
1 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 2017-2018, against a background of reduced funding and national challenges.

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 non-Christian faiths 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 also 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.

2 Background

2.1 Legal requirement for Religious Education

Every maintained school in England must provide a basic curriculum (RE, Sex Education and the National Curriculum). This includes provision for RE for all registered pupils at the school (including those in the sixth form), except for those withdrawn by their parents (or withdrawing themselves if they are aged 18 or over) in accordance with Schedule 19 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

The key document in determining the teaching of RE is the locally Agreed Syllabus within the Local Authority (LA), although schools designated as having a religious character are free to make their own decisions in preparing their syllabuses.

2.2 Sunderland Council's Statutory Responsibilities

2.2.1 Establish a permanent standing advisory council on RE (SACRE)

The Education Act 1996 requires local authorities to constitute a permanent Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE). The statutory functions of SACRE are to:

- a) Advise the local authority on matters connected with:
 - Religious Education given in accordance with an Agreed Syllabus; and
 - Religious worship in community schools and in foundation schools that do not have a religious foundation
- b) Carry out the functions conferred on them by section 394 (determination of cases in which requirement of Christian collective worship is not to apply).

2.2.2 Convene an occasional agreed syllabus conference (ASC)

Every Local Authority must also establish an occasional body called an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) to review the Agreed Syllabus for RE adopted by the Local Authority.

2.2.3 Agreed Syllabus

The Local Authority must institute a review of its Agreed Syllabus within five years of the last review, and subsequently every five years after the completion of each further review.

Local Authorities must ensure that the Agreed Syllabus for their area is consistent with Section 375(3) of the Education Act 1996, which requires the syllabus to reflect that the religious traditions of Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain.

2.2.4 Required membership of SACRE and ASC (Agreed Syllabus Conference)

The ASC is a separate entity from SACRE but may have common membership. The Local Authority appoints representatives to each of four committees that make up the ASC and, in Sunderland's case, the ASC has the same membership as SACRE.

The four groups of SACRE (four statutory committees of ASC) are:

- A Christian churches (other than C of E) and other faiths
- B Church of England (C of E)
- C Teaching associations
- D Local Authority

The Local Authority must ensure that the composition of group A on SACRE and committee A on ASC is broadly representative of the proportionate strengths of the denominations and religions in the area.

The authority is also required to take all reasonable steps when appointing a person to be a member of a group on a SACRE or a committee of an ASC to represent a religion, denomination or association, to ensure the person appointed is representative of the religion, denomination or associations in question.

2.2.5 Funding and resources

Local Authorities are required to fund and support a SACRE and ASC satisfactorily in line with the duty to constitute or convene each of these bodies and to enable them to carry out their duties effectively.

3 Monitoring of RE and collective worship

In order to fulfil the responsibility to advise the Local Authority on matters to do with RE and collective worship, SACRE monitors by requesting information from the Local Authority (eg standards, information about monitoring visits undertaken by the Specialist Inspector (RE) or (carrying out their own survey work (eg through questionnaires).

3.1 Limitations in monitoring

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. In order to ascertain the provision and status of RE in Sunderland Schools a request was sent to all Primary and secondary schools complete a 'Survey Monkey' on their provision of RE.

3.2 Responses to request for information

No direct requests to SACRE for information.

4 Advice and support for RE and collective worship

Having recently been remodelled SACRE has not as yet monitored collective worship but is seeking appropriate ways to do this.

SACRE has carried out a 'Survey Monkey' to ascertain the delivery of RE across the LA. The survey asked Primary Schools the following questions:

- Do you follow the Sunderland Agreed Syllabus?
- Do you follow the schemes of work provided by Sunderland?
- How do you deliver RE as part of the curriculum?
- What places of worship have you visited?
- Who has responsibility for the delivery and co-ordination of RE?
- What training would you like to support the teaching of RE?

Almost half the schools emailed responded to the request for information. The majority of the schools who replied did follow the Agreed Syllabus and use the plans provided. The most popular places of worship to visit where a Church or the Gudwara, there were a few visits to a Synagogue or a Mosque. Responsibility tended to sit with a co-ordinator. Requests for training where practical around list of visitors or places of worship and faith knowledge.

Secondary schools were asked the following questions:

- Do you follow the Sunderland Agreed Syllabus?
- How many students are undertaking the full GCSE course in year 11?
- What time allocation per year group is given to the teaching of RE at KS3?
- What places of worship have been visited?
- Who has responsibility for the delivery and co-ordination of RE?
- What training would you like to support the teaching of RE?

Half of the secondary schools contacted replied, and half of those use the Local Agreed Syllabus. The majority of secondary schools continue to enter pupils for GCSE Religious studies courses. Most schools had between 50 minutes -2 hours teaching /wk. Many secondary schools reported virtually no visits to places of worship.

SACRE is to consider what training they can provide through the specialist RE advisor and how they could help compile a contacts list.

4.1 Secondary School RE Networks

The advisory teacher working with SACRE has initiated links with all subject team leaders with responsibility for RE to facilitate network arrangements across the local authority. These links have at times facilitated network meetings. The changing nature of how Academies fund and source their

contracts have seen local networks replaced by a regional network provided by a neighbouring LA. This provides Sunderland schools to network with a wider number of colleagues. Sunderland continues to respond to individual requests for support and guidance. In addition SACRE keeps local academies informed of national changes in RE.

4.2 Primary School RE networks and courses.

In order to support primary RE subject leads, SACRE facilitated a 'RE Awareness Day' at the lead C of E primary schools. This day provided the opportunity for primary teachers to observe a selection of RE lessons across KS1&2, as well as reviewing resources and methods of recording the RE experience pupils have access to. Feedback from participants was very positive and future events are to be explored further.

SACRE has continued to provide primary schemes of work when requested. These are in the process of being updated.

4.3 External and specific support

The Local Authority has commissioned support from a Head of Department from a Local Secondary academy. This colleague acts as RE specialist advisor to SACRE by attending meetings, reviewing policy documents and keeping the SACRE apprised of local and national RE issues. As well as when requested facilitating training and providing advice and guidance to schools within the Local Authority.

5 Status of ASC and agreed syllabus review

5.1 Launch in 2014

The most recent Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education in Sunderland was agreed by an ASC with the same membership as SACRE and launched in June 2014.

The next review of the Agreed syllabus must be begun in 2019.

5.2 Status in 2018

All Local Authority Sunderland schools use the Agreed Syllabus (2014) and associated plans. In addition, schools that have changed to academies since 2014 continue to use Sunderland Local Agreed Syllabus. The 2014 Sunderland Agreed Syllabus was bought and adapted from Durham LA. Durham County Council's Specialist Inspector for RE, has provided additional planning materials to support the delivery of the Agreed Syllabus when the Agreed Syllabus was in first use. The RE specialist advisory to Sunderland SACRE continues to work with, and seek guidance as appropriate, from the Durham County Council's Specialist Inspector for RE in the delivery of the 2014 Agreed Syllabus.

All Head Teachers were written to on the behalf of SACRE to remind them of the statutory obligation to use the Agreed Syllabus for teaching of RE in community and voluntary controlled schools.

Academies were also informed of their statutory obligations in ensuring that they are compliant with their statutory responsibilities in terms of RE.

6 Local, national and emerging issues in RE

SACRE has been carefully following national updates and developments in Religious Education. Members of SACRE received a summary of the report 'The Truth Unmasked'. This was produced by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Religious Education following an inquiry into resources and provision for teacher training in Religious Education.

Ofsted published its long report on Religious Education in October 2013 entitled, "Religious education: realising the potential". The report was based on finding from RE inspections in primary and secondary schools undertaken across the country between 2009 and 2012 (a report was published every three years). The report highlighted several areas of weakness, including the role Government has played in undermining RE, as well as poor subject knowledge and lack of understanding of purpose of RE amongst teachers.

SACRE members also considered the 'Why SACRE should complain to schools when they neglect RE' document.

SACRE has also discussed 'Religion and world views-the way forward, a national plan for RE', which lead to a long and interesting debate about the future name of RE.

7 Management of SACRE, working in partnership

7.1 SACRE membership and meetings

SACRE met as planned in March, June and November 2018. Meetings take place in the Sandhill Centre initially before moving to the Bunnyhill Centre in June, in order to be visible to all and easy for members of the public to attend.

The membership of Sunderland Local Authority SACRE is listed in the Appendix. Membership in each of the four groups is inconsistent and as a result some meetings have been inquorate. SACRE has requested that the local authority supports them in identifying faith/community leaders to support their membership.

7.2 SACRE funding and support

September 2018 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 bursaries to support the development of RE in schools.

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

7.3 External relationships and activities

SACRE continues to work with local partners and stakeholders.

Sunderland SACRE is a member of the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE) and makes use of the NASACRE bulletins to set the agenda and keep informed of national issues.

Appendix – SACRE Membership 2018

Group	Representing
A	Christian churches (other than C of E) and other faiths.
B	Church of England (C of E)
C	Teaching Associations
D	Local Authority

Name	Representing	Group
MR ANDREW BARRON		A
MATT MOORE		A
CLLR FARTHING		D
CLLR HUNT		D
CLLR MARSHALL		D
CLLR MULLEN		D
CLLR WILLIAMS		D
MRS WIN LUNDGREN		B
MISS CAROLINE WEIR		B
MISS LISA QUINN – BRITON		B
MISS EMMA JARVIS		B
MR STUART BAIN		B
MISS NATALIE FOUNTAIN		C
MISS ELEANOR WHITELOCK		C
MR CALUM ROWLAND		C

Co-opted

Ms LISA BOUSFIELD	
Ms FIONA BRIDLE	

Local Authority Officer- Richard Cullen
Specialist Religious Education- Cathryn Forbes

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