



Camden Standing
Advisory Council on
Religious Education

Annual Report
2013-2014

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Introduction from the Chair of Camden SACRE

We are all aware of the diversity of our borough. The 2011 census showed us that there is significant representation of all the 6 main religious traditions in Camden, as well as a higher than average presence of those espousing no religion. We are also all aware, therefore, of how the religious dimensions of the global geo-political climate can be felt in our local community relations. The last year has seen a rise in anti-Semitic incidents, an increased anxiety about Islamic radicalisation, and a growing awareness of the plight of different religious minorities around the world felt among their counterparts in London.

The role of Camden SACRE is to advise the Local Authority and to help community schools to meet their statutory obligations for collective worship and religious education in this context of diversity and conflict. This is a daunting task for schools but the recent decision of the French Government to introduce RE in schools for the first time in response to the Charlie Hebdo attacks reminds us that we can no longer entertain the fantasy that religion is best left at the school gate. The Director of the LSE Professor Craig Calhoun made that clear at the SACRE day conference in January; it is time to rethink the secular.

We believe that the Agreed RE Syllabus and our guidelines for collective worship provide a framework for engaging with religion in schools in a way that builds understanding and tolerance, that values the religious identity of learners, but that also prompts critical thinking about faith, values and ethics. This report sets out how we have progressed that work in this last year, and we look forward to working with more schools in the coming year to meet the challenges of religious education in our borough today.

James Walters
Chair 2013-2014

Background

This report summarises the activities of Camden Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) during the academic year 2013 – 2014. SACRE has a remit for monitoring Religious Education and Collective Worship in non-denominational schools. The relevant diocesan authorities monitor denominational schools. The Education Act 2002 requires that Religious Education must be provided as part of the basic curriculum in addition to the National Curriculum. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from all or part of RE and are not obliged to state their reasons for withdrawal.

This report continues to be composed in the light of guidance from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) on the format of SACRE annual reports.

1. Religious Education

1.1 Locally Agreed Syllabus

After due process, the Local Authority agreed to adopt and adapt the Hampshire RE syllabus – Living Difference. The new syllabus became the statutory Agreed Syllabus for all non-denominational schools in Camden from September 2012.

Appropriate advice, support and training was offered to primary and secondary teachers to enable them to implement the new syllabus. The feedback was very positive.

During 2012, work was carried out to adapt the syllabus to make it specific to Camden. The content of the syllabus and the methodology behind it were not amended, as these were the key factors in agreeing to adopt the syllabus. Support continues to be provided to subject leaders via access to the Hampshire RE website and associated Moodle platform where there are many additional resources, including teaching plans.

Materials were sent to schools in July 2012. Each school received hard copies of the Agreed Syllabus, plus CD versions. Schools also received a primary or secondary handbook, as appropriate.

1.2 Standards in RE

The school visit programme continued and is a useful way of sampling approaches to the subject in a range of schools across Camden. SACRE members and the SACRE Consultant offer school based colleagues advice, help and support during these visits, reflecting the requirements of the agreed syllabus and pertinent to the individual needs of each school.

In addition, SACRE distributed a questionnaire to all Camden Schools. Responses were received from primary schools, secondary schools and one special school.

The key issue that emerged from the results of the questionnaire was that schools did not always feel confident in delivering RE. Only one school that replied had an RE specialist, and the others had a range of teachers who only taught RE for a short

time. The SACRE Consultant informed members that this reflected the current national picture, as made clear by key research reports from:

- All Party Parliamentary Group for RE:
<http://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/appg/appg-reports>
- Ofsted: <http://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/educators/news/2013-10-06/ofsted-report-realising-the-potential>
- RE Council Review of RE:
<http://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/educators/news/2013-10-25/re-review-report>

1.3 Methods of Teaching, the Choice of Teaching Materials, Teacher Training

The focus for the year was on continuing to support the implementation of the Agreed Syllabus.

In addition, The Chair of SACRE organised and hosted a day conference held on 30th January 2014 in the new Interfaith Centre at the London School of Economics, where he is Chaplain. Attendees included SACRE members and teachers from a range of Camden schools, including the UCL Academy and faith schools. The Director of the LSE, Professor Craig Colhoun was the keynote speaker and he addressed the relationship between religious plurality and secularism in today's world, as well as from an historical perspective. Lesley Prior, SACRE Consultant and Chair of the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE) also gave a presentation about current issues in RE. A copy of Lesley's presentation is available by contacting here at: lesley.prior@london.anglican.org

1.4 Complaints concerning RE

No complaints were received by SACRE in 2013-2014.

2. Collective Worship

2.1 Advice on Collective Worship

SACRE has produced short and clear advice for schools on Collective Worship and distributed to schools (see appendices).

Visits to schools by SACRE members accompanied by the SACRE Consultant and/or the Chair of SACRE have continued. Any school applying for or renewing a Determination should receive a visit from SACRE members prior to the application being discussed at a meeting.

2.2 Determinations

There were no new applications for a Determination. There are 15 schools with a Determination.

Eleanor Palmer Primary School applied successfully for a renewal of its determination which was granted by SACRE at its meeting on 17th June 2014

Schools with Determinations and Date of review

Primrose Hill Primary School 06/14
Brecknock Primary School 06/14
Gospel Oak Primary School 11/14
Torriano Infant School 03/15
Torriano Junior School 03/15
Beckford Primary School 02/16
Swiss Cottage Special School 02/16
Rhyl Primary School 02/16
Frank Barnes School for Deaf Children 02/17
Kingsgate Primary School 02/17
Christopher Hatton Primary School 06/17
Eleanor Palmer Primary School 06/19

Some schools have determinations which have expired but all are engaged in the process of renewing these.

2.3 Complaints concerning Collective Worship

No complaints were received by SACRE.

3. Links with other bodies

The SACRE Consultant attended the Annual General Meeting of the National Association of SACREs in London on 22nd May 2014.

Stephen Lloyd, the Liberal Democrat MP for Eastbourne, who chaired the All-Party Parliamentary Group on RE had addressed the AGM and delegates had been grateful that he had taken the time to speak to the AGM on what was a very busy day for him (local and European election were being held).

The publicity around certain schools in Birmingham had raised the profile of the importance of RE and religion in schools. There was concern that there had not been clear in terms of explaining the role of SACREs for local authority community schools and the duty of community schools to follow the agreed syllabus of their LA.

It was also commented that people were not always aware that SACREs did not have responsibility for the syllabus for academies and free schools. RE in those schools was governed by their funding agreement with the Department for Education. Currently, there is only one such school in Camden.

4. SACRE arrangements

SACRE Meetings were held on:

- 22nd October 2013
- 11th February 2014
- 17th June 2014

Clerking of SACRE was provided by Camden Council Committee Services section.

Professional support was provided by SACRE Consultants Colin Adams (until December 2013) and Lesley Prior (from January 2014) on a consultancy basis,

supported by Tracy Edwards, Specialist Leader in Education, based at Swiss Cottage Special School.

The Local Authority covered the running costs.

Appendix 1

SACRE MEMBERSHIP – 2013/ 2014

PANEL A – CHRISTIAN AND OTHER RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS

Rev. Donghwan Kim (Camden Free Church, Methodist)
Mrs. Esther Fenty (Camden Free Church, Pentecostal)
Ms. Jean Harrison (Camden Free Church, Baptist)
Ms. Lynndy Levin (Jewish)
Rev. B. Ananda Mangala (Buddhist)
Mr. Abdul Quadir (Muslim)
Mr. Peter Ward (Roman Catholic)
Ms. Krishna Pujara (Hindu)
Ms Alice Fuller (Humanist)

PANEL B – THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

Ms. Liz Wolverson
Reverend Christine Cargill
Mr. Peter Ginnings
Reverend James Walters

PANEL C – TEACHERS

Ms. Lynn Trigg
Ms Tracy Edwards
Ms. Michelle Chalibamba

PANEL D – CAMDEN LOCAL AUTHORITY

Jonny Bucknell (to May 2014)
Russell Eagling (to May 2014)
Julian Fulbrook
Nancy Jirira (to May 2014)
Heather Johnson
Mike Katz(to May 2014)
Oliver Lewis (from June 2014)
Phil Rosenberg (from June 2014)
Leila Roy (from June 2014)
Don Williams (from June 2014)

Appendix 2 – Guidance on collective worship

SACRE Guidance on Collective Worship for non-denominational schools

Why Collective Worship?

In a speech to high school students the late American writer David Foster Wallace remarked, “There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship.” That may be money, beauty, power or intellect. Wallace was not a religious person. But for him, living well was learning to worship the right things and shaping your character according to good values.

So Collective Worship is the opportunity in the day for your school to focus on what is most important. It’s a time to celebrate your common life, to reflect on the values that you want to shape your school and to form the character of the staff and pupils within it.

Why worship “of a broadly Christian character”?

The majority of people in this country believe in God and 55% self-identified as Christian in the 2011 census. Christian history, culture and values continue to shape our national life well beyond those who regularly attend church. So the law continues to stipulate that Collective Worship should reflect the broad traditions of Christian belief, being shaped by Christian stories, prayers and songs.

Religious diversity

This Christian character does not and should not preclude the incorporation of other faith traditions or humanistic wisdom within the Collective Worship. It is not the “corporate worship” of a church congregation but an inclusive experience that “collects” the whole school together and imposes no beliefs or devotional practices on anyone.

Where Collective Worship of a broadly Christian character is strongly at odds with the makeup of the school community, the Head Teacher can apply to SACRE for a Determination. If granted this does not remove the legal requirement for a daily act of worship and requires some sensitive reflection on the character of worship that may need to engage with interfaith resources and the broader values that underpin the school.

What should Collective Worship include?

Collective Worship is part of the educational experience of the school day and should contribute to the pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC). Teachers can make use of religious material drawn from a variety of traditions, including prayers. These should give those pupils who wish to the opportunity to worship God while offering to all a profound reflective experience.

Practical issues

- ⤴ Collective Worship can be offered at any time of the day in any school grouping
- ⤴ Attendance at a daily act of Collective Worship is required by the 1988 Education Act as compulsory for all pupils aged 5 to 18 unless they are withdrawn by parents
- ⤴ Parents have the right to withdraw their child from Collective Worship, but not from SMSC
- ⤴ Teachers also have the right not to take part in Collective Worship
- ⤴ Collective Worship is the responsibility of the Head Teacher and the Governing Body