

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

Wednesday 22 October 2025, 6.30pm

Hybrid meeting on MS Teams

Room 4b Civic Offices



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**Reading Borough Council SACRE: Agenda for the Meeting
Wednesday 22 October 2025, 6:30pm Hybrid Meeting**

Members Present:

Amir Saqlain (A)
 Clare Walsha (A)
 Rabbi Zvi Solomons (A)
 Vika Srivastava (A)
 Rev Jo Williams Chair (B)
 Christine Ferrerira (A)
 Fiona Middlehurst Vice Chair (C)
 Elizabeth Munro (C)
 Meri O'Connell (D)
 Rachel Eden (D)
 Katie Dickens Panel Adviser

Observer: Nikki McVeigh LA Link Advisor

Clerk: Heather Mendham

Apologies: Mohammed Ayub (D). Sam Juthani (D)

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

1.	Welcome & Introductions New members welcomed: Clare Walsha (A) & Christine Ferrerira (A)	Clerk
2.	Election of Chair: To elect a Chair for the academic year 2025/26 (nominations welcome). Rev Jo Williams was nominated by Rabbi Zvi Solomons and seconded by Meri O'Connor.	Clerk
3.	Appointment of a Vice-Chair for the academic year 2025/26 (nominations welcome). Fiona Middlehurstt was nominated by Rev Jo Williams and seconded Rabbi Zvi Solomons.	
4.	Introduction of new LA Link Advisor (Nikki McVeigh) & Panel Advisor (Katie Dickens) Nikki introduced herself as the new LA link representative, as nominated by Brian Grady, Head of Education. She has just recently become appointed and confirmed that she was present just to observe and had no voting rights. She would be working alongside Mo Galway, Katie Dickens and Chair. Katie introduced herself as the new Panel Adviser. She would offer any support /advice where needed and would work alongside Nikki. She said that she did not have a massive theological background but her role was to work together with the SACRE. She is also involved with Bracknell and Wokingham SACRE. One of her roles is to keep schools updated through her newsletter. She is also responsible for submitting the SACRE's annual report.	

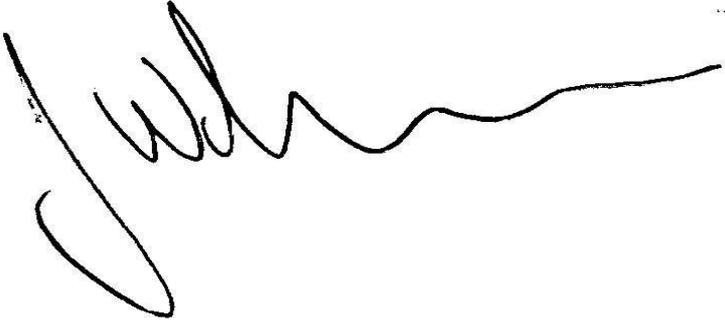
5.	Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising: 03 July 2025. Minutes were agreed and signed as a true and accurate record.	Chair
6.	<p><u>Membership Update</u></p> <p>Progress Made</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nikki contacted all nominating boards. • Successfully recruited Humanist and Catholic representatives. • RE leaders attended training sessions. <p>Outstanding Gaps & Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group C (Teachers) <p>Nikki said that recruitment remains challenging for this group. It was agreed that the requirement was that any possible reps: Must be currently teaching in primary or secondary education.</p> <p>Action: Amir to reach out to his contacts in RE & Humanities.</p> <p>Pagans: No representatives yet. Action: Nikki to continue seeking suitable contacts.</p> <p>Buddhists: Previous contact not responding. Action: Nikki to contact the Buddhist Centre on Bath Road.</p> <p>Muslim: Action: Amir to provide nominations for Sunni representatives</p> <p>Discussion regarding free Churches in Reading; along with Baptists, Quakers (Quaker Meeting House on Friends Lane); United Reformed Church (URC). Salvation Army; Methodists; Jehovah’s Witnesses and Seventh-day Adventists (Bath Road).</p> <p>It was agreed that the Interfaith Forum would be a good starting point for any approach for new membership representatives.</p> <p>Action: Jo to approach Plymouth Brethren for representation.</p> <p>Action: Rabbi Solomans to forward Judy Lyons’ contact details.</p>	Nikki
7.	<p><u>New Constitution</u></p> <p>Reading’s draft constitution was based on Wokingham’s model and reviewed by the Chair and Panel Advisor. RBC Legal Team has also reviewed it, noting a few discretionary elements.</p> <p>Jo confirmed general agreement on the document. Meri praised its thoroughness.</p> <p>Jo acknowledged the SACRE team’s work and recorded thanks to the Legal Team.</p>	Chair

	<p>Rabbi noted that up to four members in Committee A may attend as observers rather than full members.</p> <p>Jo emphasized the importance of balanced representation—one member from each group.</p> <p>Amir raised the need for two Islamic representatives (Sunni and Shia).</p> <p>Discussion on collective worship highlighted legal requirements from the 1944 Education Act. SACRE has a constitutional rep to advise on RE and collective worship.</p> <p>Clare queried Group D representation—five members from the Local Authority. Nikki said that this was dictated by RBC’s Committee Services.</p> <p>Meri appreciated the cooperative nature of meetings. Rachel noted that committee participation at AGMs may depend on party affiliation.</p> <p>Katie discussed collective worship in faith schools, where admission policies often expect a clear faith commitment. C of E schools are open to all.</p> <p>SACRE should monitor collective worship practices in local schools. Changes may be forthcoming.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair/Vice Chair group membership issue to be removed (belonging to different groups). Fiona may apply to be a teacher union representation after Christmas, so agreed to move to a teacher representative role. • Constitution will be reviewed every four years. • Elizabeth supported a flexible approach and endorsed Jo and Fiona’s leadership. • Rabbi Zvi Solomans raised syllabus concerns but acknowledged the goodwill in the room. • Clare encouraged aspiration to good practice, especially from challenging roles. • It was agreed that more representation from Group B was needed. Rabbi Zvi Solomons to send suggestions to Clerk. • Constitution was formally agreed with a four-year review cycle. • Thanks were recorded to Nikki and RBC’s legal team’s support in drafting this constitution. 	
8.	<p>New Code of Practice. Agreed: signed copies to Clerk ASAP.</p>	Chair
9.	<p>Equality & Diversity update. Agenda item not discussed.</p>	Chair
10.	<p>We had a fantastic turnout with 26 teachers joining us online for the RE101 session, which focused on statutory guidelines and expectations for Religious Education.</p>	Nikki

	<p>Session Highlights:</p> <p>The session provided a basic but essential starting point for RE leadership. Around half of the attendees were new to leading RE, representing a mix of Church of England and community schools.</p> <p>All participants showed strong engagement and a shared commitment to delivering high-quality RE.</p> <p>Feedback: We were pleased with the positive feedback received. Attendees appreciated the clarity of the session and valued the opportunity to connect with others in similar roles. The strong attendance reflects growing interest and commitment to improving RE provision.</p> <p>Looking Ahead:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A follow-up session is planned after the local syllabus review. • We will continue to support schools in developing their RE curriculum to ensure our children receive the best possible subject knowledge and grow in respect for all faiths. • There is potential for RE to be included in the national curriculum within the next 2–3 years, and we aim to support all schools in preparing for this. <p>Key Challenges: Concerns were raised around KS4 and KS5 provision, particularly the likelihood of RE being removed for sixth formers, linked to broader curriculum changes reducing focus beyond age 16.</p> <p>Next Network Meeting:</p> <p>Date: February (following SACRE syllabus approval).</p>	
11.	<p><u>Key Changes in the Ofsted Inspection Framework</u></p> <p>New Framework in Place: Schools will not be inspected under the old framework after November 2025.</p> <p>Shift in Inspection Approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move away from isolated 'deep dives' in subjects like RE. • Greater focus on how subjects are integrated into the wider curriculum. <p>RE Must Be Included: Religious Education is now a required part of the curriculum and must be visible in whole-school planning.</p> <p>New Inspection Toolkit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on breadth, coherence, and inclusion. • RE will be evaluated as part of the overall curriculum offer, not in isolation. 	Nikki

	<p>Training Provided: Specific training and guidance are available for RE, though this is not a universal rule across all subjects.</p> <p>Challenges for Schools Around RE</p> <p>1. Inclusion Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion is central to the new framework. • Schools must show how RE supports equity of access, representation of diverse beliefs, and belonging for all pupils. • This is especially challenging where RE is under-resourced or inconsistently delivered. <p>2. Curriculum Integration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RE must be woven into the broader curriculum. • Inspectors will look for clear curriculum intent, evidence of impact, and links to other subjects. <p>3. Accessibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RE must be accessible to all learners. • Challenges include inclusion of non-religious worldviews, relevance to pupils' experiences, and staff training. <p>Recommendations for Schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To meet the new expectations and make RE more accessible: • Embed RE across the curriculum through themes like identity, ethics, and community. • Diversify content to include religious and non-religious worldviews. • Invest in CPD to support staff with subject-specific training. • Timetable RE meaningfully to avoid marginalisation. • Use pupil voice to shape the RE curriculum for relevance and engagement. 	
12.	<p>Online Training opportunities NASACRE. Clerk to circulate NASACRE newsletter to committee and to let her know if they wish to attend any online courses. Budget to be checked if needed.</p>	Clerk
13.	<p>Next meeting dates:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. TBC ASC Jan/Feb 26 b. Wednesday 25 February 2026 	Chair
14.	<p>AOB</p> <p>Committee asked for thanks to Rabbi Zvi Solomans' wife to be recorded for all her hard work in reviewing the Wokingham RE syllabus.</p>	
15.	<p>Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See above for membership actions. • Clerk to circulate Katie Dickens' newsletter to committee. • Clerk to upload agenda & signed minutes to RBC website. • Clerk to download all councillor dates. • Clerk to send out a poll for the most suitable dates for quoracy for ASC. • Clerk to chase all outstanding codes of conduct. 	

Chair closed meeting at 19.53

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'J' followed by a series of connected, wavy lines that extend to the right.