

CONSORTIUM OF GUJARATI SCHOOLS

Biennial General Meeting – 19th April 2020

Report for 2018-20

The last BGM of Consortium of Gujarati Schools was held on 22nd April 2018 when a new committee was elected with Jayantbhai Tanna as Chair and Vijyaben Bhanderi as the Secretary. There was a lot of consolidation work done as outlined below.

Training for Gujarati Teachers

- 1) In order to encourage more teachers to take A Level Gujarati, CGS decided in January 2018 to pay 50% or £60 of the examination entry fees. Six teachers applied. We organised nine support sessions for them. All six obtained A* grades! Three more candidates being supported similarly by CGS this year and they will take the A Level Gujarati examinations in June 2020. This way, we would hope that the teachers themselves will encourage their more able students to take A Level Gujarati.
- 2) A training session at Jalaram Mandir, Leicester on 1st July 2018. The training went very well. 95% of those who responded found the course to be Excellent or Very Good. We gave participants an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the new GCSE and A Level Gujarati courses that will start in September 2018. We discussed the teaching of Gujarati spellings, grammar and punctuation which so many students find difficult. We looked at how teaching strategies, learning styles, lesson planning and pupil assessment played a part in raising levels of students' knowledge, understanding and skills. The course was led by two experienced and expert trainers Jayantbhai Tanna and Shobhaben Joshi. There were 55 teachers who took part. The schools represented were Jalaram Bal Vikas, Ram Mandir Leicester, Indian Education Society, Sanatan Mandir Leicester, BAPS Leicester, Derby Gujarati School, Oshwal West Area, Judge meadow College, Sure Start, Ram Mandir Walsall, Shreeji Dham Pathshala, BAPS Wellingborough, Rushey mead Academy and Sai School Leicester.
- 3) A training was held at Brent Civic Centre on 27th October 2018. The venue was Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, HA9 0FJ. We had 49 teachers taking part. They came from 13 different Gujarati schools. These included Spinney Hill School Leicester, SKSS Temple East London, Oshwal NW Area, Oshwal North Area, Oshwal West Area, SKSS Temple Willesden, SKSS Temple Kenton, Veda Mandir Bolton, Watford Hindu School, Mandhata YCA Wembley, Maa Krupa School Edgware, and Shishukunj Harrow. There were three sessions in the morning – Lesson planning and Differentiation, Leadership and Management and Nursery and Primary teaching. The two afternoon sessions were planning for Global Dimension theme in GCSE 2018 and Improving Pupil Behaviour. The three presenters were Jayantbhai Tanna (Differentiation, Leadership and Behaviour sessions), Rekhaben Shah (Nursery and Primary teaching strategies) and Vijyaben Bhanderi (GCSE 2018 changes and in particular the Global Dimension theme).

- 4) A training session was held on 21st July 2019 at the Ekta Centre in Kingsbury, London. We had 57 teachers on the list. They came from 18 different Gujarati schools. These included Alperton High School, BAPS South East, BAPS Corby, BAPS Leicester, BAPS Wellingborough, BAPS Neasden, Kingston Gujarati School, Laxmi Narayan School Birmingham, Maa Krupa School Edgware, Mandhata YCA Wembley, Oshwal North Area, Oshwal North West Area, Oshwal South Area, Pandav Vidya Shala, Bharatiya Mandal Ashton U Lyne, SKLP Saturday School, SKSS Temple Kenton, , and Spinney Hill School Leicester. It also included some teachers who tutored privately. The sessions in the morning were Changes at A Level Gujarati and Approaches to teaching A Level Gujarati Literature and Film. The two afternoon sessions were 'New requirements for GCSE Speaking/Teaching Gujarati Grammar and Tackling Environmental Issues at GCSE. The three presenters were Dr Jagdishbhai Dave, Jayantbhai Tanna and Rekhaben Shah.

Our teachers have all been grateful for these training opportunities and have made several suggestions for future training. These include:

Support for Theme 4 – Future aspirations – Study and Work; More info on conducting Speaking exam; more examples of live Speaking test role plays; meeting of all teachers once a term to share ideas; meeting of GCSE teachers with Heads twice a year; produce a GCSE and A Level guides which may be helpful for teachers; sharing of resources; producing a standards Scheme of Work for Gujarati.

CGS Membership and School Information Forms

We sent out 'Membership Forms' and received returns from 23 organisations/Schools and 6 Individual members. Unfortunately, in spite of our best efforts, we have not received Membership Form returns from many of the several organisation schools in Leicester. We will keep trying to get all schools in the UK to register for membership.

We sent 'School Information Forms' to all schools and organisations to gather information about the number of pupils in our Gujarati schools and number of entries for GCSE and A Level examinations. In spite of 2 reminders, completed school information forms were only received from 5-member organisation schools and 2 non-member organisation schools. This is a pity as we are unable to get an overall picture of the trend in the number of Gujarati learners and of examination entries. We hope organisations will realise the importance of this information and send it to us soon.

Edexcel/ Pearson Examination Board

CGS has kept the membership informed of all changes, developments and updates as well as any new posts or opportunities provided by the Edexcel/Pearson Examination Board for positions like Chair of Examiners, Assessors, Reviewers, etc.

GCSE and A Level Examination Centres

It has come to our notice that many mainstream schools either refuse to enter internal and/or external students for Gujarati examinations or charge exorbitant fees to conduct these examinations.

In this context, we met with Director of Children's services in Harrow in February 2018. He facilitated a meeting with the Head at Avanti House Simon Arnell on 26th April 2018. The Head teacher seemed quite amenable to our requests about a range of issues including becoming an exam centre for Gujarati, French lesson observation, Gujarati classes after school at Avanti House, speaking exam volunteers from CGS, training venue for CGS etc. But there was no further response from the school.

Our Treasurer Rekhaven Patel, a parent at Avanti House, managed to arrange a meeting with the school and we met with the Business Officer and Admin Secretary on 1st July 2019 as the Head was too busy. We had some discussions about French lesson observation, Gujarati classes after school at Avanti House, examination centre for GCSE Gujarati and training venue for CGS teachers. However, in spite of repeated reminders, there has been no further response from the school.

We then met with Bob Blackman and Gareth Thomas, two MPs of Harrow East and Harrow West separately. Bob Blackman has written to Avanti House and sent several reminders but has not received a response. We have asked him to arrange a meeting with Nick Gibbs, the Minister responsible for Education and we await his response. Gareth Thomas has agreed to speak with his parliamentary colleagues from Leicester, Manchester, Birmingham and Southall to see if the situation can be resolved by a common approach as we are all facing the same challenges. We are awaiting further details.

CGS Website

With the support of one of our committee members, Tusharbai Shah, we have managed to get the services of Ashish Patani who runs his own website design business. He has designed our website which has now gone live! The address is www.gujaratischools.org. It has lots of information for teachers, leaders as well as parents and Gujarati enthusiasts. We are most grateful to Ashishbai for this wonderful website for such a reasonable cost. We hope it will go a long way to support teachers and leaders to improve the quality of learning and teaching Gujarati in our voluntary schools. We hope it will raise standards, increase interest and boost the number of students learning Gujarati from Nursery to Advance level.

GCSE and A Level Examination Entries

We are deeply concerned about the low number of entries for GCSE and A Level Gujarati examination. The lack of information from Gujarati schools for 2018/19/20 examinations is an added concern. There are many parents and even established organisations who are not sufficiently aware of, or keen on supporting the learning of Gujarati for our children. This is a pity! We also have a huge challenge that we have to meet by making our Gujarati lessons more interesting and enjoyable using more 'mainstream' teaching strategies and resources including IT. It is worth noting government figures about their education expenditure per pupil per year in mainstream schools. For example, Harrow Council figures show the average education spending per primary pupil was £4275 and for secondary was £5825 per pupil last year. It is obvious that we cannot compete with the level of resources in mainstream schools. But we try our best.

We therefore urge all Gujarati parents, students, teachers, trainers, community organisers and Trustees as well as Gujarati newspapers, radio and TV presenters, opinion formers and Gujarati experts and writers to work tirelessly to save our Gujarati Bhasha – our future. We at the CGS are committed to do so. Please join us.

Appreciation and Thanks

I am most grateful to all our committee members and all our teachers and leaders who have worked so hard and supported us during the last 2 years. My personal appreciation goes to our esteemed Secretary, Vijyaben Bhanderi, for her continuous hard work, support, help, advice, suggestions and expertise in spite of her health issues. The quiet, efficient and unflinching support from our Treasurer Rekhaben Patel has also been a tower of strength to me.

We are grateful to the Oshwal Community Centre and to Tusharbai, and Rekhaben for their willing support in giving us the use of the EKTA Centre for our training sessions and for holding our committee meetings without charge throughout this period. Our thanks also go to Shree Jalaram Mandir and Community Trust Leicester for giving us the use of their premises for our training without charge.

And finally, a very big **THANK YOU** to all of you who have sacrificed your precious time and made the effort to attend this important meeting!

Jayantilal Tanna
Chairman
Consortium of Gujarati schools