

## **THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN**

At a meeting of the **Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)** held on **Thursday, 7th November, 2024** at 5.30 pm in Committee Room 2, Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE

### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

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

Ann Boater (Quaker) (Vice-Chair)  
Sally Hay (Humanist)  
Lorraine Nunez (Roman Catholic)  
Lynndy Levin (Jewish)  
Abdul Quadir (Muslim)

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

Felicity Djerehe  
Stephanie Ellner  
Rev. Sally Jones  
Mary Thorne (Chair)

#### **Panel C Teachers**

Sarah Richardson  
Helen Young

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

Councillor Judy Dixey  
Councillor Rebecca Filer  
Councillor Sylvia McNamara  
Councillor Jenny Mulholland

### **ALSO PRESENT**

Craig Baxter, Teacher, UCL Academy  
Rebecca Branch, Camden Faith Forum representative  
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**

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**1. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR**

Proposed by Ann Boater and seconded by Cllr Mulholland, Mary Thorne was elected as the Chair of SACRE for the duration of the 2023-24 academic year.

Proposed by Cllr Dixey and seconded by Cllr Mulholland, Ann Boater was elected as the Vice-Chair of SACRE for the duration of the 2024-25 academic year.

**2. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Broadcast of the meeting**

The Chair announced: 'In addition to the rights by law that the public and press have to record this meeting, I would like to remind everyone that this meeting is being broadcast live by the Council to the Internet and can be viewed on our website for twelve months after the meeting. After that time, webcasts are archived and can be made available upon request.'

If you have asked to address the meeting, you are deemed to be consenting to having your contributions recorded and broadcast, including video when switched on, and to the use of those sound recordings and images for webcasting and/or training purposes.'

**3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Sinead Costelloe, Cllr Fulbrook, Rev Damien Mason and Rose O'Brien.

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

There were no declarations.

**5. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Clerk was notified that Sally Hayes joined the previous meeting remotely which had not been recorded.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2024 be approved and signed as a correct record.

**6. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Professional Advisor stated that the terms of reference were last updated in 2010 therefore it was time they were refreshed to include aspects relating to hybrid meetings, the Faith Forum, and other initiatives SACRE now connected to. A draft of the revised terms of reference would report to the next meeting.

**Action By – Professional Advisor**

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the terms of reference be noted.

**7. MEMBERSHIP OF CAMDEN SACRE**

The Professional Advisor stated that a Sikh representative was in the final stage of confirmation and there was also progress at an earlier stage in finding a Buddhist representative.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the membership be noted.

**8. FAITH FORUM UPDATE**

Consideration was given to Faith Forum update.

**Faith Forum Awards and Case Studies**

The Camden Faith Forum representative introduced the Faith Awards. This was a first-time collaboration with the Faith and Belief Forum with faith-inspired organisations collaboratively making-positive steps to promote community cohesion in Camden. The awards were followed by a gathering in the Mayor's Parlour for winners and three Camden faith leaders later won London Faith Awards, which showcased the depth of work in this area.

The Professional Advisor said with the new syllabus and discussion about lived experienced it would be beneficial to build a network of local contacts who could be trained to engage schools through projects on faith-in-action. The Camden Faith Forum representative said she would be keen to pursue this initiative and said that people were keen to share their stories, also highlighting their monthly case studies in *We Make Camden* communications as a key platform for outreach.

**Action By - Professional Advisor and Faith Forum representative**

**Interfaith week events**

The Camden Faith Forum representative provided an overview of the upcoming Interfaith Week events, which would run over three weeks. The first event would be an interfaith panel discussion hosted by Elizabeth Oldman, a podcast producer who recently facilitated a session with three Camden faith leaders. In the following weeks, there would be an interfaith history walk led by a registered tour guide, showcasing spiritually significant locations in Camden. The Camden Faith Forum representative expressed interest in expanding this initiative for schools and invited members of the schools team to join a test walk. Additionally, an interfaith social action project would involve cooking meals for staff at a night shelter.

The Professional Advisor praised the work over the last year. She stated that Interfaith Week this year was focusing on personal stories and community-building, stressing that understanding difference and diversity started with children feeling secure in their own identity. She also emphasised the importance of personal development to help children look outward and embrace others.

**2025 plans for network briefings and events**

The Camden Faith Forum representative outlined plans for 2025, which included bi-monthly coffee mornings to discuss faith-related challenges and opportunities to engage with faith leaders. Faith organisations were supporting food banks, youth work, and tackling youth violence initiatives and there would be five briefings planned around these themes, and an update from the Council, aiming to deepen collaboration and highlight impactful work. The Camden Faith Forum representative also expressed a commitment to linking these initiatives with services for children and young people.

Cllr Rebecca Filer, Co-Chair of the Faith Forum alongside Cllr Nadia Shah, expressed an interest to work closer with schools and young people and speak with teachers outside of this meeting about ideas on how to connect work. In response to a member asking how schools could support interfaith work, the Camden Faith Forum representative said they would think about the question and respond at the next meeting.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the update be noted.

**9. DETERMINATION RENEWAL APPLICATION - GOSPEL OAK**

Consideration was given to Gospel Oak Primary School's determination renewal application.

The Professional Advisor shared her positive experience visiting Gospel Oak, highlighting the excellent collective worship, which actively involved the children and was appropriately pitched. Following the observation, the school was advised to

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incorporate a mindful moment during assemblies to create an interconnected worship experience, allowing pupils to pray, think, or reflect. Noting that over 50% of the school's pupils came from faith traditions, assemblies should align with the pupils' backgrounds to abide by the law. The school was recommended to use more inclusive language, such as inviting a "moment of silence" or saying "you might wish to pray."

A member said that it was often the case that the differences between different religions was focussed on in teaching, rather than the shared values between religions. Members agreed that the aims and messaging to promote shared values and world views between religions and non-religions should be strengthened in the policy.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT SACRE agree to grant, subject to the additional aim discussed to be included in the policy, Gospel Oak's determination renewal application.

**10. NASACRE ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON 19 MAY 2025**

Consideration was given to the update of the NASACRE Annual Conference.

The Professional Advisor gave the following updates:

- Members were asked to inform the Professional Advisor if they wanted to attend the conference as a Camden delegate on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2025, which would be held at Stratford Town Hall in Newham.
- The link and login details to access the national SACRE website would be shared with members.
- There were 'NASACRE in Conversation' events which were open to SACRE members to attend, with the next event on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2025.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the update be noted.

**11. SACRE ANNUAL SELF-EVALUATION TOOLKIT AND ACTIONS**

Consideration was given to the SACRE Annual Self-evaluation Toolkit and Actions item.

The Professional Advisor asked members to review each key area within Section 1 (Management of the SACRE and partnership with the Local Authority (LA) and other key stakeholders), between 1a-1g (pages 53-58 of the agenda), asking for feedback and their views on how Camden SACRE was performing against the criteria.

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The following was discussed for each section:

**1a – Funding: Professional and financial support**

- The Professional Advisor said that in their view Camden placed between ‘established’ and ‘advanced’ level in this area. The meeting was well supported by councillors and officers.
- In response to members asking if there was a dedicated budget, the Head of Governor Services, Camden Learning (Owen Rees), said there was a notional amount of funding for SACRE but not a specific allocation. SACRE spending included the cost of the Head of Governor Services and the Clerk’s time supporting the meeting. If there were further resources desired by members, they were welcome to make a request.
- It was noted that for SACRE to move to ‘advanced’ level, they would need a strategic costed development plan, which could be developed this year looking ahead and shared with the LA.

**1b – SACRE meetings**

- Members said Camden was ‘established’, not ‘advanced’ level in this area.
- Members said they would like to hold meetings in different venues, but it was noted that hybrid capacity may not be possible in some other venues, but schools and faith venues could be explored.

**1c – Membership and training**

The Professional Advisor said in their view Camden had good systems of training and induction. The membership had also developed to a good level.

**1d – Improvement/development planning**

- In response to members saying that it would be useful to see the figures of LA spending and a record of previous years, the Professional Advisor said that information was already included in the SACRE Annual Report.
- Members said that it was hard to see how SACRE was influencing LA plans. The Professional Advisor replied that it may not be clear to members, however Camden was investing in the interfaith network work and SACRE wanted to be feeding into that. The Head of Governor Services said Camden Learning did not have an improvement plan and did not operate on those terms so the wording on the toolkit did not easily translate over, however the Professional Advisor worked with subject networks who linked to school improvements and termly meetings for network leads. There was a strategy which Religious Education (RE) was linked into. It was noted that there was possibly work to do in making this connection clearer to members and there could be a standing item introduced to update members on the network meetings to demonstrate the professional development. The Professional Advisor said in drafting a costed development plan for SACRE that links could be made clear on that document.

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- In response to a member suggesting introducing an action tracker or an effective way of showing improvements, the Professional Advisor said that could form part of the development plan.

**1e - Information and advice**

- The Chair and the Professional Advisor said that in their view Camden was 'established' level in this area.
- There would be a monitoring form in the summer term which would be used when the new syllabus was implemented. A survey would be given to teachers which would provide more detailed information about each school. This step would progress Camden to 'advanced' level.

**1f - Partnerships with key stakeholders**

- The Professional Advisor said in their view Camden had elements of 'advance' level due to being nationally connected, had representation at conference, newsletter circulation, Faith Forum collaboration, and LA collaboration.
- In response to a member asking how SACRE heard the voice of young people, the Professional Advisor said that the new monitoring form would collect their views.
- Noted by the Professional Advisor, the Chair said that it would be good to invite teachers to SACRE to hear about their experience of the curriculum and an opportunity to hear directly from students.

**1g – Relations with the Academies sector**

The Professional Advisor said they had invited UCL academy representative, Craig Hall. It was noted that there was a good relationship between the LA and academies, but they only represented 4/57 Camden schools.

A member stated that it would be useful for some agenda items to cross-reference the self-evaluation toolkit throughout the year. This would provide a good guide to members on what their aims were.

It was agreed this paper would report again to the next meeting in February 2025 for members to discuss each section and to agree an action plan to further develop Camden SACRE.

**Action By – Professional Advisor**

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the draft document be noted.

## **12. POSSIBLE INTERVENTIONS AND DEVELOPMENTS FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

Consideration was given to the Possible Interventions and Developments for Religious Education paper.

The Chair highlighted weaker overall GCSE and A-Level outcomes for the previous academic year, though Camden performed relatively well compared to national averages. The Professional Advisor reported on discussions with secondary network leads and RE teachers, regarding the types of support schools would find most helpful. Feedback emphasised the need for actionable strategies to support schools effectively. The Head of Governor Services confirmed funding for three key priorities at Key Stage (KS) 4: improving maths outcomes, addressing educational disadvantages, and conducting a deep dive into open bucket subjects (which RE formed a part of). Collaboration with secondary schools to develop these interventions was emphasised.

The Professional Advisor proposed several initiatives to support GCSE students and teachers, including masterclasses by chief examiners focusing on long-answer questions for higher-tier students, webinars on revision techniques and course planning support. A teacher representative emphasised the importance of improving students' ability to tackle 12-mark questions, including providing in-depth analysis, examples, and sources of wisdom to strengthen arguments and explore multiple perspectives, because students currently averaged half of the available marks. Another teacher representative highlighted challenges with GCSE specifications, noting that strong work in KS3 syllabuses often lacked continuity at GCSE level. They stressed the need to allocate sufficient KS3 time to build foundational skills and prepare students for GCSE, noting that some schools allocate as little as 40 minutes per fortnight. They also supported the Professional Advisor's suggestion of masterclasses, particularly to aid non-specialist teachers, and recommended creating opportunities for staff moderation of exam scripts to enhance quality assurance. The Professional Advisor agreed to explore these initiatives at the next network meeting.

The Chair queried how aware secondary schools were of the knowledge and skills levels of Year 7 pupils upon entry, noting that while church schools and primaries in Camden were strong, current cohorts did not follow a unified syllabus. It was highlighted that in a few years, pupils would join secondary schools with consistent foundation knowledge. The Professional Advisor suggested using the summer term to remind secondary schools of what Year 6 pupils had covered and to provide examples of their standard of work to support effective transition planning. Additionally, support via the network meetings would be impactful.

Members said that faith schools should not reduce focus on the faith curriculum in exam years, which was likely a result of schools prioritising league table success. A member highlighted the need for more creativity in the curriculum, especially in Year 9, GCSE, and A-Level, to better engage students while providing knowledge. The

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Chair agreed, noting that if history could be engaged successfully, RE should be just as effective.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT SACRE

1. agree actions Camden SACRE would like to recommend to the Local Authority in terms of teachers' professional development in 2025.
2. agree Camden SACRE would like to submit an application for Westhill/NASACRE funding for an RE project run with Camden schools.

**13. DRAFT 2024-25 SACRE PRIORITIES**

There was not enough time to discuss this item and Professional Advisor asked members to email her outside of the meeting with any suggestions to edit the draft document and draft development targets.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the draft document be noted.

**14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

A member asked how children who were not attending mainstream schools, such as special schools, virtual school, or alternative provisions, were supported by SACRE. In response, it was confirmed that schools did as much as they could to support those children and they were involved where possible. The Chair said members could discuss this topic at the next meeting.

The meeting ended at 7.05 pm.

**CHAIR**

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**MINUTES END**