

# Nottingham City Council

## Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Minutes of the meeting held at Huntingdon Academy, Alfred Street Central, St Anns, Nottingham, NG3 4AY on 14 March 2024 from 4.25pm to 5.55pm

<b>GROUP A - Representatives of Christian denominations and other religions/faith</b>		
	Martin Bennett	Salvation Army
	Vacancy	Methodist Church
	Moira Dales	Roman Catholic
	Krishna Dasi	Director of Hinduism Education Services
	Chris Richards	Humanist
✓	Deb Martin	Quaker
	M Qasim Hussain	Islam
	Ezekiel Alawale	Majority Black Led Churches
✓	Pvail Singh	Sikhism
✓	Norman Randall	Jewish
	Dr Irfan Malik	Ahmadiyya Muslim Association
	Vacancy	United Reformed Church
✓	Anna Ratcliff	Baptist Church
	Vacancy	Greek Orthodox Church
<b>GROUP B - Church of England representatives</b>		
	Anne Lumb	Southwell and Nottingham Diocese
	Alison Milbank	University of Nottingham - Theology & Religious Studies
✓	Andrea Burrows	Lowdham Primary and Trinity Church
	Kirsty Lacey	Bluecoat Aspley Academy (Secondary)
	Sarah Peek	St. Stephen's Primary
	Vacancy	
<b>GROUP C - Teacher representatives</b>		
	Louise Regan	National Education Union
	Nazia Iqbal	Chair of Governors, Middleton Primary
✓	Emmanuel Ofori	Governor, Berridge Primary & Bluecoat Aspley (Secondary)
✓	Fiona Maciel	Governor, Carrington Primary
	Leanne Harwood	Governor, Dovecote Primary
	Samia Ishaque	Governor, Middleton Primary
	Ambreen Razak	Chair of Governors, Snape Wood Primary
	Claire Al-Hussaini	Leader of SEND and Safeguarding (Djanogly City Academy)
<b>GROUP D - Elected City Council representatives</b>		
✓	Councillor Cheryl Barnard	Bulwell Forest Ward
	Councillor Angela Kandola	Berridge Ward
✓	Councillor Neghat Khan	Dales Ward
✓	Councillor Farzana Mahmood	Radford Ward
✓	Councillor David Mellen	Dales Ward
✓	Councillor Sajid Mohammed	Mapperley Ward

### Others in Attendance

Mike Carey	- Governance Officer, Nottingham City Council
Nick Lee	- Director of Education, Nottingham City Council
Lucy Moss	- Fernwood Primary
Rebecca Riley	- Head of School, Huntingdon Academy
Councillor Naim Salim	- Hyson Green & Arboretum Ward
Heidi Shewell-Cooper	- SACRE Lead Officer
Deborah Yeomans	- East Midlands, RE Hubs Lead

## **16 Welcome**

In the absence of Councillor Cheryl Barnard, Councillor Neghat Khan took the Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Huntingdon Academy for hosting the meeting.

## **17 Apologies for absence**

Martin Bennett  
Samia Ishaque  
Councillor Angela Kandola – other Council business  
Sarah Peek  
Ambreen Razak  
Louise Regan  
Chris Richards

## **18 Declarations of Interest**

None.

## **19 Minutes**

With amendments to the list of attendees, the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2023 were confirmed as a true record. The attendees added for the 19 October 2023 meeting are Andrea Burrows, Fiona Maciel, Dr Irfan Malik, and Emmanuel Ofori.

## **20 RE HUBS**

Deborah Yeomans, East Midlands RE Hub Lead, delivered the presentation on RE Hubs, highlighting the following points:

- (a) now in its second year, the RE Hubs project is the culmination of several projects aimed at supporting the RE community, improving interaction between research providers, teachers, and the community. Its goal is to provide a service for teachers, enabling access to knowledge, training, and resources in their region to enable them to teach great RE;
- (b) Claire Clinton is the Lead Director for England & Wales, and there is a named Lead for each region in England & Wales. All dedicate around two days a month to the project, and all are RE professionals in different ways. The

project's Steering Group is comprised of some of the major organisations in RE;

- (c) the project offers free monthly training to support school speakers and people that represent places of interest for RE, RVE and R&W, to help them understand best practice when going into schools or welcoming school groups to their sites. Trained speakers and representatives are accredited and their details hosted on the website, giving schools assurance. Additionally, the project offers free training for people who run local groups;
- (d) SACRE members were given a tour of the RE Hubs website, available at <https://www.re-hubs.uk/>, and were shown how to access the list of accredited school speakers and places of interest, along with other resources.

In the discussion which followed, and in response to questions from SACRE members, the following points were made:

- (e) once they have taken part in training, accredited speakers can be listed in both the school speakers section and as representatives of places of interest, depending on which category is accurate for them;
- (f) there are a number of school speakers and places of interest already accredited for Nottingham and the East Midlands, but it would be useful for SACRE members to reach out to their contacts and encourage more local speakers and sites to get accredited.

SACRE members thanked Deborah for her presentation.

## **21 Matters Arising**

Heidi Shewell-Cooper, SACRE Lead Officer, gave a verbal update on the actions agreed at the last meeting:

- (a) members who have not attended or responded for some time have been contacted, and this has led to some new people being appointed;
- (b) Group D confirmations will be noted in a later item;
- (c) contact has been made with the Nottinghamshire County SACRE Officer to plan a joint meeting in the next academic year, looking at a date in Spring at the Central Library;
- (d) an update on revising the Constitution will be noted in a later item.

Additionally, SACRE members requested that future meetings are scheduled outside of Ramadan and Purim.

## **22 Response & Recovery: Critical Incidents**

Councillor Cheryl Barnard, Chair of SACRE, joined and took the Chair for the remainder of the meeting. Councillor Sajid Mohammed joined the meeting.

Rebecca Riley, Head of School for Huntingdon Academy, delivered a presentation on Huntingdon Academy's response to the 2023 Nottingham attacks, in which Ian Coates, who worked at Huntingdon Academy and was well-known in the community, was killed. She raised the following points:

- (a) Huntingdon Academy is a multicultural school, comprising many beliefs and faiths, and staff do a lot of work to promote tolerance, acceptance, and curiosity about different faiths;
- (b) the attacks in 2023 caused panic and confusion. It was crucial to think carefully about how to communicate with the children, the staff team, the parents, and with the community. Huntingdon's leadership team drew on the Trauma Council's Critical Incident guidance to develop the school's response, resting on five principles: safe, calm, connected, in control, and hopeful;
- (c) safety is the first principle, both in the lockdown of the school, but also the need foster a feeling of safety when this is threatened by a traumatic incident. Even though it was difficult for the team, it was important that the school gates opened the next day, giving people routine, stability, and enabling the children to see trusted adults. The incident was difficult for parents who had experienced trauma themselves, particularly those who came to the UK seeking safety. Staff were supported in their own response, and were given a script to support age-appropriate conversations with the children;
- (d) calmness is the second principle. It was important to ensure the team kept gathering together and communicating, and that the leadership team listened to staff about their needs at different moments. Lisa DeSouza, Senior Educational Psychologist, supported the school through the process, helping to create a safe space to talk for staff and parents;
- (e) connection is the third principle, and is crucially important for reaching the stages of feeling in control and hopeful. It is important that the children do not feel the world is just a dangerous place, but to show that there is kindness in it, and the school took 'Love Wins' as its slogan;
- (f) the school hosted a community event centred on Ian, to raise money for a memorial garden, and many members of the community supported it and gave their time, making it the biggest event the school had ever held. At Christmas, the school continued Ian's tradition of making festive displays, with children and their families contributing sections of the display.

Nick Lee, Director of Education, spoke about the Educational Psychology team and made the following points:

- (g) the Educational Psychology service has been working on improving the Education Department's understanding of trauma and the impact on children, and does a lot of work with refugee and asylum seeker children, as well as work with the Mental Health in Schools team. The City has developed real expertise in dealing with trauma;

- (h) the team's approach is to work with schools to build capacity and skills to respond to traumatic events, building scripts to help support staff themselves, as well as to guide interactions with children and young people, and parents when appropriate;
- (i) this is not core funded, but reliant on grant funding and other funding streams, including a traded offer with schools. It has a huge number of benefits, attracting, developing, and maintaining the core Educational Psychology service, which is a statutory service.

In the discussion which followed, and in response to questions from SACRE members, the following points were made:

- (j) intrusive media attention made the situation harder and complicated the school's communication with the children. Colleagues at the Council, including Community Protection, supported the school around this;
- (k) due to the range of individual needs and communication styles, it was decided that it would be most appropriate to support parents in communicating the news to their children rather than having teachers delivering the news in classes. Parents fed back that they were very glad it was communicated in this way, due to the need to tailor communication to the individuals. Guidance was provided for parents in how to have this conversation, and teachers facilitated further conversations afterwards;
- (l) there were concerns that false media reports that it was a terror attack might divide the children and the community, but this did not occur. The school's focus was on hope and kindness, and the community response was about togetherness in the face of the tragedy rather than division;
- (m) SACRE members discussed how RE is strongly placed to help equip schools with the skills to respond to distressing incidents and events that may divide the community, building a respect for different faiths and traditions, and helping children to practice skills at discussing complex issues in a respectful and healthy way. For instance, Black Theology can be useful to spark conversations around race, and themes in the Nottinghamshire Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy can be woven into RE. Good RE helps to build the potential for wonder and joy, and teaches children about how to build healthy relationships;
- (n) Huntingdon Academy is an RSE school, and conducts RSE assemblies in which children sit in circles to discuss something relevant from the news, which builds skills for healthy debates and discussion.

## **23 LA Officer's Update**

Heidi Shewell-Cooper, SACRE Lead Officer, presented the Local Authority Officer's Update report, and highlighted the following points:

- (a) the membership is looking healthy, though there are a few resignations to note. SACRE is asked to endorse recommendations for new members, while continuing to pursue other Group A vacancies. Members were encouraged to

make recommendations if they know individuals who may potentially fill the vacancies;

- (b) the nominated Councillors for Group D have been confirmed by the Local Authority;
- (c) it is noteworthy that David Wand has resigned after over eighteen years on the group, and it would be recommended to write formally to thank David for his contribution over the years.

SACRE members acknowledged the contribution David made over eighteen years of membership of the group.

**Resolved:**

- 1. to endorse the Local Authority's nomination of Anna Ratcliff as Baptist representative;**
  - 2. to endorse the proposal from the Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham for Emmanuel Ofori to fill the remaining vacancy in Group B, moving from Group C.**
  - 3. to endorse the Local Authority's nomination of Councillor Sajid Mohammed and Councillor Farzanna Mahmood as confirmed members in Group D.**
- (d) SACRE members attended two training events in November and December 2023. The first, 'In Conversation', brought representatives of SACREs across the country together to discuss key themes and inform national developments. It was proposed that a self-evaluation process inspired by this meeting should begin at the next meeting, with roundtable discussions in smaller groups.

**Resolved:**

- 4. in light of this training, that SACRE undertake a self-evaluation process to inform the next Annual Report and enable SACRE to determine its priorities and work plan for 2024/25.**
- (e) The second training session outlined the responsibilities of SACRE to monitor schools and the different approaches taken by SACREs across the country to do this;
- (f) this could include research into OFSTED reports, though RE is not always inspected, or observing assemblies, with a randomly allocated audit each term. It is important to being a meaningful discussion without impinging too much on headteachers' and RE coordinators' time, in a way that builds connections and creates value for the schools.

**Resolved:**

- 5. that Nottingham City SACRE convene a 'Monitoring Sub-Group' to progress this area of work;**
- 6. that the membership of this sub-group should include Councillor Neghat Khan, Fiona Maciel, Norman Randall, Anna Ratcliff, and Pvail Singh.**

- (g) OFSTED's Annual Report was published in November 2023, and includes references to individual subjects, including RE.

**Resolved:**

**7. that SACRE take account of this Report in undertaking its role to monitor the quality of RE provision and supporting the professional development of staff.**

- (h) SACRE acknowledged the support from colleagues in Newham in compiling guidance for schools regarding Ramadan. It has recently been reissued with an updated paragraph about music;
- (i) SACRE members agreed that it would be useful to adapt the document for next year to make it more specific to Nottingham.
- (j) work to revise and update the constitution is ongoing, and the document is currently with the legal team for comments. It is intended that the updated constitution will be brought to SACRE in July.

**24 Summary of Actions**

All Members

- To reach out to their relevant contacts and encourage them to get accredited and listed with the RE Hubs project.

Councillor Cheryl Barnard

- To write to David Wand to formally thank him for his years contributing to SACRE.

Heidi Shewell-Cooper

- For meetings to be scheduled outside of Ramadan and Purim from the next academic year.
- To arrange for roundtable discussions in smaller groups at the next meeting, as part of the SACRE self-evaluation.
- To set up the Monitoring Sub-Group.

**25 Date of Next Meeting**

11 July 2024.