

To: Councillors Ayub, Eden, Ennis, Goss  
and O'Connell

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**NOTICE OF MEETING - STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION 17  
JUNE 2026**

A meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education will be held on Wednesday, 17 June 2026 at 6.30 pm in Committee Room 4B , Civic Centre, Reading. The Agenda for the meeting is set out below.

1. **WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS. NEW MEMBERS UPDATE**
2. **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING.** **5 - 12**
3. **SACRE TOR AND CONSTITUTION** **13 - 36**
4. **FEEDBACK FROM THE THAMES VALLEY SUMMIT**
5. **BUDGET UPDATE**
6. **AUTHORISING ABSENCES FOR RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE POLICY**
7. **UPDATE ON RELIGIOUS SYLLABUS**
8. **FEEDBACK FROM RE LEADERS NETWORK.**
9. **NATIONAL UPDATES** **37 - 38**
10. **INSPECTION FEEDBACK – OFSTED/SIAMS**
11. **ACTION PLAN FOR SACRE (WHAT 3 THINGS TO FOCUS ON)**
12. **PRESENTATION FROM CHAIR (VOLUNTEER NEEDED FOR NEXT MEETING)**
13. **DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

***CIVIC OFFICES EMERGENCY EVACUATION:** If an alarm sounds, leave by the nearest fire exit quickly and calmly and assemble on the corner of Bridge Street and Fobney Street. You will be advised when it is safe to re-enter the building.*

- Wednesday 21 October 2026
- Wednesday 24 February 2027



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**Reading Borough Council Standing Advisory  
Council for Religious Education (SACRE)**

**Wednesday 25 February 2026, 6.30pm**

**Online meeting via MS Teams**



**Reading**  
Borough Council

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**Working better with you**

**Reading Borough Council SACRE:  
Wednesday 25 February 2026, 6:30pm Microsoft Teams Meeting**

**Members Present:**

Jo Williams (Chair; Church of England representative Group B).  
 Helen Robinson (Teacher rep, Group C).  
 Christine Ferreira (Catholic rep, Group A).  
 Fiona Murray (Vice Chair, Group C):  
 Clare Walsha (Humanist rep Group A).  
 Mohammed Amir Saqlain (Muslim rep – Shia Group A).  
 Katie Dickens (RE Adviser).  
 Cllr Rachel Eden (Group D).  
 Ramesh Mepa (Hindu rep Observer Group A for SACRE meeting only): on behalf of Vika Srivastava.  
 Dr Shira Solomons (Jewish rep Observer Group A for SACRE meeting only): on behalf of Rabbi Zvi Solomons (Group A).  
 Nikki McVeigh (Local Authority rep).  
 Ann Jarvis (Teacher rep Group C).  
 Cllr Meri O’Connell (Group D).

**Observer:** Nikki McVeigh LA Link Advisor

**Clerk:** Heather Mendham

**Apologies:** Mohammed Ayub (Group D). Sam Juthani (Group D) Vika Srivastava (Group A)

**Absent:** Javed Kachhalia (D). Stephen Goss (D)

1.	Welcome & Introductions Meeting was quorate to proceed.	Chair
2.	Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising: 22 October 2025. Minutes were agreed and signed as a true and accurate record.  Clare Walsha raised a query about publishing agendas online before the meeting. Jo Williams confirmed this requirement and asked Heather to ensure compliance.  Minutes were approved unanimously.	Chair
3.	Membership Update Nikki McVeigh confirmed two new teacher members: Anne Jarvis and Helen Robinson.  Methodist rep Sarah Wickett approved but absent.  Quaker group seeking a representative; awaiting Sikh update.  Jo Williams requested Diocese of Oxford be contacted for a second Church of England representative.  Mohammed Amir Saqlain updated on attempts to secure a Sunni representative via Reading Muslim Council.	Nikki

4.	<p>Annual Report</p> <p>Katie Dickens explained that individual school GCSE results cannot be published without permission; these will be removed.</p> <p>General list of schools offering RS GCSE will remain.</p> <p>Clare Walsh asked about comparative RE results over time and nationally.</p> <p>Cllr Rachel Eden noted that Reading usually performs strongly at GCSE, making lower RE results unusual.</p> <p>Fiona Murray added contextual information about high RS grade boundaries and suggested NATRE data.</p> <p>Annual report was approved subject to amendments.</p>	Katie Dickens
5.	<p>Next meeting:</p> <p>Proposed dates: 17 June, 21 October, 24 February (pending confirmation).</p> <p>Discussion on hybrid format; Jo Williams expressed preference for in-person with online option if rooms available.</p>	Chair
6.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>No further items raised.</p> <p>Jo Williams closed SACRE meeting and opened the ASC meeting.</p>	Chair
7.	<p>Actions Agreed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agendas to be published online when circulated – Responsible: Heather Mendham.</li> <li>• Remove individual school GCSE data from annual report – Responsible: Katie Dickens.</li> <li>• Conduct deeper analysis of GCSE RE performance and trends – Responsible: Katie Dickens &amp; Nikki McVeigh.</li> <li>• Contact Diocese of Oxford for additional Church of England representative – Responsible: Jo Williams / Nikki McVeigh.</li> <li>• Follow up with Reading Muslim Council to secure Sunni representative – Responsible: Mohammed Amir Saqlain.</li> </ul>	Chair

8.	<p>Jo Williams (Chair) Opened the ASC meeting, confirmed recording arrangements, welcomed Shira and Ramesh as full ASC representatives, explained breakout room use, clarified meeting purpose (review and voting on each section of the draft Agreed Syllabus), and handed over to Katie Dickens.</p> <p>Katie Dickens (RE Adviser) outlined process for reviewing the syllabus, thanked Dr Shira Solomons for producing extensive documents, noted that Reading is the final authority to review the syllabus already accepted by neighbouring SACREs, explained section-by-section voting, clarified handling of typos and content issues, and introduced Section A before sending groups to breakout rooms.</p> <p>Due to a technical issue the members were unable to separate into online breakout rooms.</p> <p>Katie Dickens adopted an objection-only voting process; no objections were raised so Section A passed unanimously.</p> <p>Section B Covered statutory content and adjustments following Section A changes. No objections: Section B passed.</p> <p>Section C Covered non-statutory content including Hebrew Bible additions and 'peace be upon him' phrasing. No objections: Section C passed.</p> <p>Section D Introduction (Katie Dickens) Highlighted importance of Section D, explaining it defines the religions/worldviews taught in each phase. Emphasised the Wokingham model is proposed but not universal. Noted schools maintain autonomy. Called for views or objections.</p> <p>Clare Walsha (Humanist Representative) Welcomed inclusion of non-religious worldviews in the syllabus. Presented Reading census data showing high non-religious populations, especially among younger cohorts. Argued that non-religious children lack structured opportunities comparable to religious children for developing beliefs and ethical frameworks. Requested that non-religious worldviews/Humanism appear in every phase. Favoured the original version over the Wokingham model.</p> <p>Katie Dickens – Clarification Asked whether Clare wanted Humanism named in EYFS and KS1 or broader non-religious coverage. Clare confirmed preference for the original syllabus model including non-religious content in all phases.</p> <p>Dr Shira Solomons Proposed compromise language adopted by Bracknell ASC: change Section D4 to 'It is recommended that non-religious worldviews have dedicated curriculum time within each phase', balancing flexibility with regular coverage.</p>	Chair/ Katie Dickens
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9.	<p>Explained rationale, showed example wording, and confirmed it would likely address Clare's concerns.</p> <p>Katie Dickens Agreed the amended recommendation would ensure coverage every two years without over-prescription. Asked Clare whether this resolved concerns.</p> <p>Clare Walsha Confirmed the compromise sounded positive and requested clarification on how it affects the coloured phase tables.</p> <p>Katie Dickens clarified that changing the wording in paragraph D4 does not alter how the tables function. Non-religious worldviews/Humanism appear across phases every two years under both table versions. Clare expressed concern that the Wokingham table's 'and/or' made Humanism seem optional. Katie noted all content is optional for schools, but tables provide guidance.</p> <p>Further Discussion on Table Interpretation Fiona Murray highlighted risks for non-specialist primary teachers who may rely heavily on the tables and misinterpret 'and/or'. Suggested a middle-ground solution to clarify Upper KS2 content. Cllr Rachel Eden requested side-by-side display of the tables for clarity.</p> <p>Rationale Behind the Wokingham Table (Dr Shira Solomons) Shira argued strongly against keeping the original table. Explained that Judaism and Hinduism do not reappear in secondary RE, so Upper KS2 may be pupils' final opportunity to learn them. Warned that ambiguous options could lead teachers to choose Islam repeatedly. Proposed removing 'and/or Humanism' or replacing it with 'non-religious worldviews'.</p> <p>Resolution on Section D Tables Katie Dickens proposed adopting the Wokingham table but removing the 'and/or Humanism' phrase. Fiona and Jo Williams agreed. Section D approved with modification.</p> <p>Section E – Terminology Katie Dickens proposed adopting 'religions and worldviews' across the document. Approved unanimously.</p> <p>Sections F and G These sections had previously been held over; no vote required.</p> <p>Section H – Hindu Non-Statutory Content Katie Dickens introduced Hindu non-statutory content approved by the Hindu Education Board. Ramesh Mepa confirmed approval. Shira requested EYFS river lists be replaced with 'sacred rivers'; Ramesh agreed. Section H approved with amendment.</p> <p>Section I – Errata Approved unanimously without concerns.</p>	Chair
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	<p><b>Final Review of Entire Document</b> Katie invited final comments before overall vote. Only Shira and Mohammed raised points; each given two minutes.</p> <p><b>Final Comments – Dr Shira Solomons</b> Shira requested removal of an added definition of 'personal worldviews', correction of an incorrect core question on life and death, reversal of an incorrect change adding theology/human sciences to a philosophy category and restoring consistent use of 'religions and worldviews'.</p> <p><b>Final Comments – Mohammed Amir Saqlain</b> Mohammed noted factual corrections in Islam content: Qur'an described incorrectly as a source of worship (should be divine guidance), clarification that praying on private land requires permission, and correction of inaccurate statements about the pillars and articles of faith. Offered written wording. Corrections accepted by group.</p> <p><b>Closing</b> Katie Dickens summarised that most issues were minor corrections and recommended not printing a static document due to ongoing refinement. Suggested future SACRE meetings include ASC slots for adjustments. Proposed a final vote on approving the entire document with recorded amendments. Jo Williams supported moving to the vote.</p> <p><b>Jo Williams (Chair)</b> Clarified that ASC voting must occur by groups, requiring one vote per group. Noted that unanimous agreement would simplify the process, but if not unanimous, group-based voting is mandatory. Sought guidance from Heather due to technical problems affecting group allocation.</p> <p><b>Heather Mendham (Clerk)</b> Reported technical issues in Microsoft Teams preventing her from assigning some attendees to breakout rooms. Suspected differences in app versions or update issues. Noted that some participants were not appearing in the assignable list.</p> <p><b>Katie Dickens (RE Adviser)</b> Confirmed that amendments to the syllabus can be made at any time by SACRE members. Explained the importance of not printing the syllabus due to national developments: RE may move into the national curriculum, with programmes of study already being drafted. Warned that the agreed syllabus may only have a short shelf life if national curriculum RE is adopted by Easter 2027. Suggested a pragmatic approach with a dynamic online document. Proposed interim voting solutions, such as each group nominating a representative to vote if breakout rooms fail.</p> <p><b>Ramesh Mepa (Hindu Representative)</b> Asked whether future amendments to the agreed syllabus were permissible. Confirmed understanding after Katie's explanation.</p> <p><b>Clr Rachel Eden</b></p>	
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	<p>Suggested that if the group was unanimously in favour, a single unanimous vote might be quicker—unless anyone felt unable to speak freely. Later acknowledged the group voting rules require private discussion time.</p> <p>Fiona Murray (Secondary Teacher Rep) Stressed the need for private group discussion before voting, based on previous ASC practice. Suggested members switch from the Teams app to the browser version to fix the breakout room assignment issue. Requested that Heather repost the meeting link to allow members to rejoin via browser.</p> <p>Dr Shira Solomons Briefly suggested voting by group without breakout rooms but accepted Katie’s clarification that private discussion was required. Suggested phone-based workarounds such as WhatsApp if needed.</p> <p>Members rejoined the meeting ready for a successful deployment to the online breakout rooms.</p> <p>Nikki McVeigh Emphasised that the ASC must follow the formal voting procedure even if the decision seems straightforward. Explained the procedure: group discussion, internal vote, selection of a spokesperson, and reporting back.</p> <p>Jo Williams (Chair) Clarified that groups do not need unanimous agreement internally; each group votes by majority, and this majority becomes the group’s official vote.</p> <p>Dr Shira Solomons Reiterated that internal group decisions must be by majority vote.</p> <p>Katie Dickens Suggested councillors could confer by phone if breakout rooms failed. Confirmed only Groups A and C needed breakout room allocation for the final vote.</p> <p>Christine Ferreira Reported she could not be assigned due to Teams not recognising her name. Confirmed she could still express her group’s stance verbally.</p> <p>Jo Williams Checked directly with Chris whether she supported the changes; Chris confirmed she had discussed them and supported them.</p> <p>Breakout Room Deployment</p>	
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	<p>Heather Mendham opened breakout rooms and allocated approximately two minutes for discussions. Monitored participation and recalled members as needed.</p> <p>Breakout Discussions Conclude &amp; Voting Begins</p> <p>Group A – Dr Shira Solomons</p> <p>Reported unanimous agreement in Group A. Noted remaining minor wording adjustments from Mohammed would be added to errata.</p> <p>Group B – Jo Williams</p> <p>Confirmed Group B was fully in agreement.</p> <p>Group C – Fiona Middlehurst</p> <p>Reported Group C (teachers) were satisfied and approved the final draft.</p> <p>Group D – Cllr Rachel Eden</p> <p>Confirmed Group D also approved the entire document.</p> <p>Katie Dickens</p> <p>Thanked all members for their patience, professionalism, and detailed contributions. Recognised the constructive discussion and technical perseverance. Offered special thanks to Dr Shira Solomons for extensive work and attention to detail.</p> <p>Jo Williams (Chair)</p> <p>Thanked Katie for guiding the meeting. Expressed gratitude to all members for their involvement through multiple revisions. Celebrated completing the work on time and formally closed the meeting.</p>	
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Chair closed meeting at 8pm



**READING BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**SACRE CONSTITUTION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE**

## DOCUMENT CONTROL INFORMATION

**Title:** Reading SACRE Constitution

**Date:** October 2025

**Review date:** October 2029

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## **1. WHAT IS SACRE?**

1.1. SACRE stands for Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education. Every upper tier Local Authority area must have a SACRE. It is the responsibility of the Local Authority to convene and support a SACRE. This is set out in Section 390-397 of the Education Act 1996 - <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/section/390>

1.2. The purpose of a SACRE is to provide advice to the Local Authority in relation to Religious Education ("RE"), and the statutory requirements to provide a daily act of religious worship. Religious Education is the only subject in the basic curriculum that is not statutorily prescribed by the Department for Education, although it is a statutory element of the curriculum. It remains a local responsibility to set a syllabus for local schools. The rationale for this is that it is important that Religious Education reflect the views and perspectives within a locality of people of all beliefs and none. The legislation requires that every SACRE reflect the demography of the local area for this reason.

1.3. As set out in section 391 of the Education Act 1996, the functions of a SACRE are to:

- a) advise the Local Authority on matters that the Local Authority sees fit to refer, where these relate to:
  - i. religious worship in community schools or in foundation schools which (within the meaning of Part II of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998) do not have a religious character, and
  - ii. religious education to be given in accordance with an agreed syllabus

a (i) and (ii) include methods of teaching, the choice of materials and the provision of training for teachers.

- b) Compile and submit an annual report
- c) decide whether the Local Authority's agreed syllabus for RE needs to be reviewed, and require that the local authority does so
- d) ensure the locally agreed syllabus is reviewed every five years, with an Agreed Syllabus Conference ("ASC").

1.4 SACREs must also consider and make a 'determination' on any application that the requirement for Christian collective worship should not apply to a particular school or class, or description of pupils within that school.

## **2. MEMBERSHIP**

2.1. The basis for the membership of any SACRE is set out in the 1996 Education Act Section 390(4). The members of the SACRE shall be appointed by Reading Borough Council ("the Local Authority").

2.2. In accordance with Section 390(6) and paragraph 4(4) of Schedule 31 of the 1996 Education Act, the Local Authority will ensure that the composition of Group A on a SACRE, and Committee A on an ASC, is - so far as it is consistent with the efficient discharge of the SACRE's functions - broadly representative of the proportionate strengths of the denominations and religions in the area.

2.3. SACRE members shall form the following four “Representative Groups”:

**Group A) such Christian denominations other than the Church of England, and other religions and denominations of such religions that in the opinion of the Local Authority will appropriately reflect the principal denominations in the area.**

**Up to 4 members, representing denominations such as:**

Free Churches.

Roman Catholic Church.

Baptist Church.

Salvation Army.

Methodist Church.

Greek Orthodox Church.

United Reformed Church.

Evangelical Church.

**Religions and worldviews other than Christianity (1 member from each):**

Hinduism.

Islam.

Judaism.

Sikhism.

Buddhism.

Humanism.

Pagan.

**Group B) The Church of England – 3 members**

**Group C) Teachers, Teaching Unions and Educationalists (representing both Primary and Secondary education) - 6 members**

**Group D) The Local Authority – 5 members (elected councillors representing different political parties)**

**Co-opted members**

Any other co-opted members agreed by SACRE (non-voting)

**Local Authority support**

**The Local Authority will provide the following support for the operation of SACRE:**

Local Authority Link Officer.

Clerk to SACRE.

RE Advisor.

2.4 Members of SACRE represent particular communities or interest groups and are accountable to a nominating body. Members of SACRE should represent the perspective of their nominating group in the work of the SACRE. They should act as channels through which information passes between their nominating group / sponsoring body and SACRE, bringing the confidence of their faith / belief / professional group/ Local community that they can represent them appropriately.

2.5 It is the responsibility of the Local Authority to determine who would be in the groups, but they would normally consult local faith communities and SACRE members before making a decision. SACRE has no legal right to veto this decision.

### **3. RECRUITMENT**

3.1 The Local Authority must appoint named persons to each of the four Representative Groups.

3.2 When there is a vacancy within a Representative Group, the Clerk will generally approach an organisation, explaining the work of the SACRE, and the required commitment, and ask the organisation to provide a nomination. In some cases, individuals may be invited to join the SACRE, or express interest in joining; they will be asked to identify an appropriate organisation to be their nominating body, and to provide a nomination. Individuals cannot be nominated by a family member, partner, or friend.

3.3 The Clerk will maintain a record of each member's nominating body, and the contact details of the individual who nominated the member and will periodically check that the contact information is up to date.

3.4 Upon receiving a nomination, the Clerk will welcome the new member to the SACRE in writing and provide details of the next meeting. New members will be provided with the SACRE's constitution, latest annual report, and NASACRE's handbook for SACRE members, as well as details of upcoming training available to new SACRE members provided by NASACRE. They will be asked to sign the Code of Conduct within this constitution to confirm that they agree to act in accordance with it.

3.5 In accordance with Section 392(2) of the 1996 Education Act, before appointing a person to represent any religion, denomination, association or organisation as a member of the SACRE, the Local Authority shall take all reasonable steps to assure themselves that he or she is representative of the religion, denomination, association or organisation they are being appointed to represent. The Local Authority will seek assurance that nominating bodies are reputable organisations which act in accordance with the Code of Conduct within this constitution and provide a support network for the member. All appointments to the SACRE and ASC will be made on the basis of nomination by a suitable, reputable organisation.

3.6 In the case of Group C (Teachers, Teaching Unions and Educationalists), nominations will be sought via the Reading Primary and Secondary Associations, teaching unions and RE Leaders.

3.7 The Chair or Vice-Chair will aim to arrange a meeting with new members before they attend their first SACRE meeting. For new faith representative members who are not school teachers, a teacher member of Group C will be asked if the new member could visit their school to observe an RE lesson and Collective Worship.

3.8 SACRE members may suggest people or organisations who they feel would be a positive addition to the SACRE. Members may be consulted by the Local Authority regarding the appointment of members and amendments to the membership structure, but the legal responsibility for appointing SACRE members and determining the make-up of the SACRE lies with the Local Authority.

3.9 Absent members may be substituted if the Clerk knows that the meeting will not be Quorate or if a member is temporarily absent for more than 3 meetings due to circumstances, for example poor health. In this case, members may suggest substitutions, but the nominating body will make the final decision.

#### **4. TERM OF OFFICE**

4.1. Members of Representative Groups are expected to serve from the date of their appointment for 4 years, at which point they are eligible to be re-appointed or replaced. In order to be re-appointed, a re-nomination will need to be received from the member's nominating body. Members of Representative Group D (Local Authority) may often serve shorter terms, depending on their re-election to office, or the re-allocation of their areas of responsibility by the Local Authority.

4.2. Members may resign from the SACRE at any time by contacting the Clerk, who will inform the Chair, Vice-Chair and Local Authority link officer.

4.3. The Local Authority will withdraw a person from membership of the SACRE if, in their opinion, he or she ceases to be representative of the religion, denomination, organisation or association which they were appointed to represent (in accordance with section 392(3) of the 1996 Education Act).

4.4. Where a member of a Representative Group fails to attend 3 consecutive meetings of the SACRE, the Clerk shall ask the member if they wish to continue to serve. If they do but then continue to fail to attend 3 subsequent consecutive meetings (the Clerk shall inform the member in writing after missing the second meeting as a warning) they shall cease to be a member of the SACRE, and their nominating body shall be invited to nominate another representative provided that:

- a) the Clerk to the SACRE has advised the member in writing of the provision of this clause following the second missed meeting and at least 10 working days before the third meeting and
- b) the SACRE does not decide to disapply this rule for reasons of extenuating circumstances.

4.5 If the SACRE cannot carry out the functions it was appointed to do, namely give advice to the Local Authority and its schools on RE and collective worship or the review of a syllabus the Local Authority and not the SACRE or ASC is the appropriate body to deal with such situations. The Local Authority will remove membership from any person who fails to adhere to the SACRE's Code of Conduct, as set out in Appendix 1. In such a case, the Local Authority would generally contact the nominating body to mediate between the member and the Local Authority to ensure that the behaviour of the SACRE member is appropriate.

4.6 Upon a member's resignation or following the removal by the Local Authority, the Local Authority shall take the appropriate steps as per paragraph 3.2 to appoint a replacement.

## **5. CO-OPTED MEMBERS**

5.1 The SACRE may appoint people through co-option to aid in its work and/or for specific time-limited projects.

5.2 Any member of SACRE may propose someone for co-option if that person will represent a view or perspective not already represented on SACRE.

5.3 A member may be co-opted without a formal vote being taken on this if no member objects to their co-option.

5.4 Co-opted members are not members of any of the four Representative Groups on the SACRE.

5.5 Co-opted members:

- shall have the right to speak at meetings but not to vote
- will generally join the SACRE for a year but may join for a shorter period at the discretion of the SACRE.

## **6. MEETINGS**

6.1 At least 7 clear days before each meeting of the SACRE the Clerk shall send notices to every member setting out the business to be transacted.

6.2 At least 3 clear days before each SACRE or ASC meeting (or at the time it is convened if the meeting is convened at shorter notice), the Local Authority shall give public notice of the time and place of such meeting by posting it on its website in accordance with regulation 4 of The Religious Education (Meetings of Local Conferences and Councils) Regulations 1994 ("the 1994 Regulations").

6.3 The SACRE shall regulate its own proceedings and may establish committees for specified purposes. Such committees may include persons who are not themselves members of the SACRE.

6.4 The SACRE shall generally meet three times per year. Dates of meetings will generally be shared with SACRE members at least 6 months in advance. When setting meeting dates, the Clerk will aim to avoid the dates of religious festivals or holy days which may prevent SACRE members from being able to attend a meeting. Members should notify the clerk when dates are shared, any reasons for re-considering a suggested meeting date.

6.5 In the event that an additional meeting is required, members will be notified of the date of this as early as possible, and at least two months in advance of the meeting date. The process for the meeting agenda and papers will follow the procedures set out in clause 7 of this Constitution.

6.6 The Director-Education or his/her representative(s) shall be entitled to attend all meetings of the SACRE and of any committees it may establish and to speak but not to vote.

6.7 All meetings of the SACRE and any sub-committee of the SACRE including the four Representative Groups which constitute the SACRE shall be open to the public in accordance with regulation 3(1) of the 1994 Regulations, except if clause 6.9 applies.

6.8 The public may be excluded from any meeting or any part of a meeting during an item of business that is likely to 'be ... in breach of the obligation of confidence' (as stated in Paragraph 4(2) of The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012) and/or confidential information would be disclosed as defined in regulation 9 of the Religious Education (Meetings of Local Conferences and Councils) Regulations 1994.

6.9 If clause 6.9 applies, the Chair will declare that the meeting will go into 'Part 2'. This signifies that the discussion will be confidential to SACRE members, and that that part of the meeting will not be live streamed. Any members of the public who have attended the meeting will be asked to leave for this item. Minutes of 'Part 2' discussions will only be circulated to SACRE members and not made public.

6.10 If there is an unresolvable issue at the meeting of SACRE or an ASC, or one that would bring the SACRE, ASC or the Local Authority into disrepute, the Chair will close the discussion. The SACRE or ASC shall have the power to exclude any person from a public meeting, including members of the public and/or representatives of news media, for the purpose of suppressing or preventing disorderly conduct or other misbehaviour, in accordance with regulation 3(2) of the 1994 Regulations.

6.11 The validity of the proceedings of the SACRE, or of any of its Representative Groups, shall not be affected by a vacancy in the membership or on the ground that a member does not at the time represent the denomination, religion, or association they were appointed to represent.

## **7. AGENDAS AND PAPERS**

7.1 The agenda for each meeting shall be determined by the Chair, Local Authority link officer, RE Advisor, and the Clerk to SACRE.

7.2 Members may submit requests for agenda items to the Clerk for consideration at least 14 days before a meeting.

7.3 The agenda and any papers for review will be circulated to SACRE members as well as published on the Reading Borough Council website at least 7 days before the meeting.

7.4 For standing agenda items see appendix 3.

## **8. MINUTES**

8.1 The clerk will agree draft minutes of each meeting with the Chair, RE advisor and LA link officer.

8.2 Draft minutes of each meeting will be sent to members no later than three weeks after each meeting.

8.3 The minutes shall be confirmed at the next meeting.

8.4 The Clerk shall publish minutes of SACRE meetings on the Reading Borough Council website.

## **9. AVAILABILITY OF PAPERS TO THE PUBLIC**

9.1 All papers of the SACRE shall be available to the public except in relation to any information defined as confidential as set out in clause 6.9 and defined in Regulation 9(3) of the 1994 Regulations and The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

## **10. VOTING**

10.1 In the interests of achieving consensus through discussion (except as provided in clause 11.2 below for the election of the Chair and Vice-Chair). When a formal vote is required, each of the groups have equal voting rights; there is one vote per Group, each Group makes its own arrangements for how to decide, most commonly through internal discussion rather than a majority vote. SACRE should only take a vote from the four Representative Groups when it is necessary to make a formal record of the position of SACRE, or if there are opposing views. Following a vote, SACRE can record a position on a matter on which it is advising the Local Authority.

10.2 For the SACRE to be quorate, at least one member of each Representative Group should be present (in accordance with the Education Act 1996).

10.3 On any question or matter on which the SACRE is formally advising the Local Authority, only the Representative Groups on the SACRE shall be entitled to vote, and each Representative Group shall have a single vote (as set out in Section 390(7) of the Education Act 1996).

10.4 A proposal shall be deemed to be carried if it is approved by at least three of the four Representative Groups.

10.5 Decisions within a Representative Group about how the Representative Group will vote do not require unanimity. In accordance with Section 392(7) of the 1996 Education Act, each Representative Group may decide how to regulate its own proceedings, including provision for resolving deadlock. Unless a Representative Group determines its own method of deciding on its vote, and of how to resolve a tied vote, the default process shall be that the vote of each Representative Group will be decided by a majority of votes within the Representative Group. A tied vote within a Representative Group will be recorded as an abstention by that Representative Group.

10.6 Only Representative Group members present in the meeting may vote. Co-opted members do not have a vote.

10.7 When votes are to be taken, Representative Groups will have the opportunity to discuss the matter at the meeting prior to voting.

10.8 When it is anticipated that meetings will involve a vote, whether formal or informal, the matter will be included as an item in the published agenda, and members notified in advance that a vote will be taking place.

## **11 CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR**

11.1 The SACRE shall elect annually at its first meeting in the academic year (or any meeting during the year when the position is vacant) a Chairperson and a Vice Chairperson from among its members. The Chair and Vice Chairperson should be from different Groups.

11.2 Members will be asked to nominate and 'second' members to stand for the roles of Chair and Vice-Chair. A vote will then be taken on the basis of one vote per member. The Chair and Vice-Chair will be appointed for a period of one year, after which time an election will be held among the membership. Chairs and Vice-chairs may serve for repeated terms if they are re-elected.

11.3 Where it is not practicable or possible for some reason to elect a Chair or Vice-Chair, the Local Authority may appoint a Chair and/or Vice-Chair for a period of time, under its duty as the appointing body (according to section 390 of the 1996 Education Act), until it is possible for such roles to be elected in accordance with clauses 11.1 and 11.2 above.

11.4 The Chair, Vice-Chair, RE advisor and Local Authority link officer will constitute this SACRE's executive group and will meet before each SACRE meeting.

## **12 SUB-COMMITTEES**

12.1 The SACRE may constitute sub-committees to deal with matters, for example to work on a particular aspect of the Action Plan. At least 7 clear days' notice of meetings of any such sub-committees should be given to members. The Terms of reference for the SACRE will apply to a sub-Committee.

12.2 Sub-committees cannot make decisions which are binding on the SACRE.

## **13 CONSTITUTION**

13.1 The Local Authority has a legal duty to comply with the relevant legislation. A SACRE's constitution is broadly determined by the 1996 Education Act and The Religious Education (Meetings of Local Conferences and Councils) Regulations 1994.

13.2 This SACRE's constitution is devised by the Local Authority, in partnership with its legal services, in consultation with the SACRE.

13.3 This SACRE Constitution will be reviewed every 4 years, or earlier if there is a change in legislation or of the religious demographics of the area. The Local Authority may change the Constitution at any time, but it shall consult with the SACRE to approve the changes before doing so. The Local Authority will not be obliged to obtain the SACRE's approval where the changes are required, such as the removal of reference to bodies that no longer exist.

13.4 After consultation with members regarding changes to the Constitution, the revised document will be formally approved and adopted via the Local Authority's executive committee.

## **14 COSTS**

14.1 The costs of operating the SACRE shall be met by the Local Authority, with a budget identified on an annual basis. This will include the cost of providing an RE advisor.

14.2 In addition, the Local Authority will provide the services of a Clerk to the SACRE, and a Local Authority link officer.

## **15 AGREED SYLLABUS CONFERENCE**

15.1 The locally Agreed Syllabus is the statutory document for RE in maintained schools in the local authority. It sets out what should be taught to pupils in all key stages and the standards expected at the end of each key stage. It is produced by an Agreed Syllabus Conference.

15.2 An Agreed Syllabus Conference (“ASC”) is a statutory body that produces the Agreed Syllabus. It is established under Schedule 31 of the Education Act 1996.

15.3 An ASC is a separate legal entity from a SACRE. The ASC will be incorporated into the SACRE constitution and members shall follow the SACRE Code of Conduct.

15.4 The ASC is a body appointed by the Local Authority according to the same structure as the SACRE, but the membership of one does not automatically mean membership of the other, Hence the ASC may have a wholly different membership to the SACRE, a shared membership or may be the same members of the SACRE. Voting too on an ASC is different to a SACRE. All Committees (known as Groups in the SACRE) must vote for a syllabus before it can be adopted. It has to be unanimous and not a majority vote.

15.5 The Local Authority has responsibility to convene the ASC and includes the duty to provide with funds and for its work.

15.4 The Agreed Syllabus will be reviewed at least every 5 years in line with Paragraph 2 of Schedule 31 of the 1996 Education Act, and a Conference for this purpose shall be convened every five years.

15.5 The Representative Groups on the SACRE, other than the group representing the Local Authority, may at any time require a review of any Agreed Syllabus that is currently adopted by the Local Authority, in accordance with section 391(3) of the 1996 Education Act. In accordance with section 391(4) of the 1996 Education Act, each Representative Group shall have a single vote on the question of whether to require a review of the Agreed Syllabus. There is no provision for co-opted members.

15.6 Paragraphs 4(1) and 4(2) of Schedule 31 of the 1996 Education Act provides that the membership of the ASC will be appointed by the Local Authority according to the same four-group structure as the SACRE. The four groups on an ASC are referred to as “committees” rather than Representative Groups.

15.7 The number of persons appointed to represent each denomination or religion required to be represented shall - so far as is consistent with the efficient discharge of the Committee’s functions - reflect broadly the proportionate strength of that denomination or religion in the area in accordance with paragraph 4(4) of Schedule 31 of the 1996 Education Act.

15.8 Before appointing a person to represent any religion, denomination or associations as a member of a Committee on an ASC, the Local Authority shall take all reasonable steps to assure themselves that they are representative of the religion, denomination or associations in question, in accordance with paragraph 7(1) of Schedule 31 of the 1996 Education Act.

15.9 Paragraph 7(2) of Schedule 31 (Agreed Syllabuses of RE) of the 1996 Education Act provides that no proceedings under that schedule shall be invalidated on the ground that a member of a Committee did not represent the religion, denomination or associations which they were appointed to represent, unless it is shown that the Local Authority failed to take the steps required by paragraph 7(1)/ clause 15.6 above.

15.10 In accordance with paragraph 8 of Schedule 31 of the 1996 Education Act, a person appointed as a member of a committee:

- may resign their membership; or
- may be withdrawn from membership by the Local Authority if, in their opinion, they cease to be representative of the religion, denomination or associations which they were appointed to represent.

15.11 On resignation or if a person is withdrawn from the ASC, the Local Authority shall appoint someone in their place in the same manner that they made the original appointment as per Paragraph 9 of Schedule 31 of the 1996 Education Act.

15.12 Any sub-committees appointed by the ASC shall each include at least one member of each of the Committees constituting the ASC, in accordance with paragraph 5 of Schedule 31 of the 1996 Education Act.

15.13 Members of the ASC will elect a Chairperson of the ASC – by voting on the basis of one vote per member.

15.14 For the ASC to be quorate, at least one member of each of the four Committees should be present.

15.15 Paragraph 6 of Schedule 31 of the 1996 Education Act provides that on any question to be decided by the ASC or by any sub-committee of the ASC, a single vote shall be given for each of the Committees constituting the ASC.

15.15 Only Committee members present in the meeting may vote.

15.16 Where a conference is convened to reconsider any agreed syllabus, if

a) the conference—

(i) unanimously recommend that the existing syllabus should continue to be the agreed syllabus, or

(ii) unanimously recommend a new syllabus to be adopted in substitution for the existing syllabus, and

(b) it appears to the Local Authority that the syllabus or, as the case may be, the new syllabus, reflects the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain,

the authority may give effect to the recommendation.

15.17 The vote of each Committee of the ASC must therefore be unanimous for a syllabus before it can be adopted, as set out in Schedule 31 of the Education Act 1996.

15.18 If one of the Committees has a tied vote within its members and after further discussion cannot decide how to vote, it shall be deemed that the Committee has abstained from voting. This will mean that a unanimous recommendation of the ASC cannot be reached and clause 15.20 of this Constitution shall apply.

15.19 Once a syllabus is unanimously approved by the ASC, it will be formally approved and adopted via the Local Authority's executive committee.

15.20 Where the unanimous recommendation of the ASC cannot be reached on the adoption of a syllabus, the Local Authority may report this to the Secretary of State who will take over the process as set out in paragraph 12 of Schedule 31 of the 1996 Education Act.

## **16 REQUESTS FOR DETERMINATIONS**

16.1 In accordance with section 394(1) of the 1996 Education Act, the SACRE shall, on an application made by a head-teacher of:

- a) any community school or
- b) foundation school which has not been designated under section 69(3) of the 1998 School Standards and Framework Act as having a religious character)

consider whether it is appropriate for the requirement for Christian collective worship (imposed by paragraph 3(2) of Schedule 20 to the 1998 School Standards and Framework Act) to apply in the case of that school, or in the case of any class or description of pupils at that school.

16.2 In determining whether it is appropriate for the requirement for Christian collective worship to apply as referred to in 16.1, the SACRE shall have regard to any circumstances relating to the family backgrounds of the pupils at the school, or of the pupils of the particular class or description in question, which are relevant for determining the character of the collective worship appropriate in their case, in accordance with section 394(2) of the 1996 Education Act.

16.3 In accordance with section 394(3) of the 1996 Education Act, the SACRE shall give the headteacher written notification of their decision on the application.

16.4 In accordance with section 395(1) of the 1996 Education Act, any determination by a SACRE under section 394 shall be reviewed by the SACRE:

- a) at any time on an application made by the head teacher, and
- b) in any event not later than the end of the period of five years beginning with the date on which the determination first took effect or (where it has since been reviewed under this section) with the effective date of the decision on the last review.

## **17. ANNUAL REPORT AND COMMUNICATION WITH SCHOOLS**

17.1 In accordance with section 391(6) of the 1996 Education Act, the SACRE shall each year publish a report on its proceedings and those of its Representative Groups ("the SACRE Annual Report"). This report shall specify any matters on which the SACRE has given advice to the Local Authority and the reasons for offering the advice.

17.2 The SACRE Annual Report will be sent via email to elected members, the Director of Education, RE teachers, SACRE members, NASACRE, the DfE and the Secretary of State. It

will also be shared with headteachers via the Education Newsletter and published on the RBC website.

17.3 The SACRE communicates regularly with schools via RE Network Meetings and the weekly Headteacher briefing, as well as via email with RE teachers.

## **18. CODE OF CONDUCT**

18.1 An effective SACRE and ASC is a model of social cohesion in which every member has the right to voice their opinion in an environment where they are heard and respected, even when there are many different positions or opinions on the issues under discussion.

18.2 Members of SACRE and of an ASC must feel they form part of an environment where challenge is welcomed but without any threat (either implied or real), bullying, harassment, or discrimination. Should any SACRE or ASC member feel that dialogue has crossed the line from challenge into threat, bullying, harassment, or discrimination, they may raise an informal concern with the Local Authority through the Clerk, and this will be addressed with the relevant SACRE member informally by an appropriate Local Authority officer. If the individual raising the concern is dissatisfied with the action taken, they may make a formal complaint to the Director of Education, as set out in 19 below.

18.3 The Code of Conduct apply to members' conduct outside SACRE and ASC meetings as well as within meetings. The Code of Conduct applies to all forms of communication and interaction, including:

- a) at face-to-face meetings
- b) at online or telephone meetings
- c) in written communication
- d) in verbal communication
- e) in non-verbal communication
- f) in electronic and social media communication, posts, statements, and comments.

Members' social media communications, communication in any public forum, and in any written communication, should be respectful and polite, and should not include threatening, offensive, discriminatory or derogatory language. Social media communications, and any public communications, should be professional in tone, align

with the values of the SACRE and should not bring the Local Authority into disrepute.

18.4 On appointment to the SACRE, members must declare any relevant interests they (or their partner) have and should update the Clerk as soon as there is any change to this information. The Clerk will ask members on an annual basis to confirm that the information remains accurate and complete. When a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to a member's declared interest, members must disclose the interest. The Chair can use their discretion to decide whether it is appropriate for the member to participate in discussion of the matter, and to vote on it.

18.5 Members who would like to raise any matters relating to the SACRE or ASC can contact the LA link officer, Chair, Vice-Chair or Clerk at any time. If a SACRE member wishes

to communicate with all other members of the SACRE outside SACRE meetings about any matter, or with the RE advisor, this must be done via the Clerk.

18.6 This Code of Conduct applies to SACRE and ASC members as soon as they join the SACRE or ASC and sign their declaration of acceptance of the Code or attend their first meeting of the SACRE or ASC and continues to apply until the person ceases to be a SACRE or ASC member. The Clerk will keep copies of the signed Codes of Conduct.

18.7 Members are required to co-operate with any investigation related to a possible breach of the Code of Conduct and comply with any sanction imposed following a finding that the Code has been breached.

## **19. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

19.1 Anyone may raise a formal complaint with the Local Authority about the SACRE or ASC as a whole, or about individual members.

19.2 A complaint can be submitted on the Local Authority's website or sent, via the SACRE Clerk, to the Director of Education.

19.3 The Local Authority will confirm receipt of the complaint and provide contact details and an estimate of when its reply can be expected.

19.4 A formal investigation will be undertaken by a senior Local Authority officer, following the Local Authority Corporate Complaints procedure. Where the Code of Conduct set out in clause 18 above is deemed to have been breached, the investigating officer will, if considered appropriate, arrange support and mediation to resolve the matter before taking other action.

## **20. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUESTS**

20.1 The Local Authority is subject to the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("FOIA") and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 ("EIR").

20.2 SACRE members shall assist and co-operate with the Local Authority to enable it to comply with information disclosure requirements.

20.3 A SACRE member shall:

(a) forward any received FOIA request ("Request for Information") to the Local Authority as soon as practicable after receipt and in any event within two working days of receipt.

(b) provide all necessary assistance as reasonably requested by the Local Authority to enable it to respond to a Request for Information within the time for compliance set out in section 10 of the FOIA or regulation 5 of the EIR.

20.4 The Local Authority shall be responsible for determining at its absolute discretion whether information is exempt from disclosure in accordance with the provisions of the FOIA or the EIR; and/or is to be disclosed in response to a Request for Information.

20.5 In no event shall the SACRE member respond directly to a Request for Information unless expressly authorised to do so by the Local Authority.

## **Appendix 1: Code of Conduct**

### **Reading SACRE Code of Conduct**

As voting members of a Local Authority committee, SACRE and ASC members are subject to Reading Borough Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors (Chapter 9.2 of the Reading Borough Council constitution). This includes the expectation that committee members will uphold The Seven Principles of Public Life - GOV.UK (the 'Nolan Principles').

An effective SACRE and ASC is a model of social cohesion in which every member is heard and respected, even when there are many different positions or opinions on the issues under discussion.

Reading SACRE expects all its members (when operating as members of the SACRE or of an ASC) to:

- attend all SACRE meetings and take a full and active part in its work.
- participate in and review the work of SACRE for the benefit of the whole community.
- listen with respect to the views of other members and where a situation of disagreement occurs, disagree respectfully (respect means politeness and courtesy in behaviour, speech, and in the written word. Debate and having different views are all part of a healthy democracy. Members can challenge, criticise, and disagree with views, ideas, opinions, and policies in a robust but civil manner. They should not, however, subject individuals, groups of people or organisations to personal attack).
- express views and opinions openly, honestly, and sensitively, always recognising others may have views different from one's own.
- assume at all times that other members of SACRE are honourable and concerned with the best interests of SACRE.
- seek reasoned consensus where views diverge and never disrespect the views of other SACRE members or seek to convert them to a different belief stance.
- actively consult with and report back to the body which they represent so that debate is fully informed.
- actively challenge and resist stereotyping.
- accord any and all religion and worldviews the same respect.
- ensure they do not bully, harass, or discriminate against any person, group of people or organisation.
- withhold any views inconsistent with equality and human rights and accept the presence of views they find challenging, where not to do so would compromise the rights of others.

- take a dispassionate view of religion as a field of study, mindful that religious education involves developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of religion and worldviews, rather than nurturing religious faith.
- show respect in their communication with Local Authority employees, and employees of partner organisations, being respectful of the employees' role and professional integrity.
- act in a dignified and professional manner, as befits their role as members of a Reading Borough Council committee, and as representatives of their nominating body.

Members of SACRE and of an ASC must feel they form part of an environment where challenge is welcomed but without any threat (either implied or real), bullying, harassment, or discrimination. Should any SACRE or ASC member feel that dialogue has crossed the line from challenge into threat, bullying, harassment, or discrimination, they may raise an informal concern with the Local Authority through the Clerk, and this will be addressed with the relevant SACRE member informally by an appropriate Local Authority officer. If the individual raising the concern is dissatisfied with the action taken, they may make a formal complaint to the Director of Education, as set out in 19 below.

The expectations in clause 18.1 apply to members' conduct outside SACRE and ASC meetings as well as within meetings. The Code of Conduct applies to all forms of communication and interaction, including:

- a) at face-to-face meetings
- b) at online or telephone meetings
- c) in written communication
- d) in verbal communication
- e) in non-verbal communication
- f) in electronic and social media communication, posts, statements, and comments. Members' social media communications, communication in any public forum, and in any written communication, should be respectful and polite, and should not include threatening, offensive, discriminatory or derogatory language. Social media communications, and any public communications, should be professional in tone, align with the values of the SACRE and of Reading Borough Council, and should not bring the Local Authority into disrepute.

The Nolan Principles and the Reading Borough Council Code of Conduct require that members of Local Authority committees impartially exercise their responsibilities in the interests of the local community, and do not use, or attempt to use, their position improperly to the advantage or disadvantage of themselves or anyone else.

On appointment to the SACRE, members must declare any relevant interests they (or their partner) have and should update the Clerk as soon as there is any change to this information. The Clerk will ask members on an annual basis to confirm that the information remains accurate and complete. When a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to a member's declared interest, members must disclose the interest. The Chair can use their discretion to decide whether it is appropriate for the member to participate in discussion of the matter, and to vote on it.

Members who would like to raise any matters relating to the SACRE or ASC can contact the LA link officer, Chair, Vice-Chair or Clerk at any time. If a SACRE member wishes to communicate with all other members of the SACRE outside SACRE meetings about any matter, or with the RE advisor, this must be done via the Clerk.

This Code of Conduct applies to SACRE and ASC members as soon as they join the SACRE or ASC and sign their declaration of acceptance of the Code or attend their first meeting of the SACRE or ASC and continues to apply until the person ceases to be a SACRE or ASC member.

Members are required to co-operate with any investigation related to a possible breach of the Code of Conduct and comply with any sanction imposed following a finding that the Code has been breached.

Signed: .....

Print name: .....

Date: .....

## **Appendix 2: Roles and Responsibilities**

**Roles and Duties are not exhaustive lists and are regularly reviewed.**

### **The Chair**

There are a number of key roles that the Chair performs.

The specific role of the Chair is to ensure that the SACRE fulfils its statutory duties and responsibilities.

To do this the Chair will need to have a clear grasp of the nature and make up of SACRE, what it is responsible for and what it can do beyond its statutory functions.

The Chair should also take a leading role in SACRE's on-going process of self-evaluation and development. During SACRE meetings it is the responsibility of the Chair to ensure the smooth and efficient running of the meeting. This includes making sure that the business of the meeting is dealt with and that all members can participate and contribute fully.

The Chair also has the responsibility to decide on any involvement from non-members who are present, for example, experts who might be brought in to advise SACRE on a specific matter pertinent to an agenda item being discussed; likewise, if it is deemed necessary, to decide when someone should be asked to leave the meeting or be removed from it.

The Chair of SACRE is responsible, with the clerk and the professional officer, for constructing the agenda for each meeting. This includes deciding on items where the press and public might need to be excluded if they are present. In the meeting, it is the Chair's role to sign the minutes of the previous meeting as a true and accurate record as well as to ensuring that any actions resulting from the minutes have actually taken place.

If the Chair needs a mandate to act on SACRE's behalf before the next meeting, that should be sought at the meeting being chaired. If there are issues relating to inefficiencies in the timeliness of notice for meetings, the publication of agendas and reports, the provision of funding or support or the venue of SACRE's meetings, it is the Chair's place to bring this up with the most senior paid official of the local authority.

In many ways the Chair of SACRE is its public face and may be asked to represent SACRE at Council meetings or public events, including interfaith events. In this way the Chair of SACRE becomes a champion for religious education and collective worship in the local authority and its schools. Therefore, it is important that the Chair of SACRE has a clear understanding of the nature of RE and collective worship and how that effects different schools in different ways, the role that RE and collective worship play in a broad and balanced education and their contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Beyond understanding these, a good and effective SACRE Chair needs to believe in the positive contribution of these elements of education in the development of each pupil and of society.

The Chair also needs to be committed to ensuring the inclusive involvement of all SACRE members and the constituencies that they represent.

**The Chair shall ensure there is:**

- a clear timetable of meetings for the year is agreed and published.
- membership of the SACRE is efficiently maintained, i.e. that the four groups of SACRE have appropriate representation, with good attendance and participation.
- SACRE produces guidance to support the local authority and its schools with regard to religious education and collective worship.
- an annual report is produced each year and sent to the Secretary of State as required by statute.
- SACRE members have a programme of training, and when necessary, induction.
- there is a Vice or Deputy Chair if the Chair is unable to make a meeting.
- where there is an agreed code of conduct, it is adhered to by all SACRE members.

**The Clerk**

Legislation underpinning the statutory work of SACREs requires that they should have the support of a clerk or similar officer, that minutes are produced in an efficient and legal manner, thereby ensuring the smooth and effective running of the SACRE; the LA has a responsibility to ensure that the minutes of SACREs and ASCs are publicly available for six years after their adoption. Follow-up from meetings and liaising with various organisations and communities is time consuming, requiring a level of professional competency.

**The Clerk shall:**

- Arrange, attend and clerk meetings of the SACRE / ASC
- Produce and circulate minutes and agendas of the SACRE / ASC in a timely manner
- Ensure that all papers are circulated to members in advance of meetings
- Advise on dates of meetings, particularly in relation to religious holidays or other Council meetings which may clash and affect quoracy
  
- Arrange venues for meetings of the SACRE / ASC
- Liaise with a venue for use of any necessary equipment (e.g. IT, projector) required
- Remind members / other attendees about reports for meetings / circulation deadlines
- Circulate additional papers from e.g. NASACRE, RE Council and Ofsted, as appropriate
- Work as a team closely with the Chair, RE Professional and other SACRE officers to produce reports, e.g. when changes to the SACRE constitution or membership are required
- Be the first point of contact for SACRE members, faith community members, members of the public and other bodies concerned with the work of SACREs

- Respond to queries, alerting the Chair and Adviser when necessary
- Maintain the SACRE membership list, keeping it up to date, chasing members whose attendance is poor and identifying any membership issues for the attention of the Chair, RE Professional and LA officers
- Contact nominating bodies represented on the SACRE when membership lapses to arrange for replacements and / or liaise with these bodies over other issues
- Contribute information, e.g. membership and attendance details for the Annual Report
- Assist in the production and circulation of the Annual Report; issue Welcome / Induction Packs for new members and ensure that they have sufficient information
- Where possible liaise with the LA Officer, other Council departments, keeping the Chair, the RE Professional and other officers informed of any relevant Council initiatives
- Ensure that all SACRE publications / advice are circulated to the relevant bodies
- Liaise with the Council's committee / legal section re. governance issues
- Be responsible for the passing on invoices for payment, relating to SACRE work, e.g. attendance at national conferences, catering for meetings.

### **RE Link Advisor**

It is important therefore that the RE Link Advisor is able to work with the support of the Clerk and the LA Officer, at least one of whom should be able to make necessary links with council processes and departments to ensure effective communications with schools and cross-Council working.

### **The RE Link Advisor shall:**

- Attend all SACRE\* meetings, helping to prepare agendas and key papers
- Advise SACRE\* on issues relating to its work
- Ensure SACRE\* is up to date with local, regional and national initiatives and issues related to RE, collective worship and syllabus developments, e.g. the work of the RE Council, the All Party Parliamentary Group for RE, DfE or charitable funded initiatives
- Relate SACRE's work to wider community issues, including partnerships with faith and belief communities
- Lead on areas related to the Agreed Syllabus, RE and collective worship
- Produce reports to meet the deadlines agreed for distribution of papers for meetings
- Support SACRE members' development, including their ability to provide a bridge between their nominating body and SACRE
- Manage and deliver the training of SACRE members and, where appropriate, teachers and other groups interested in RE
- With relevant administrative support / SACRE Clerk, manage and advise meetings of sub groups e.g. working parties for particular initiatives

- With the SACRE Clerk ensure that SACRE publications are circulated to relevant bodies
- Working with the Chair, the Clerk and other SACRE officers, produce reports to the Council e.g. when changes to the SACRE constitution or membership are required
- Draft and edit the SACRE Annual Report and all SACRE materials and publications
- With administrative support, update any relevant RE / ASC / SACRE website and SACRE's presence on the LA website
- Take the lead on the monitoring aspects of SACRE, especially agreed school visits and analysis of examination results in Religious Studies.

### **The Local Authority Officer**

It is customary for SACREs to be attended or appointed by a senior Local Authority Officer who represents the Director of Children's Services, supports SACRE's effective communications with the LA and the smooth running of the work of the Clerk and RE Link Adviser. Where either or both of these other functions are provided by an external consultant, this role is vital and pivotal as the LA Officer will need to establish the necessary links for SACRE with Council processes and departments to ensure effective communications with schools and cross-Council working. The LA Officer will be able to provide SACRE with information regarding the local schools and the successes and difficulties they are experiencing, will understand and link SACRE to budget processes and Council initiatives which may influence or impact on their work, e.g. the Prevent Board or Community Safety Partnership. Where the RE Professional is not a LA employee, the LA Officer will need to facilitate their link to other information about schools, examination data and other LA employees who can support links with schools, training processes and office backup. When the LA is sending its budget for the coming year, the LA Officer should ensure that the needs of SACRE are recognised and that a sufficient budget is available so that SACRE can perform its statutory duties. When there is an Agreed Syllabus Conference, those additional needs will also have to be budgeted for.

### **Appendix 3: SACRE Standing Agenda Items**

#### **1. All meetings:**

- Welcome and Apologies
- Approval of minutes
- Matters arising
- How are things in Reading schools?
- Action Plan and budget
- Feedback from teacher networks and training
- National updates relating to education and RE, including NASACRE updates
- Feedback from Berkshire SACRE hub meetings
- Member presentations - about their faith or worldview/ about collective worship at their school
- AOB
- Dates of next meetings

#### **2. Autumn meetings:**

- Election of Chair and Vice-Chair
- Draft annual report for previous academic year to be shared
- Reading school Ofsted inspections update

#### **3. Spring meetings:**

- Final annual report on previous academic year to be shared
- Draft Development Plan for coming financial year

#### **4. Summer meetings:**

- Feedback from NASACRE Conference/ASC



## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION & SACRES IN PROTECTING WHAT MATTERS

Key points from the MHCLG publication



### 1 COHESION & PURPOSE OF RE

**1. RE is explicitly linked to social cohesion.**

The paper situates RE within a wider education offer that supports cohesion, stating that education reforms will

**“strengthen citizenship, British history, and religious education.”**

This places RE alongside subjects seen as central to building shared understanding and social cohesion.

**2. Faith and belief literacy is positioned as a public good.**

The paper emphasises that improving understanding of religion and belief can promote

**“inclusivity, understanding and respect.”**

RE is implicitly part of this wider aim to strengthen religious literacy.

**3. RE sits within a broader values and cohesion agenda.**

The positioning of RE alongside aims such as promoting tolerance and tackling division reflects the paper’s wider concern with

**“a more confident, cohesive and resilient United Kingdom.”**

RE is therefore embedded in a cross-government cohesion strategy.

### 2 STANDARDS & CURRICULUM DIRECTION

**4. Government commits to raising standards in RE.**

The document includes a clear commitment to

**“drive up standards in the teaching of Religious Education.”**

This is one of the most direct policy statements on RE in the paper.

**5. Possible inclusion of RE in the National Curriculum is signalled.**

The paper states:

**“We will carefully consider including Religious Education in the national curriculum, subject to the sector reaching consensus on the content and approach to delivery.”**

This frames inclusion as conditional on sector agreement rather than a confirmed reform.

### 3 SACRES – ROLE & RECOGNITION

**7. SACREs are explicitly recognised at national level.**

The executive summary commits to

**“promote the role of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs)”**

This is a notable acknowledgement of SACREs within a cross-government policy document.

**8. Focus on SACRE annual reports as a national evidence base.**

The paper adds that this will be done by

**“supporting improved analysis of their annual reports to better understand the role they play in communities.”**

This elevates SACRE reporting as a tool for national insight, not just local accountability.

### 4 POLICY POSITIONING

**10. RE gains cross-government (not just DfE) visibility.**

Because the commitments sit within an Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government publication rather than a DfE-only document, RE is being recognised as relevant to community policy, integration and resilience, not solely curriculum policy.

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

### OVERALL POLICY SHAPE

RE is positioned as a cohesion tool

SACREs are positioned as community actors

National Curriculum inclusion is possible but conditional

Direction is positive but not yet operational

Commitment remains high-level and contingent, particularly on “the sector reaching consensus.”

Source: Protecting What Matters: Towards a more confident, cohesive, and resilient United Kingdom (MHCLG, 2025)

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