



READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
SACRE CONSTITUTION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

DOCUMENT CONTROL INFORMATION

Title: Reading SACRE Constitution

Date: October 2025

Review date: October 2029

CONTENTS

1.	What is SACRE?.....	3
2.	Membership.....	3
3.	Recruitment.....	5
4.	Term of office.....	6
5.	Co-opted members.....	7
6.	Meetings.....	7
7.	Agendas and papers.....	8
8.	Minutes.....	8
9.	Availability of papers to the public.....	9
10.	Voting.....	9
11.	Chair and Vice-Chair.....	10
12.	Sub-Committees.....	10
13.	Constitution.....	10
14.	Costs.....	10
15.	Agreed Syllabus Conference.....	11
16.	Requests for determinations.....	13
17.	Annual Report and communication with schools.....	13
18.	Code of Conduct.....	14
19.	Complaints procedure.....	15
20.	Freedom of Information requests.....	15
	Appendix 1 – Code of Conduct.....	
	Appendix 2 – Roles and Responsibilities.....	
	Appendix 3 – SACRE Standing Agenda Items.....	

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

