for future meetings.**



POST MEETING NOTE: Mayfield School has agreed to host the next meeting. Further details will be provided nearer the time of the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 5.44 pm.

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Chair of SACRE