

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

AGENDA

Meeting to be held in the COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CITY HALL,
PLATER WAY, SUNDERLAND, SR1 3AA on Tuesday 17th
OCTOBER, 2023 at 4.30 pm

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1. Apologies for Absence	-
2. Minutes of the last meeting of the Council held on 20th June, 2023 (Copy attached)	1
3. Matters Arising	
4. SACRE Membership Report of the Assistant Director of Law and Governance (Copy attached)	6
5. Agreed Syllabus: Training Update	-
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8. NASACRE Briefing and Training – Virtual Training Paper (Copy attached)	13
9. NASACRE Conference London	-

10. **Any Other Business**

-

11. **Date and Time of the next meeting**

ELAINE WAUGH,
Assistant Director of Law and Governance.
City Hall,
SUNDERLAND.

25th September 2023

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

HELD ON TUESDAY, 20th JUNE, 2023 AT 4.30 PM

VENUE: BUNNY HILL CENTRE, HYLTON LANE, SUNDERLAND

Present: -

Local Councillors

Councillor Dodds
Councillor P. Smith

Christian and Other Denominations

Matt Moore
Tony Wortman
Elizabeth Wortman

Church of England

Amy Clarke
Caroline Weir

Teachers Association

Tracy Conway

In Attendance

Cathryn Forbes, Specialist Officer
Richard Cullen, Strategic Lead, School Improvement & Early Years
Paul Wood, Principal Governance Services Officer
Sara Gummerson, School Improvement Officer

SAC205 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor Williams. Also apologies from David Whiting.

SAC206 Election of Chair and Vice Chair

The Clerk to the Council requested nominations for the role of Chair and Vice Chair respectively. Mrs Amy Clarke nominated Ms Caroline Weir for the role of Chair and this was seconded by Matt Moore. There being no further proposed nominees it was unanimously agreed that Ms Weir assume the role of Chair.

The Chair nominated Mrs Amy Clarke for the role of Vice-Chair and this was seconded by Mr Tony Wortman. There being no further proposed nominees it was unanimously agreed that Mrs Clarke assume the role of Vice - Chair.

SAC207 Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 21st March, 2023

It was AGREED that the minutes of the meeting held on 21st March 2023 were a true record.

SAC 208 Matters Arising

Mr Wortman referred to Page 4 of the minutes and provided further details on the Srebrenica event. This would be taking place on Tuesday 11th July at 6.30pm at Sunderland Minster and had an extensive programme lined up with Choir/Violinist as well as a number of speakers. Mr Wortman advised that everyone was welcome to attend.

SAC209 SACRE Membership

The Assistant Director of Law & Governance submitted a report (copy attached) for Members of the Standing Advisory Council to review and approve the list of volunteers (listed in 3.1 of the report) onto its Membership.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

It was AGREED to approve the new volunteers listed in paragraph 3.1 of the report onto the Membership of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education.

SAC210 Review of SACRE Work September 2022 to now

Mrs Forbes addressed the Council advising that this was an opportunity to congratulate all who had taken part over the past year and to discuss what work had been done, what was achieved and to put this into the Annual Report. Items such as the Agreed Syllabus and the increase in Membership could be considered and Mrs Forbes enquired if there was anything else Members wished to raise.

Mr Wortman informed the Council of recent talks he had given at a number of schools, which had been well received and offered to provide further talks should any schools be interested.

The Chair suggested that an item be included on the RE Hub and that the training done on behalf of SACRE had been excellent. Mrs Forbes agreed, adding that RE Today training was worth highlighting and also that SACRE was now hopefully starting to be consistent in achieving a quorum now that we had welcomed new Members onto the Council.

Mrs Forbes added that a start had been made to look at a Development Plan (which was to be considered on this agenda) and two surveys had been carried out to obtain thoughts on meeting times/locations and also teachers' thoughts on the new syllabus.

Mrs Forbes commented that the Newsletters being circulated were informing of new events due to having links to the Interfaith Forum and such like so they were broadening their position further.

Mrs Forbes advised that she was happy to draft the Annual Report and bring this back to October's meeting for consideration.

Mr Cullen referred to the great amount of work Mrs Forbes had done and commented that this was most appreciated.

SAC211 Update on Development Plan

Mrs Forbes circulated the Sunderland SACRE Development Plan 2022-2025 along with the Sunderland SACRE SEF for Members' consideration advising that it covered to the period 2025 when the next agreed syllabus would be considered.

Mrs Forbes referred to discussions around Working Groups and the Plan looked to put details of who would lead and the timescales on these. It was discussed and agreed that Collective Worship was the main priority and that this needed a separate action plan and a working party to consider. Mrs Forbes added that if the Council accepted the documents these would be brought back in October for Members to give comment once they had time to fully consider its contents as it would always be updating as we progressed.

It was agreed that Mr Wood would circulate the Development Plan for Members that were not present at this meeting for their consideration.

Mr Wortman advised that he had visited the Youth Council and had been very impressed with the work that they were already doing and the presentation that they had provided. Mr Wortman suggested that they would be well worth inviting to this meeting and he would pass the contact details onto Officers.

The Chair thanked Mr Wortman for the details and commented that we would need to consider a specific reason and a clear objective in order to ask them to attend and to ensure that the Council made a good showing of Members so that their efforts were respected.

The Chair thanked Mrs Forbes for the amount of work and time given on this Plan and suggested that going forward it should not just be Officers and the Chair that populated this work and that it would be really great if all Members could be on board with this.

In response to the Chair's query over the surveys carried out and if there was a list of people that had indicated they were happy to be part of the suggested working groups, Mrs Forbes advised that the surveys had been anonymous but that most responders had said that they would be happy to be part of a working group if there was a clear direction/purpose to the groups.

The Chair commented that she was keen to keep this agenda on the move between the usual termly meetings and enquired about Members' thoughts on what the priority should be. It was agreed that Collective Worship was the biggest issue to address and expressions of interest were sought to form the working group on this. Mrs Clark and Ms Conway volunteered to be part of the group and it was agreed that all Members would be emailed by Mr Wood with the opportunity of joining.

Mr Wood advised of an upcoming training session provided by NASACRE for new Members and that he would email details to the Council. The Chair commented that she would like a standing item on the agenda for future meetings so people could discuss what NASACRE training they had been able to access.

Councillor P. Smith commented that people had many other functions and Boards that they attended which came with many training sessions so it may not be possible for some to partake in more sessions.

Mrs Clarke commented that those that could attend sessions however could only benefit the group in sharing their experiences.

The Chair clarified that she also had a full time job and other governor roles for example so it would just be a standing item to share any info/experiences and it was not expected that Members were mandated to do extra work/training.

SAC212 NASACRE Briefing

Mrs Forbes updated the group on the latest NASCARE Briefing and advised that there was little to report at this time and that new items would start to appear on the website imminently.

The Chair advised that she had attended the Annual Conference and would look to compile an update report for the next agenda.

SAC213 Newsletter – Call for Items

Mrs Forbes updated the Council on the RE Hubs which SACREs were able to sign up to and advised that details of this would be included in the Newsletter. Mr Wood was to email all Members with the links received from our RE Hub Lead.

It was also discussed and suggested that items on the Archbishops' Young Leader Awards, Spirited Arts Competition, RE Quality Mark and details of the Interfaith week along with the Srebrenica event be included in the newsletter.

SAC214 CPD Delivered for staff

Mrs Forbes updated the Council on recent training that had been provided and advised that these had been well attended. Ms Conway advised that she had found the thematic units session really useful in helping to plan and it would be good to see what came out of it at the end of the year.

Mrs Forbes commented that there had been lots of positivity around the curriculum and informed that the Chair was providing training on Understanding Christianity and Lat from RE Today was going to be providing further training at a number of sessions.

SCA215 Date and Time of the next meeting

The next meeting was to be held on Tuesday 17th October, 2022. Members discussed the benefits of both City Hall and Bunny Hill Centre as venues and it was the overall consensus that City Hall was the better suited venue as this was served better by public transport. Therefore it was:-

AGREED to hold future meetings at City Hall but the decision could be revisited in the future for those Members not in attendance.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting

(Signed) Caroline Weir,
Chair

Item 4

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION 17 OCTOBER 2023

SACRE MEMBERSHIP

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF LAW & GOVERNANCE

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 For Members of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) to review and approve the list of volunteers (as listed in paragraph 3.1) onto its Membership.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Volunteers to become SACRE Members must be approved by the Council before formally being recognised as Members with voting rights (dependent upon their category).
- 2.2 Members are appointed to the Council for a period of 4 years as per the Constitution. At the end of this period, the Clerk notifies the Members in question and seeks permission to include the extension as an item on the next available agenda for the Council to approve

3. CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 The following representatives have volunteered their services to become a Member of SACRE

Raja Zaf Iqbal	Christian Denominations & Other Religions (Muslim Representative)
Nicky Anderson	Church of England Representative

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 To approve the new volunteers onto the Membership of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education.

Contact Officer: Paul Wood, Principal Governance Services Officer

Paul.wood@sunderland.gov.uk

Introduction

Sunderland Council has statutory obligations relating to Religious Education in the City. This report summarises those statutory requirements and sets out key aspects of how they have been met in the academic year September 2022-July 2023.

This annual report has been prepared by the Sunderland Council Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education (SACRE). Members of SACRE are representative of churches and other religious traditions in the region, teachers' associations and elected councillors. SACRE members donate their time and are not paid for their services.

Religious Education is required by law and contributes to community cohesion by promoting mutual respect and tolerance in a diverse society. It provides a key context to develop young people's understanding and appreciation of diversity, to promote shared values and to challenge racism and discrimination.

The Chair of SACRE Comment

The year 2022-23 has been a productive one for Sunderland SACRE with the further embedding of the Agreed Syllabus, ably supported by our RE consultant, Cathryn Forbes, through professional advice and training sessions for teachers. We note the farewell of Councillor Louise Farthing who has stepped down from chairing SACRE this year, a position which she has held since 2016; we thank her for her service to SACRE and wish her well in her retirement. I take over the role from Councillor Farthing and look forward to working with our dedicated members in this new role.

Quoracy remains a challenge, particularly within Group C. We are keen to amplify teachers' voices and working on supporting membership and attendance for this group will be a priority in the coming year. However, we welcomed a dedicated new member to Group C this year and have been delighted with the positive contribution they have brought. Membership in Group D has remained fairly consistent but we also said goodbye to Councillor McKeith this year. We have also welcomed two new members to Group B, as well as welcoming several new members to Group A which has increased the diversity of SACRE membership and enabled us to be more representative of the community that we serve. For the first time in many years, we now have representation from a number of religious traditions other than Christianity (as well as broadening our Christian representation) which we are delighted about. A special thanks must go to our clerk, Paul Wood, for all of his efforts in recruiting new members.

To function effectively, SACRE relies on the contributions of its members and officers. I would like to thank our members for their commitment this year, as well as expressing our gratitude to the dedication of our clerk, Paul Wood, our local authority officer, Richard Cullen, and our specialist adviser, Cathryn Forbes, who all serve SACRE so well and are key to its success. I am looking forward to my new role as Chair, serving alongside our new Vice-

Chair, Amy Clarke, and working together with our committed members to strengthen the work of SACRE even further in the coming year.

1 Meetings

This academic year saw 'in person' meetings, taking place on 12.10.22, 21.03.23 & 20.06.23.

We have seen our membership increase with members of the Jewish and Muslim faith joining us, alongside a member of the Methodist Church. We also recruited to the teachers' group which has meant we have been quorate.

Our existing chair retired at the March meeting and in June a new Chair and Vice-Chair were elected.

We carried out a survey of SACRE members in early 2023. This was, in part, to help maximise the opportunity for meetings to be quorate. Members were asked about their preference for time, place, and day of SACRE meetings. In addition, we took the opportunity to ask members: in which areas of SACRE work they wished to be more involved; how often they used NASACRE resources; and the areas of work they would most wish to see Sunderland SACRE develop.

The development areas highlighted by members and the use of the NASACRE SEF tool saw us in June begin to formulate a three year action plan for Sunderland SACRE.

2 RE (Statutory Responsibilities)

2.1 Local Agreed Syllabus and RE in schools

The academic year 2022-23 saw SACRE provide a free day of training on the 21st September for teachers to support the implementation of the new Agreed Syllabus. The day was led by Lat Blaylock of RE Today as we are using their Syllabus B for the Sunderland Agreed Syllabus.

The event saw 63 schools take part in a day that was inspirational and full of practical activities to use in the classroom. The event provided an excellent platform for teachers to further enhance the skills and knowledge to implement the new syllabus fully within their schools.

Schools have been able to download all the resources from the day and take advantage of discounts to purchase additional support materials to facilitate their delivery of the Agreed Syllabus.

Following our full day conference, there have been four further half-day training sessions (details in 2.2).

Teachers completed a questionnaire at the end of the autumn term on their experience of working with the Sunderland Agreed Syllabus.

Over a third of schools responded and we were very pleased that over 80% of schools that responded are currently using the syllabus.

When asked about **attendance at the training** that has been provided 28 of the responding schools had attended both the launch and the one-day conference and 46% of respondents had attended all training offered. The following are some of the comments made about the training:

“All training has been exceptional. Very informative and helpful.”

“The SACRE Conference was a fantastic event which should be an annual event so that RE Leads and Senior Leader can network and improve the teaching and learning of RE.”

Teachers were asked to **detail the positive aspects** of the new Sunderland Agreed Syllabus. The areas most frequently commented on included: Clear vision; clarity of outcomes; clear progression; easy to use; and greater depth. One respondent commented: *“It fits in with our other curriculum subjects with its spiral curriculum and its aim of digging deeper. Its intention is clear. Staff have found it clear to use and outcomes are clearly matched to the key questions.”*

Teachers were asked to outline any **challenging aspects** of the new Sunderland Agreed Syllabus. The two biggest issues were: covering knowledge gaps when introducing a new syllabus across all year groups; and resourcing lessons.

Teachers were asked to share something **they felt proud** of having used the new syllabus. These are some of the comments:

“In the dinner hall two children from Year 2 turned to the deputy head teacher and asked her if teachers could see everything, and when she replied that nobody can see everything one boy replied well God can. The other little boy disagreed politely and they started to debate whether God was all knowing. Two year 2 children having a philosophical discussion while eating their lunch because of their new thought provoking RE curriculum.”

“The children are enjoying the Big Question aspect of the lesson plans - not only is it a key way to assess their knowledge of what has been taught but also a good review for them and a great way to get children to discuss certain aspects of the religion taught so far.”

Teachers identified a number of areas that would help with the implementation of the Agreed Syllabus. These included: Assessment; support with G&T; sharing resources on some sort of central hub; lesson resources; and more training on the teaching of Islam.

SACRE concluded that it is evident from the schools that responded to the survey that the new Sunderland Agreed Syllabus is viewed positively. Teachers in Sunderland schools are working hard to implement the new syllabus and feel that children are benefitting from a more challenging RE curriculum.

Teachers have overall taken advantage of training offered and particularly value the One-day conferences delivered by Lat.

A focus on developing assessment models and challenging all children would further enhance the delivery of the new syllabus.

2.2 Training, Monitoring and Other Information

Through Together for Children, the RE advisor for SACRE provides training to schools. To support the launch of the new Agreed Syllabus, the following courses were delivered:

- 14th November 2023: Approaching how to teach non-Christian faiths.
- 6th February 2023 1.15-3.15pm Communities of Enquiry and delivering quality RE
- 2nd May 2023 1.15-3.15pm Working with the thematic units from Sunderland's Agreed Syllabus for RE
- 19th June 2023 1.15-3.15pm Looking back and looking forward: Lessons and strategies from working with The Sunderland Agreed Syllabus for RE.

These courses are well received and have good attendance. The courses saw the inclusion of a networking session with participants being asked to bring examples of students' work and resources they had developed using the new Agreed Syllabus. This worked well and is to be a regular feature. The training also provides opportunities to discuss national RE trends and topics, as well as to explore further support teachers may require.

SACRE have noted that OFSTED no longer undertake any subject scrutiny visits in RE. In the past, these were useful for analysing national issues of importance. SACRE's capacity to conduct direct monitoring has always been limited and there is a need to consider how this activity will take place in the future given current budget pressures. SACRE will note any mentions of RE in OFSTED reports, particularly any 'deep dives' that are carried out in RE.

SACRE has looked at the preliminary findings of the RE GCSE

SACRE provides a regular newsletter to all schools. Topics covered included:

January 2023:

- New Agreed Syllabus
- Spotlight on the North East Religious Resource Centre
- SACRE survey
- RE CPD
- Sunderland Inter Faith Forum and resources

March 2023:

- New Agreed Syllabus and what you have to say.
- News from the North East Religious Resource Centre
- RE CPD
- What is going on in Sunderland this spring?

Summer 2023:

- RE Hub
- RE CPD
- What is going on in Sunderland this Summer and coming up in the Autumn?
- Spirited Arts Competition
- Archbishop of York Youth Trust - Young Leaders Awards

Each newsletter always includes CPD that is being provided and the following paragraph encouraging schools to get in touch:

*“**AND FINALLY...**All of us involved in teaching RE are acutely aware of the number of demands we face and how busy life gets! But we want to keep the work of SACRE relevant to everyone and to take every chance to share experiences (good and less so), as well as to celebrate your hard-won successes as widely as possible.*

So, even though we know it takes time and even though we know how hard you're all already working, PLEASE do keep in touch! Let us know what you have found particularly useful of what we are sharing and what you have been doing that might helpfully be shared with others. You can always reach us by emailing [...]

We are REALLY looking forward to your feedback and news (so get emailing!). “

Any queries about the provision of RE in schools, and resources to support that, are responded to by the RE advisor to SACRE who works on a non-contractual basis. In addition, the RE specialist advisor supports SACRE by attending meetings, reviewing policy documents and keeping the SACRE appraised of local and national RE issues, as well as, when requested, facilitating training and providing advice and guidance to schools within the Local Authority.

3 Collective worship

Having recently been remodelled SACRE has not as yet monitored collective worship but is seeking appropriate ways to do this. A working party was created in June 2023 to begin the work on this area.

4. Links with other bodies

Sunderland SACRE is a member of NASACRE and uses their briefings for discussion at meetings.

SACRE members have also been involved in the focus groups run by 'The Faith and Belief Forum' discussing 'Religions and Worldviews'. The discussions from the focus groups have been part of the research in creating the 'Promoting the Exploration of Religion and Worldviews in Schools – Fostering Coherency and Diversity' Insights Report.

5. SACRE local involvement

Both local Christian Dioceses have members on the Sunderland SACRE.

6. Management of SACRE, working in partnership

6.1 SACRE membership

The membership of Sunderland Local Authority SACRE is listed in the Appendix. Membership has increased across the four 'committees' (though the committees remain unbalanced),

resulting in more meetings being quorate. SACRE continues to work with the local authority in identifying faith/community leaders to continue to expand membership.

6.2 Training for SACRE members

Members have made use of the training materials offered by NASACRE.

Several members have also taken part in the full training day on the new Agreed Syllabus offered to teacher.

6.3 SACRE funding and support

Sunderland LA has not reduced the SACRE budget and made a commitment to funding support for the Specialist RE advisor.

SACRE has made a commitment to use funding to provide CPD to support the development of RE in schools.

SACRE has been well supported by the clerk to SACRE, provided by the Law and Governance Team.

NASACRE 2023-24 virtual training programme

We are delighted to announce that NASACRE is running another year of webinars to support SACREs in their practice. NASACRE-subscribed SACREs have unlimited access for all their members to each and every webinar for £50 annually which represents incredible value for professional development. SACREs may also book for individual sessions – prices are below.

- 1. Thursday 21st September 2023, 6:30-8pm: *So, you've joined your local SACRE...***
Led by Denise Chaplin, Catherine Hughes & Claire Clinton
Description: This session will help new SACRE members to understand their role, how SACRE works, its statutory responsibilities and how members make their contribution to this work.
Free session.
- 2. Monday 16th October 2023, 7-8:30pm: *Applying for and gaining a Westhill/NASACRE award***
Led by Linda Rudge & Anne Andrews
Description: This session will help SACREs to consider the opportunity afforded by applying for and gaining an award. Hear from successful SACREs sharing what the award has enabled their SACRE to do.
Free session.
- 3. November 2023 – dates TBC in each region, 6:30-8pm: *Regional meetings - for SACRE Chairs/Vice chairs, LA officers and professional support officers, working with their RE Hub lead and a NASACRE Exec member***
Description: This session taking place in regions will allow for a smaller number of SACREs to come together; it continues NASACRE's conversation with our membership, to share good practice, national and local news and giving time for SACRE leadership teams to raise, discuss and help to support each other.
Free session.
- 4. Tuesday 5th December 2023, 7-8pm: *How may SACREs effectively monitor schools?***
Led by David Levien, Catherine Hughes and Claire Clinton
Description: A chance for SACREs to come together and hear about a range of strategies and practices that build relationships with schools and enable SACREs to monitor RE and CW.
*Free to SACREs who have bought an annual webinar package.
£20 for a subscribed SACRE and £30 for a non-subscribed SACRE.*
- 5. Thursday 18th January 2024, 6:30-8pm: *Using data effectively as a SACRE***
Special guest: Deborah Weston
Description: This session will help SACRE Chairs/Vice chairs and professional support officers to make effective use of the data that NATRE, NASACRE and the DfE provides, ensuring local data can be drawn upon.
*Free to SACREs who have bought an annual webinar package.
£20 for a subscribed SACRE and £30 for a non-subscribed SACRE.*
- 6. Thursday 22nd February 2024, 4-5:30pm: *Being an effective SACRE clerk, part 2***
Led by David Levien, Catherine Hughes and Claire Clinton
Description: This session will help SACRE clerks to reflect on their present practice and share with other clerks around the country some top tips for fulfilling the SACRE clerk's role; it will focus on minute-taking, SACRE's constitution/terms of reference and composition.
*Free to SACREs who have bought an annual webinar package.
£20 for a subscribed SACRE and £30 for a non-subscribed SACRE.*

7. **Monday 26th February 2024 7-8pm: *Dealing with beliefs and practices about loss & death in your Agreed Syllabus***
Led by: Denise Chaplin and Paul Smalley
Description: This session will help SACREs to reflect on what they do a present to cover this aspect of the curriculum in schools. It will provide input from the national body of funeral directors, as well as examples from 2 different SACREs of their support work around these issues within their Agreed Syllabus.
Free to SACREs who have bought an annual webinar package.
£20 for a subscribed SACRE and £30 for a non-subscribed SACRE

8. **Tuesday 12th March 2024, 7-8pm: *Convening an Agreed Syllabus Conference – legalities and processes***
Led by: Paul Smalley with Linda Rudge
Description: This session will share the legal process and best practice suggestions for convening an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) for your SACRE.
Free to SACREs who have bought an annual webinar package.
£20 for a subscribed SACRE and £30 for a non-subscribed SACRE.

9. **Wednesday 26th June 2024, 6:30-8pm: *So, you've joined your local SACRE...***
Hosted by Exec members
Description: A rerun of the September session, to help new SACRE members to understand their role, how SACRE works, its statutory responsibilities and how members make their contribution to SACRE's work.
Free session.