
**DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
ANNUAL SACRE REPORT – ACADEMIC YEAR 2017/18**

Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)

Legal Requirement for Religious Education

1. Every maintained school in England must provide a basic curriculum (RE, sex education and the National Curriculum). This includes provision for RE for all registered pupils at the school (including those in the sixth form), except for those withdrawn by their parents (or withdrawing themselves if they are aged 18 or over) in accordance with Schedule 19 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.
2. The key document in determining the teaching of RE is the locally agreed syllabus within the Local Authority (LA), although schools designated as having a religious character are free to make their own decisions in preparing their syllabuses

The Duties of SACRE

3. There is a legal requirement on all Local Authorities to establish a 'Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education' (SACRE). A SACRE's main duty is to advise the Local Authority on matters connected with the teaching of Religious Education and Collective Worship.
4. SACRE can advise the Authority to review its Agreed Syllabus and can recommend that particular teaching methods, materials and resources are considered for use in Religious Education.
5. A SACRE may also consider any application from Head Teachers that the requirement for Christian collective worship should not apply to a particular school or class of pupils within that school.

Membership of SACRE

6. The membership of SACRE consists of four representative groups (or committees) and co-opted members. The membership below was at the start of the Academic Year 2017/18.

Representing Darlington Borough Council

- Councillor Cyndi Hughes (Cabinet Member with Children and Young People Portfolio).
- Councillor C Taylor (Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee)
- Councillor I Galletley (Conservative Group Member)

- Councillor Curry (Liberal Democrat Group Member)

Representing Church of England

- Reverend P. Baker
- Martin Stand
- Beth Miller

Representing Other Faith Groups

- Chief Inspector C Reeves, Grange Road Baptist Church
- Morvyn Sanderson, Methodist Church
- Helen Ellis, Roman Catholic (appointed 12/11/18)
- Reverend D. Gibson, Assemblies of God Pentecostal Church
- Bhopinder Singh, Sikhism (appointed 12/11/18)
- Naomi Shaw, Hebrew Congregation
- Dr. M.A. Quader, Muslim Community/Islamic Society of Darlington
- Dr. N. Thakur, Hindu Community
- Kelsang Dragden, The Atisha Kadampa Buddhist Centre
- Mrs. M. Calderon, Religious Society of Friends
- Salvation Army (current vacancy)
- Meg Thomson, United Reformed Church (appointed 19/3/19)
- Bess Robertson, Darlington Hebrew Congregation (appointed 12/11/18)

Representing Teaching Associations

- Mrs. F. Rankin, National Union of Teachers
- Nick Blackburn, National Association of Head Teachers
- Association of School and College Lecturers (current vacancy)
- Ms. J. Uzzell, National Association of School Teachers/Union of Women Teachers
- Mike Shorten, Association of School and College Leaders)

Co-opted Members

- Ms. J. Cossins
- Mr. M. Fryer
- Mr. P. Andre
- Ms R Choudhury

Meetings of SACRE

7. SACRE Members have met during the Academic Year 2017/18 on 6 November 2017 and 26 March, 2018. A meeting had been arranged for July 2018 but subsequently cancelled due to lack of business.
8. The SACRE was guided and advised by Paul Richardson, Lead Officer from Children and Adults Services and supported by Allison Hill, Democratic Officer.

Chair and Vice Chair of SACRE

9. At the meeting held on 13 March 2017, Jenny Uzzell , National Association of School Teacher/Union of Women Teachers was appointed as Chair and Martin Stand, Church of England was appointed Vice-Chair for a period of three years from the date of appointment.

Synopsis of Meeting Content and Events:

Future Role of SACRE – Discussion

10. At our meeting in November 2017 we discussed the future role of SACRE and sought views on the Interim Report of the Commission on RE ‘Religious Education for All’, the consultation document prepared by the Commission on Religious Education representing work in progress towards the final report that the Commission were to publish in September 2018.
11. Although there was no obligation on the government to respond to or act upon any recommendations that were made following the extensive consultation exercise, Members felt it important to give this their consideration.
12. We discussed the reference in the document to the areas for consultation on the role of SACRE’s and proposed recommendations and it was acknowledged that there was a varied provision of religious education throughout the country and a varied level of activity within each individual SACRE. This is believed to be due to the varied status of schools within each authority with the increase in academies and fewer maintained schools, as was the case in Darlington.
13. We acknowledged that the increase in academies was creating issues generally with educational performance and the monitoring thereof and discussed the varying religious composition of each local area and the suggestion within the discussion document for the abolishment of SACRES in favour of local faith group representation or a change to SACRES to include representatives of non-religious worldviews as full Members.
14. We also discussed the lack of funding available for SACRES and the how the role of SACRE was becoming unclear with fewer schools being under local authority control, although there was still a legal obligation on all schools to provide religious education although the academies are not under any obligation to follow the Local Agreed Syllabus on Religious Education.
15. Members agreed that a survey of all schools within the borough be undertaken to ascertain if they were using the agreed syllabus and if not what form of religious education were they offering and in particular what two religions were being studied at secondary level. This survey was sent to all schools in November 2017.

16. With regard to the consultation in relation to a National Curriculum for religious education instead of locally agreed syllabuses we agreed that if a Local Agreed Syllabus was removed there was still a need for a monitoring role by this SACRE, especially in primary schools as most secondary schools in Darlington had specialist departments for religious education.
17. Members also agreed that they needed a clearer purpose of what they wanted to achieve as a SACRE and what they could achieve moving forward and how they could raise the profile of SACRE. We discussed redeveloping the Resource Document and updating a list of RE Co-ordinators within schools and contact numbers so that any information can be readily distributed around the Group. Members also discussed the possibility of introducing an electronic newsletter as a further means of improving communication among SACRE Members and around the schools.
18. Discussion also ensued on the teaching of religious education in secondary schools and the impact of the English Baccalaureate (Ebacc) on examination courses for religious studies as a non core academic subject; and the fact that pupils are not required to undertake a qualification in RE.
19. All SACRE Members were encouraged to complete the on line consultation survey for submission to the Commission by 4 December 2018.

Questionnaire – Religious Education Being Taught Within Maintained Schools and Academies in the Borough of Darlington

20. At the meeting on 26 March 2018 we considered the responses to the questionnaire sent to all maintained schools and academies within the Borough of Darlington regarding religious education taught within their schools.
21. There had been a good response from the schools and also a distribution list had been compiled of the religious education contacts within the Borough's schools to aid communication between this SACRE and schools in future.
22. We were also encouraged to see that there was a good proportion of the Borough's schools and academies using the Locally Agreed Syllabus and were interested to note the two religions that were being taught at secondary level as part of the GCSE examination.
23. The Chair acknowledged that the questionnaire had been a useful exercise in determining the use of the Locally Agreed Syllabus across the Borough and especially that it was being used by the academies.

Special Thanks

24. In presenting this report Darlington Borough Council, local School Teachers and Members of Faith Groups be warmly thanked for their collective and individual contributions.

Members of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education