

**Ms Hania Franek
Head of School Governance & Information
Children's Services Directorate
Tower Hamlets Borough Council
Mulberry Place
5 Clove Crescent
London E14 2BG**

17/10/15

Dear Hania,

Re: Membership of the Tower Hamlets SACRE

Many thanks for your letter explaining the process that is to be undertaken for constitutional change in Tower Hamlets SACRE membership which I trust will eventually lead to the BHA being a full member of SACRE, the situation which now exists on the Hammersmith and Fulham SACRE where I also have the privilege of being the BHA representative. I do understand that there are stages in any such process and that they take time to be achieved. I am pleased that this development is now underway.

Although the matter of membership is important, the issue that takes precedence for me must be the inclusion in the Tower Hamlets Agreed Syllabus of content relating to Humanism as a non-religious worldview and ethical lifestance. Many other Agreed Syllabus documents include Humanism alongside the religions at every stage (Hammersmith and Fulham AS being a good example), but the current Tower Hamlets RE Syllabus totally fails in this regard.

The imperative to teach and learn about both religious and non-religious worldviews is recognized by many of today's leading educational and political figures such as Charles Clark and Linda Woodhead who repeatedly emphasize the need to include Humanism in programmes of Religious Education in their report *A New Settlement: Religion and Belief in Schools*. Indeed, they consider that Religious Education should move "towards a situation in which RE has to cover a wider range of religion and belief ... including the study of (H)umanism" (page 39).

Acknowledgement of the pluralist nature of British society has lately become a driving force in RE which is now responding to demands for an approach more appropriate to multicultural school populations – microcosms of the larger British public. Tower Hamlets has, without doubt, a richly multicultural population so students need and deserve RE programmes that reflect and serve this increasing diversity. A narrowly restricted curriculum sells the students short by being blind to the realities of the lives, attitudes and values of many of them. As a growing number of students are non-religious, their needs can best be recognized and served if RE programmes are inclusive of, and fair and objective about, non-religious perspectives and systems of belief such as Humanism.

For these reasons I place the inclusion of Humanism in the Tower Hamlets Agreed Syllabus as my major concern at this time. It is regard for the broad and balanced education of the students that makes it so; and my motivation for attempting to lift the status of BHA membership on the SACRE is in order to promote this. I am acutely aware that time is running out for the next review and much needed revision of the current Agreed Syllabus and I trust that all SACRE

members want to deliver the best RE syllabus possible for the future. It seems to me that we must start immediately if we are to have a fit-for-purpose Agreed Syllabus in schools by the end of 2017.

Given that SACRE meets only three times per year and the process of review and revision is time consuming, the next meeting of SACRE on Monday 19th October is a crucial opportunity to begin the work of establishing the Agreed Syllabus Conference. A resolution to this effect should be enough to start with. Having experience of this work, I would be willing to serve on this committee as I did on the Hammersmith and Fulham ASC.

As I intend to raise the matter again at Monday's meeting, I am sure that an expression of support for the start of this review and revision from you would be of immense value in this regard.

Thank you again for your letter and your attention to these important matters.

Yours sincerely,

Zelda Bailey.

BHA representative on Tower Hamlets SACRE