

SUNDERLAND STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

CONSTITUTION

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Sections 11 and 12 of the 1988 Education Reform Act, amended by Sections 15 and 16 of the 1993 Education Act and then by Section 390 of the Education Act 1996 requires Sunderland City Council (the Local Authority) to establish a permanent body, called a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (the SACRE) to advise them on matters concerned with the provision of Religious Education and Collective Worship. This constitution sets out the main functions of the SACRE; membership and voting arrangements; and rules on the conduct of business.

2 Relationship of the SACRE with the Local Authority

- 2.1 The SACRE will have a separate identity and is independent of the Local Authority. The SACRE shall be consulted by the Local Authority on any issues falling within its scope of interest.

3 Function

- 3.1 SACRE's main function is to advise the Authority upon such matters connected with religious worship in Community Schools and in Foundation Schools which do not have a religious character and the religious education to be given accordance with an agreed syllabus as the Authority may refer to SACRE or as the SACRE may see fit.

Also it:-

- can require the Authority to review its current agreed syllabus; and
 - must consider applications made by a head teacher that the requirement for collective worship in Community Schools or any Foundation School which has not been designated as having a religious character to be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character shall not apply to the collective worship provided for some or all of the pupils at that particular school.
- 3.2 The broad role of the SACRE therefore is to support the effective provision of Religious Education and collective worship in schools.

4 Membership

- 4.1 The SACRE shall consist of:-
- 4.1.1 persons appointed to represent respectively:

- such Christian denominations and other religions and denominations of such relations as, in the opinion of the Authority, will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area; (not including persons to represent the Church of England);
- the Church of England;
- such associations representing teachers as, in the opinion of the Authority, ought, having regard to the circumstances of the area, to be represented;
- elected Members;
- Co-opted Members who shall hold office on such terms as may be determined by the members co-opting them.

4.2 The membership shall consist of:-

4.1.1 Group (A)

Roman Catholic representatives (nominated by the Roman Catholic)
 Non-conformist representatives (Baptist, Methodist and the United Reformed Church)
 Other Christian Denominations
 Representatives of other faiths, including;
 Jewish representative
 Sikh representative
 Muslim representative

4.1.2 Group (B)

Church of England representatives (nominated in consultation with the Durham Diocesan Board of Education)

4.1.3 Group (C)

Representation from such associations representing teachers as, in the opinion of the Authority ought to be represented, having regard to the circumstances of the area.

4.1.4 Group (D)

Elected Members of the Authority

The SACRE may also include co-opted members appointed in accordance with paragraph 5 below.

- 4.2 The number of members appointed to any representative group to represent each denomination or religion required to be represented shall, so far as is consistent with the efficient discharge of the groups function, reflect broadly the proportionate strength of that denomination or religion in the City of Sunderland.

5 Co-opted Members

- 5.1 The members of the SACRE, who have not been co-opted themselves, may co-opt a person, and a person so co-opted shall hold office on such terms as may be determined by the members co-opting them.

6 Term of Office

- 6.1 Members of the SACRE (with the exception of those Members appointed by Sunderland City Council) shall hold office for a four year period or until he/she is re-appointed or the appointment of his/her successor. The Clerk to SACRE shall generate letters to those whose term of office is due to cease and ensure that re-appointment (should it be desired) is an item on the agenda at the next SACRE meeting.
- 6.2 Any person co-opted shall hold office on such terms as may be determined by the members co-opting them.
- 6.3 A member of SACRE may be removed from membership by the Authority if in their opinion s/he ceases to be representative of the religion, denomination or associations which s/he was appointed to represent or (as the case may be) of the Authority.
- 6.4 Should a member of SACRE not attend three consecutive meetings, the Clerk to SACRE shall write to that member informing them that their membership will lapse if they are unable to attend the next meeting. This does not apply to Members appointed on behalf of Sunderland City Council.
- 6.5 Any member of the SACRE may at any time resign his/her office.

7 Substitution

- 7.1 Any member of the SACRE unable to attend a meeting may appoint a named substitute to attend in his/her place.

8 Voting Arrangements

- 8.1 On any question to be decided by SACRE only the representative groups on the Council shall be entitled to vote and each such group shall have a single vote.
- 8.2 On formal votes it may be necessary for the four representative groups to meet separately to determine how their collective vote will be cast. To facilitate such a vote each representative group should elect a chair.
- 8.3 In the event of a tied vote groups are to revisit the issue in question until a decision has been achieved.
- 8.4 Co-opted members shall not have a vote.

9 Conduct of Business

- 9.1 Subject to the requirement of the voting arrangements above, the SACRE and, in relation to any question failing to be decided by members of the SACRE of any particular group, the members of that group may regulate their own proceedings.

- 9.2 The validity of proceedings of SACRE or of the members of the SACRE of any particular group shall not be affected: -
- 9.2.1 by an absence or vacancy of a representative of any member of the SACRE
 - 9.2.2 on the ground that a member of the SACRE appointed to represent any religion, denomination or association does not at the time of the proceedings represent the denomination or associations in question.
- 9.3 The representative groups on the SACRE, other than that consisting of persons appointed to represent the Authority, may at any time require a review of any agreed syllabus for the time being adopted by the Authority.
- 9.4 Three weeks in advance of each meeting, the Chair shall consult with the Advisory Teacher for RE and the Clerk to SACRE to agree the agenda. SACRE members can propose agenda items by contacting the Chair or the Clerk to SACRE. An agenda for each meeting shall be distributed two weeks in advance of a scheduled meeting, by the Clerk to SACRE.

10 Frequency of Meetings

- 10.1 The SACRE shall normally meet termly on three occasions per year.
- 10.2 Meetings of the SACRE may be convened at the request of the Chairman or any of the representative groups.

11 Sub-Groups and Working Parties

- 11.1 SACRE may appoint members to working parties which may include non- members with expertise to contribute. The working party shall not make decisions on behalf of SACRE. The working party shall preferably include members from all representative groups.
- 11.2 There shall be a permanent sub-group of SACRE able to give immediate guidance to Local Authority officers and to deal with urgent business between meetings. This sub-group shall consist of the Chair and a representative from each of the remaining three groups. Members may meet formally or consult informally by letter, telephone or e mail.

12 Reports

- 12.1 The SACRE must in each year publish a report with respect to the exercise of their functions and any action taken during the preceding year which would be forwarded to QCA by the said deadline.

13 Quorum

- 13.1 No decisions can be made at the meeting unless a minimum of 3 out of the 4 representative groups are represented at that meeting.
- 13.2 Any business discussed at an inquorate meeting would be considered for formal approval at the next quorate meeting.

14 Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair

- 14.1 The Chair of SACRE shall be elected annually at the first meeting of the new academic year, from amongst those members appointed by it. The new chair shall take up office from the beginning of that meeting.
- 14.2 SACRE shall adopt the same procedure for the election of the vice chair.

15 Observers

- 15.1 In accordance with the statutory requirements of the Education Act 1996 and associated regulations the press and public will be entitled to attend meetings of the SACRE. At the beginning of each meeting, for half an hour, members of the public will have an opportunity to receive answers to any pre-received written questions they have submitted to the Clerk/advisory teacher.
- 15.2 In addition to an Administrative Officer appointed by the Local Authority to clerk the SACRE meetings, there will be in attendance an Advisory Teacher for RE and other persons on the staff of Children's Services, each of whom may speak but not vote.

16 Consultation Process

- 16.1 Members are advised to consult with the groups that they represent on a regular basis.
- 16.2 From time to time SACRE may, as and when appropriate, consult with parents and governing bodies of Community schools and Foundation schools and shall make contact with the parents and governors via the school.

17 Monitoring and Review

- 17.1 The effectiveness of SACRE will be assessed by internal review, annually via the SACRE Self Evaluation Form (SEF).
- 17.2 The SACRE will monitor and review the operation of the Constitution to ensure that the aims and the principles of the SACRE are given full effect and may make recommendations for ways in which it can be changed.
- 17.3 The SACRE is authorised at any time to make any variations to those parts of the Constitution to give effect to any changes in the law and where, in its opinion, needs and circumstances require it.