

## Minutes of the meeting of the East Sussex SACRE, held on 7 February 2006

**Present:** Dr Taleb Durgahee (Sussex Muslim Society), Councillor J Garvican, Mrs C Gravestock (Associate Adviser RE), Councillor M Lock, Mr M Lloyd (Diocese of Chichester), Councillor R Martin, Mr R Saunders (C of E), Rabbi V Silverman (Jewish Community), Councillor R Stogdon, Mrs R Stutters (Baha'i Faith Community), A Tindall (Religious Society of Friends), Dr B Vance (URC)

**Also attended:** Regan Delf (for Item 3)

### Action

Councillor Garvican informed colleagues that Father Alan was unable to attend to talk on the work of St Patrick's Trust. The meeting opened with a few moments of silent reflection.

#### 1 Apologies for Absence and Welcome

Apologies were received from Mrs A Bassett (Salvation Army), Rev D Bastide (C of E), Ms J Bell (NUT), Rev D Bishop (Sussex Baptist Society), Mr K Fossey (Buddhist Community), Mrs M Hughes (Diocese of Arundel & Brighton), Ms L Lee (Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University), Mrs P Lock (C of E), Mr M Relf (New Churches), Imam Dr A Sajid (Sussex Muslim Society), and Mrs J Taylor (NAHT).

Dr Taleb Durgahee was welcomed to his first meeting of SACRE.

#### 2 Minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2005

##### 2.1 Matters arising

##### 2.1.1 Item 3.1 – Agreed Syllabus

It was confirmed that the Lead Member for Learning and School Effectiveness had been very positive in his response to the Agreed Syllabus and had recommended it for use in schools. All those present at the meeting, including County Councillors and Matt Dunkley, had supported the Syllabus.

Councillor Garvican reported that, following the Press Release on the Agreed Syllabus, he had been invited to take part in a local radio interview.

##### 2.1.2 Item 4.2 – SACRE bid for County Council funding in relation to faith community partnerships

It was reported that SACRE's bid had been successful and had resulted in funding amounting to £5,000.

Charlotte Gravestock informed colleagues that a number of schools had already expressed an interest in working on the project, and welcomed support for the concept of Unity, Difference and Diversity. Charlotte undertook to report further detail at the next SACRE meeting.

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In response to a query, it was clarified how it was proposed to use the funding.

#### 3 Implications of the new Ofsted inspection framework for monitoring teaching and learning in East Sussex schools

3.1 Regan Delf, Joint Head of the School Improvement Service, was

welcomed to the meeting. Regan reported on the new Ofsted inspection framework and highlighted the following key changes:

- a shorter inspection period of 2 days or less
- shorter notice of inspections
- focus on school leadership and management, and the school's capacity to improve
- requirement for schools to complete a self-evaluation

**3.2** Regan clarified that the aim of the inspection was to establish whether the school's self-evaluation accurately reflected the reality of its situation, and to show the school where it needed to improve. Copies of a new inspection report were tabled and, in response to a query, Regan confirmed that the school self-evaluation only extended to those areas set out in the framework. RE was included in the area of personal development and well-being under spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

**3.3** Charlotte explained that detailed comments on RE would no longer be provided. In view of this, Regan stated that there was a need for the School Improvement Service to consider whether additional monitoring of RE, separate from Ofsted inspections, needed to be undertaken.

**3.4** SACRE colleagues welcomed this possibility which, otherwise, would make it difficult for the Committee to undertake its legal monitoring function. It was agreed that Charlotte would investigate ways in which the School Improvement Service could support SACRE.

**3.5** Charlotte informed colleagues that she would no longer be part of the School Improvement Service from the end of April, although she would continue to act as a consultant to the SIS which would include working with SACRE. Regan Delf suggested that a permanent member of the SIS would be identified who would attend future SACRE meetings in addition to Charlotte. Councillor Garvican, Regan and Charlotte would agree the ongoing support for SACRE.

#### **4 'Excellence and Distinctiveness'**

**4.1** Martin Lloyd referred to the extracts from the new National Society guidelines circulated with the agenda. The role of church schools has always been to provide education for the whole community, and Martin clarified that the guidelines encouraged, therefore, the main faiths as well as Christianity.

**4.2** The recommendation to schools was that 2/3-3/4 of the minimum 5% RE curriculum time should be devoted to Christianity, and the remainder allotted to other faiths. In response to a query as to how the required provision of RE by schools was monitored, Martin confirmed that Section 48 inspections were undertaken on church schools, and that additional monitoring was undertaken through the work of the Diocese with schools.

**4.3** It was highlighted that faiths which were small in number could sometimes be ignored by schools. Martin expressed the view that such faiths should be included in schools' celebration of diversity, if not in RE. The valuable role that parents could play in highlighting the importance of individual faiths was stressed, to ensure that their children were not

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disadvantaged, and clarification was sought on the involvement of parents in the checks and balances process for RE. It was confirmed that a number of parents were school governors, and that schools were encouraged to engage with parents generally.

- 4.4** Councillor Garvican highlighted the importance of considering the implications of the Religious Hatred Bill, particularly with regard to the teaching of RE. It was agreed to ask the County Council's legal department to provide a briefing at the next SACRE meeting.
- 4.5** Charlotte tabled copies of the Bishop of Portsmouth's preface to 'Excellence and Distinctiveness', together with her draft response in which she expressed concern at the Bishop's recommendation to C of E members of SACREs to veto from the outset any Agreed Syllabus that was not based on the non-statutory National Framework.
- 4.6** Charlotte stated that if every group was given a similar recommendation, SACREs would be rendered pointless, as any single group could veto discussion on any issue it did not happen to like or agree with, so that serious and fruitful discussion would never get off the ground. Councillor Garvican also made the point that SACRE members are representatives and **not** delegates and, therefore, in no way bound to vote in a particular way.
- 4.7** The East Sussex C of E representatives confirmed that the Diocese had no intention of mandating on how its representatives voted, and SACRE members agreed the importance of holding to that principle.

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## **5 SACRE constitution and membership**

- 5.1** As agreed at the last meeting, consideration was given to the membership of SACRE following the wish of the Diocese to increase the C of E membership from 3 to 4; and the need to address the position of the non-voting members, and that of the Baha'i Faith Community representative in particular.
- 5.2** Charlotte read out the letter which had been received from Jeremy Taylor clarifying the Diocese's wish for the C of E membership to be increased. The discussion that followed highlighted members' concern that an increase in membership might result in the other C of E members reducing their attendance. It was stressed that consistency in attendance was important if SACRE's work were to be effective.
- 5.3** The view was also expressed that increased C of E representation would upset the balance of SACRE at the expense of affording opportunities for representation from other faiths in future.
- 5.4** The C of E members expressed the view that it would be unlikely that all of the four proposed representatives would attend every meeting in view of their other commitments. There would be no question of their 'overcrowding' SACRE, therefore, and, although they might have a common view, the representation would always seek to provide a balance.
- 5.5** Following discussions, it was proposed that:
- the C of E representation (Group B) be increased to 4 members;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- in order to accept the member of the Baha'i Faith Community into full membership, Group A be increased to 14.</li> </ul> <p>The proposal was agreed.</p>	
<b>5.6</b>	Pat Lowne updated members on the current vacancies on SACRE:	
<b>5.6.1</b>	<p><b>Methodist vacancy</b></p> <p>The Methodist governors of The Haven CE/Methodist Primary School in Eastbourne had been notified of the vacancy. It was agreed that, if no expression of interest were received, Pat would contact Kathleen Wood, the Education Secretary of the Methodist Church.</p>	<b>PL</b>
<b>5.6.2</b>	<p><b>Muslim representative</b></p> <p>Following notification of Imam Sajid's wish to retire, Dr Taleb Durgahee had agreed to replace him as Muslim representative. It was agreed to invite Imam Sajid to remain on SACRE as a Co-opted, non-voting member.</p>	
<b>5.6.3</b>	<p><b>Hindu vacancy</b></p> <p>It was reported that Mr Ash Patel of the Gujurati Society was willing to fill the vacancy, or to nominate a priest if SACRE preferred. It was agreed to accept Mr Patel as the Hindu representative.</p>	
<b>5.7</b>	<p>Following the agreement for other faith organisations to be asked if they wished to be considered for membership of SACRE, Pat reported that no response had been received from the Christian Scientists. The Unitarian church in Kent, however, had expressed an interest in joining SACRE, and Rev Usher was willing to serve as their representative. In view of the meeting's preference for a local representative, and the possibility of securing representation from the Unitarian church in Hastings, it was agreed that Pat should write to Rev Usher seeking his agreement to approach someone from East Sussex.</p>	<b>PL</b>
<b>5.8</b>	<p>Reference was made to the low attendance at recent SACRE meetings, and colleagues were reminded that the constitution stated that members who were absent on three consecutive occasions without giving apologies would be deemed to have resigned. Pat was asked to write to those members who were at risk of being in that position.</p>	<b>PL</b>
<b>6</b>	<p><b>Any other business</b></p>	
<b>6.1</b>	<p><b>SACRE Awareness Event 2006</b></p> <p>Colleagues were asked to consider the focus of this year's Awareness Event. Having looked at the Abrahamic faiths, it was agreed to focus on Buddhism which Charlotte undertook to explore.</p>	<b>CG</b>
<b>6.2</b>	<p><b>Valentine Party</b></p> <p>Pat Lowne reported that the Gujurati Society was holding a Valentine Party on 18 February at Patcham High School. Complementary tickets were available to SACRE members, who were asked to let Pat know if they were interested.</p>	<b>ANY</b>
<b>7</b>	<p><b>Agenda items for SACRE meeting on 28 June 2006</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implications of the Religious Hatred Bill</li> <li>- SACRE constitution and membership</li> <li>- Update on 'Faith Communities Partnership' project</li> </ul>	