

## **THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN**

At a meeting of the **STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)** held on **THURSDAY, 6TH FEBRUARY, 2025** at 6.00 pm in Committee Room 2, Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE

### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

#### **Panel A Christian and Other Denominations**

Lorraine Nunez (Roman Catholic)  
Nandarane Naina Parmar (Hindu)  
Abdul Quadir (Muslim)

#### **Panel B The Church of England**

Felicity Djerehe  
Stephanie Ellner  
Rev Damien Mason  
Mary Thorne (Chair)

#### **Panel C Teachers**

Sarah Richardson

#### **Panel D Camden Local Authority**

Councillor Judy Dixey  
Councillor Rebecca Filer  
Councillor Julian Fulbrook  
Councillor Jenny Mulholland  
Councillor Nazma Rahman  
Councillor Nanouche Umeadi

### **ALSO PRESENT**

Anoushka Clayton-Walshe, Committee Services  
Claire Clinton, Professional Advisor to SACRE  
Owen Rees, Head of Governor Services, Camden Learning

**The minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting. They are subject to approval and signature at the next meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) and any corrections approved at that meeting will be recorded in those minutes.**

### **MINUTES**

#### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Ann Boater, Sally Hay, Dr Lynndy Levin and Helen Young.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY, NON-PECUNIARY AND OTHER INTERESTS IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA**

There were no declarations.

**3. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Webcasting**

The Chair announced that the meeting as being broadcast live to the internet and would be capable of repeated viewing and copies of the recording could be made available on request. Those participating in the meeting were deemed to be consenting to being filmed.

**4. MINUTES**

It was noted that Nandarane Naina Parmar's apologies had not been recorded in the minutes.

As a matter arising, it was noted that the Faith Forum representative could respond to the question on how schools could support interfaith work at the next meeting.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2024, subject to the correction, be approved and signed as a correct record.

**5. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR DECIDES TO TAKE AS URGENT**

There was no notification of urgent business.

**6. MEMBERSHIP OF CAMDEN SACRE**

The Professional Advisor said they were working to fill a sixth position in Panel B (Church of England). They also said that they were awaiting final confirmation from UCL Academy regarding Craig Baxter's appointment to Group C (Teachers).

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the membership be noted.

## **7. DRAFT CAMDEN SACRE PROTOCOL AND REVISIONS TO TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Consideration was given to the draft Camden SACRE Protocol and revisions to the Terms of Reference papers.

The Professional Advisor summarised the report and stated that the new protocol document aimed to define SACRE's ambitions regarding attitudes and approach

In response to questions, the following was confirmed:

- In relation to section 2 of the protocol, it was clarified that although the Diocese Director of Education was referenced to reflect seniority, this did not mean SACRE would routinely consult at that level. However, escalation from a local level could occur if and when appropriate.
- SACRE was formed of four groups. However, when members sat as an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC), these groups were renamed as 'committees', with the only change being in terminology.

### **RESOLVED –**

THAT SACRE:

1. Agree the Camden SACRE protocol (Appendix 1)
2. Note the terms of reference (Appendix 2)

## **8. FAITH FORUM UPDATE**

Consideration was given to the Faith Forum Update.

The Camden Faith Forum representative had sent their apologies for the meeting. A written update would be circulated to members.

### **Action By - Faith Forum representative**

### **RESOLVED –**

THAT SACRE note the update.

## **9. NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SACRE (NASACRE) UPDATES**

Consideration was given to the NASACRE updates.

The Professional Advisor provided the following updates:

- A SACRE Clerk's Network webinar meeting was scheduled for 25 February 2025, covering top tips and ideas.
- A NASACRE in conversation event was scheduled for 13 March 2025, bringing together Religious Education (RE) advisors, SACRE Chairs and Vice-Chairs, and local authority (LA) education representatives.

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- A webinar had been scheduled on conducting an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) in March 2025, but the professional advisor did not think anyone from Camden needed to attend this.
- The NASACRE Conference was scheduled to take place at Stratford Town Hall on 19 May 2025, focusing on handling sensitive and controversial issues, with further details to be emailed to members. The LA was able to fund attendance. Members were asked to hold the date in their diaries.
- In June 2025, various briefing workshops had been planned, led by charities and experts, covering multiple topics, with a briefing to be released in mid-February. Members were encouraged to attend, and more information about the sessions was to be shared in due course.

**Action By – Professional Advisor**

**RESOLVED –**

THAT SACRE note the update.

**10. CAMDEN SACRE ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24**

Consideration was given to the Camden SACRE Annual Report 2023-24.

The Professional Advisor summarised the report, which provided an overview and analysis of the summer 2024 exam results, Ofsted reports from 2023-24 on RE and Collective Worship (CW), and a summary of Camden SACRE's work and achievements for the period. The Professional Advisor stated that the largest piece of work had been on agreeing the new syllabus, and positive feedback had been received.

In response to questions, the following was confirmed:

- 2024 GCSE results were provisional and pending verification in January or February 2025. In most cases, the unverified results were largely the same as the final figures. However, this year was more complicated, as the unverified results, usually received in November, were only available in the second week of December. Additionally, the DfE had not yet released the A-Level data.
- In relation to the network meetings, it was confirmed that the secondary schools network meeting was scheduled for the following Wednesday, and the primary schools network meeting was to take place at the start of March. The autumn meetings had been well attended.
- Next year, the annual report was to be circulated to SACRE members before the report was to be submitted to the Department for Education (DfE). This year, it had been submitted to the Chair and the Head of Governor Services prior to submission only due to the time constraints.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT SACRE note the report.

## **11. CAMDEN SACRE PRIORITIES 2024-25**

Consideration was given to the Camden SACRE Priorities 2024-25 paper.

The Professional Advisor summarised the report, which outlined the Camden SACRE priorities for 2024-25.

In response to questions, the following was confirmed:

- It was confirmed that RE school leads contacted the Professional Advisor between meetings and often asked questions. Requests included support for starting units and locating materials. RE leads also sought advice on suitable speakers to invite. These interactions helped the Professional Advisor stay informed about their work.
- The Camden Places of Worship database was held by the Professional Advisor and shared with RE leaders in both primary and secondary schools in Camden. The database aimed to help schools connect more easily with places of worship and education centres, improving opportunities for school visits and for individuals to visit schools to share their lived experiences as religious or non-religious people. Individuals had been contacted to confirm whether they were happy for their details to be shared with schools or included in the database. The database was to be shared with members so they inform the Professional Advisor if there were any missing places of worship or contacts.

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**Action By – Professional Advisor & SACRE Members**

**RESOLVED –**

THAT SACRE note the report.

## **12. SACRE ANNUAL SELF-EVALUATION TOOLKIT**

Consideration was given to SACRE Annual Self-Evaluation Toolkit.

The Professional Advisor asked members to review each key area within Sections 2 (Standards and quality of provision of Religious Education) and 3 (effectiveness of the locally agreed syllabus) and provide their feedback on how Camden SACRE was performing against the criteria. Additionally, the Professional Advisor suggested that in subsequent years SACRE meetings on occasion could be held fully remotely or fully in-person because it either format it could allow for splitting into breakout rooms or smaller groups for the benefit of discussion items.

The following was discussed for each section:

## **Section 2 - Standards and quality of provision of Religious Education**

### **2a. RE provision across the LA**

- The Professional Advisor shared that they now had a better understanding of schools through the network meetings. This was also reflected in the annual report, which included feedback from schools about their curriculum. There was a draft questionnaire for schools (page 107 in the agenda). This monitoring form would provide data on how many pupils had withdrawn from RE, a figure not yet available to the DfE. It would also capture how schools rated their RE provision and the support they would like. The Professional Advisor noted that progress had been made in this area.
- A member said they would like more visibility and discussion on RE provision at SACRE meetings.
- The Chair requested that schools present their good practices to SACRE for members to consider their impact. As part of this, schools could present pupils' workbooks. The Chair also suggested that SACRE could visit schools for this activity. The Professional Advisor said schools would be keen to participate, suggesting this could be organised for a day SACRE met fully in-person, and said they would consult the networks on how to approach this request.

### **Action By – Professional Advisor**

### **2b. Standards of achievement and public examination entries**

- The Professional Advisor stated that there were robust processes within the LA to gather information. Secondary schools had submitted their timetables to the DfE, which provided valuable data. However, the data still needed to be investigated and acted upon. While there were not many pupils sitting GCSEs, it would be useful to see that number increase and further understand the students who were not sitting GCSEs and what they were doing. SACRE needed more information to move to the next level.
- A member said it would be helpful to be presented with term-by-term data.
- The FSM data looked at whether children receiving FSM performed differently in different areas, and then thought needed to be put into how to target support. Schools with higher results tended to perform well across the board, even though some of those schools might not be considered high performing on a national level. However, triangulating data from various sources helped to get a more complete picture. The Professional Advisor suggested they could meet online with RE teachers to explain and understand more about the data, as teachers may have already discussed it with their line managers, which would provide useful feedback for SACRE. They also proposed that personal contact from SACRE would be beneficial for providing support to teachers.
- A member said SACRE should spend more time on achievement and standards, hear more from Camden Learning regarding the schools' overview, and how their data compared with national trends. They emphasised the importance of discussing what actions were being taken to drive standards and quality and to consider the bigger picture. The Head of Governor Services stated that the 2024 Achievement and Standards report, prepared by Camden Learning, was to be

published in the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee agenda and could be shared with members.

**Action By – Committee Clerk**

- The Head of Governor Services stated that the provisional exam results data for 2024-25 could be ready by the autumn term for SACRE to consider. The Professional Advisor stated that, next year, as part of a SACRE meeting, they could take members through the data step by step to analyse and identify triangulation. Additionally, the Professional Advisor suggested that if the monitoring form survey was to be conducted in July 2025, the results could be discussed in the autumn meeting.
- The Chair stated that, for next year, members may want to hear about RE data and provision, and how this fit into the context of schools and other subjects to assess alignment. They also suggested measuring the impact to see if any difference was being made.
- It was agreed that the Ramadan advice for schools would be circulated to members, which had been circulated to teachers and Heads of RE in the second week of January 2025 and was included in the headteacher's weekly newsletter for all RE leaders in both primary and secondary schools.

**Action By – Professional Advisor**

**2c. Quality of learning and teaching**

- The Professional Advisor stated that a monitoring report was needed, as there was currently no self-assessment data from schools on where they stood. While the data was not available at the moment, a plan was in place and development was underway.

**2d. Quality of interaction and communication with leadership and management of RE in schools**

- The Professional Advisor stated that a strong system was now in place, with all elements developed and people aware of where to find them. Camden Learning was available to offer support when needed. Support for people attending meetings was in place, and there were now systems connecting people, rather than the primary route being through the Professional Advisor. Primary schools were easier to manage, while secondary schools were more challenging due to the larger scale and more teachers. However, they were building relationships and felt that the system was good and well-established. The Chair said that systems were now in place, and now it was about embedding practices and seeing the impact.
- In response to the Chair asking how many specialists and non-specialist RE teachers there were in secondary schools, the Professional Advisor said this question would be added to the secondary school monitoring forms. It was acknowledged that there was a shortage of specialist RE teachers, which was an area of concern.

**Action By – Professional Advisor**

## **2e. Relations with academies and other non-LA maintained schools**

- The Professional Advisor stated that the relationships with academies were advanced, with a proactive strategy in place. Everyone was invited to all events, and all resources, including the syllabus, were free to use at the point of entry. There was an academy representative pending confirmation on joining as a SACRE member.

## **Section 3 - Effectiveness of the locally agreed syllabus**

### **3a. The review process**

- The Professional Advisor said that the review processes were advanced and successfully implemented.

### **3b. The quality of the local Agreed Syllabus**

- The Professional Advisor stated that the quality of the syllabus was highly regarded, with positive feedback from schools, although it had also raised the level of challenge. Primary students were being asked to engage in more challenging tasks, but there were resources available to support this. Previously, there had been differences across schools, but this had now levelled out.
- The Chair raised concerns about challenging teachers' subject knowledge and asked whether the syllabus was being adapted to meet the needs of children, particularly with the high levels of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in schools. In response, the Professional Advisor stated that during a recent RE advisors' network meeting, they had organised a session with two teachers specialising in SEND, one of whom also worked as an advisor to maintained schools. The discussion on how they adapted their teaching for SEND challenges was valuable, which led to the Professional Advisor sharing these insights with all schools they worked with, asking the teachers to contribute some of their slides.

### **3c. Launching and implementing the Agreed Syllabus**

- The Professional Advisor stated that the syllabus had been implemented well.

### **3d. Membership and training of the ASC**

- The Professional Advisor said this had been established at a good level.

### **3e. Developing the revised agreed syllabus**

- The Professional Advisor said that the syllabus strongly reflected worldviews and communities.

### **3f. Making best use of National Guidance**

- The Professional Advisor highlighted that national programs were used to develop disciplines to a high quality. Schools felt that the programs were of high quality, and they had received positive feedback, with quotes from schools supporting this.

## **RESOLVED –**

THAT SACRE note Section 2 & 3 of the self-evaluation toolkit.



### **13. POSSIBLE INTERVENTIONS AND DEVELOPMENTS FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN CAMDEN**

Consideration was given to the possible interventions and developments for Religious Education in Camden.

The Professional Advisor summarised the item which set out proposed RE intervention plans.

#### **GCSE Intervention Plan**

- The Chair expressed concerns about needing to improve GCSE results to meet or exceed the national average and considered what measures could be put in place to support this.
- The discussion highlighted a mismatch between GCSE demands and fostering learning curiosity. The Professional Advisor noted that conversations were ongoing between exam boards regarding the outdated syllabus, which had been set nine years ago and required a refresh. However, this depended on government approval, with the DfE currently focusing on a broader curriculum review. The Secretary of State had recently stated that the government was considering whether RE should be included in the national curriculum. Exam boards were keen for the government to revise the criteria to better align Key Stage 3 (KS3) and Key Stage 4 (KS4). The Chair noted that while KS3 had a broad curriculum, KS4 was much narrower in focus. The Professional Advisor added that KS4 was heavily centred on factual content and sacred texts, which was easier to mark, with less emphasis on lived experiences or the practical implications of religious beliefs and practices. The Professional Advisor explained that prior to the changes nine years ago, students had more flexibility in their studies, whereas now exam boards were constrained by a more rigid syllabus. They stated that exam boards would prefer greater freedom in designing the course content, but this was ultimately a matter for national policy.
- The Professional Advisor stated that a half-day event and two webinars were planned, with an additional session scheduled for later in the year. The Head of Governor Services confirmed that extra funding had been agreed by Camden Learning to support this work. The Chair noted that Camden Learning was prioritising the subject, and the Head of Governor Services added that this aligned with Camden Learning's wider strategy. While Religious Education was part of the 'open bucket' subjects at the secondary level, it was not as strong as they would like. The planned project would contribute to the broader secondary and GCSE strategy.

#### **Westhill & NASACRE Grant**

- The Professional Advisor informed members about a funding opportunity through NASACRE in partnership with the Westhill Trust. The initiative aimed to support interfaith projects that help young people engage with different religions and worldviews. Historically, local authorities could bid for up to £4,000, with funding awarded to a maximum of five LAs per year. However, recent changes meant the funding had increased to £12,000 over two years. A Camden draft bid had already been prepared, but with the increased funding, the Professional Advisor

suggested reconsidering the scope of the project. Discussions with the Chair raised the idea of using the grant to additionally fund a training project with the Faith Forum, which would support building a database of speakers and places of worship. Previous attempts to organise training for speakers and leaders had been unsuccessful in securing locations, and this funding could help establish those connections. Additionally, the grant could support training for school speakers and help SACRE members visit schools to engage with students, providing an opportunity to strengthen interfaith education in the borough.

- A member suggested engaging with university faith societies and inviting their members as guest speakers. They noted that young people often preferred listening to their peers, making peer-led discussions more impactful. The Professional Advisor referenced a past project in a different London borough where trained sixth-formers spoke about their faith in secondary schools. The programme was feasible as students had free periods to participate, but training would be necessary.
- The Chair highlighted that, with the new curriculum and the increased emphasis on lived experience, schools were likely to value this initiative.
- It was suggested that the funding be split, with £8,000 allocated to a two-year primary intervention and £4,000 used for training speakers.
- In relation to the primary intervention plan, it was clarified that 24 schools were expected to send six children each, who would return to their schools as peer learning leaders. Members discussed that the event was to take place in Camden, likely in a school hall for a single day.
- The Head of Governor Services suggested that the costs to train the trainer should be included in the funding bid to ensure sustainability rather than making it a one-off initiative. The Chair supported extending the bid to cover training for SACRE members and young people as speakers on religious and non-religious worldviews.
- A revised draft funding bid would be shared with SACRE members.

### **Action By - Professional Advisor**

#### **Monitoring Forms**

- The Professional Advisor invited comments on the monitoring form, emphasising that it was still in the early stages. Further discussions with headteachers and governors would be needed to determine the best approach.
- The Head of Governor Services asked what the key metrics were SACRE wanted to measure and what questions should be included. They suggested considering the percentage of curriculum time allocated to RE and identifying the focus and priorities for schools.
- The Professional Advisor referenced a previous approach in another London borough, where monitoring initially avoided CW for the first two years, instead focusing on a few key questions about how RE was rated in schools. The form started simply and was expanded over time.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT SACRE

1. Note the GCSE intervention plan;
2. Approve the grant application (Appendix 1); and
3. Agree the monitoring forms (Appendix 2), including the additional question asking how many specialists and non-specialist RE teachers there were in secondary schools as discussed on item 12.

**14. DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION (DfE) WORKFORCE DATA FOR CAMDEN SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Consideration was given to DfE workforce data for Camden secondary schools.

The Professional Advisor summarised the report, which set out information provided by Camden schools about RE on their timetables alongside the DfE's records of exam results.

The Professional Advisor stated that they would speak with Heads of RE in different schools about the data, as there were some inaccuracies. For example, they knew that RE was being taught at KS3 in some schools listed, but administrative staff had recorded zero because it was listed under 'Humanities' on the timetable. Additionally, some secondary schools were missing from the DfE data. The Professional Advisor suggested that by having these conversations, they could present the data to schools, ask about RE provision, gather more accurate details, and report back to SACRE.

**Action By – Professional Advisor**

**RESOLVED –**

THAT SACRE note the report.

**15. CAMDEN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (RE) NETWORK MEETINGS UPDATE**

**RESOLVED –**

THAT SACRE note the update.

**16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT**

There was no urgent business.

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The meeting ended at 7.35 pm.

**CHAIR**

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**MINUTES END**