



Joining your local SACRE

- **supporting**
- **strengthening**
- **promoting**

Aims for tonight's training

This training presentation looks at these four questions:

- What is a SACRE?
- How is it composed?
- What is its role?
- What are the Local Authority's responsibilities?
- Your relationship to your sponsoring group as their SACRE representative

What is a SACRE?

SACRE stands for:

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

A SACRE is part of local government.

Its main function is to advise the local authority (LA) on matters related to Religious Education and collective worship in schools.



What is a SACRE?

- In 1944, Local Education Authorities (LEAs) were empowered by law to set up a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)
- In 1988, the Law changed and LEAs had to do so
- Today every local authority must have a SACRE and it must meet sufficient times to fulfil its statutory duties
- Most SACREs meet at least three times a year

SACRE: Statutory responsibilities (1)

A SACRE must:

- Advise the local authority (LA) on matters related to agreed syllabus religion education (RE) and
- Collective worship (CW) either in response to a referral from the LA or as it sees fit
- Publish an Annual Report on its work and on actions taken by its representative groups
- Email a copy of the Annual report to the Secretary of State – these reports from September 2021/2022 have been analysed by the DfE and NASACRE – you can find a link to Dr David Hampshire’s conference presentation on 2023 conference page on Nasacre website

SACRE: statutory responsibilities (2)

A SACRE must also:

- Meet in public, unless confidential information is to be disclosed
- Make minutes of its meetings available for inspection at LA offices
- Consider appeal from schools wishing to modify the legal requirement for the majority of acts of collective worship to be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character; this procedure is called a 'determination' as SACRE determines whether or not to agree the appeal

SACRE: statutory responsibilities (3)

An effective SACRE should:

- Monitor the provision and quality of agreed syllabus RE and of CW in order to provide targeted advice and support on teaching agreed syllabus RE
- Advise the LA on the provision of training of teachers
- Consider complaints about RE and CW referred to them by their LA
- Consider whether changes need to be made to the agreed syllabus, in partnership with the LA
- Offer advice to the LA in respect of the agreed syllabus and its implementation

SACRE: statutory responsibilities (4)

A SACRE may:

- Require the LA to review its Agreed Syllabus
- Decide to advise the LA on matters to do with RE and CW
- Co-opt individuals who are not members of any of the groups, for example to provide educational expertise, the views of young people and children, or religious and non-religious views that reflect a diverse multi-cultural society

How is SACRE composed?

Group A	Christian denominations other than the Church of England and other religions and their denominations, reflecting the principal religions of the area
Group B	The Church of England
Group C	Teacher and head teacher associations and often others representing education interests
Group D	The Local Authority

Questions



Representation on a SACRE

- All four groups must be represented on the SACRE
- The numbers of members in each group will be determined by the individual SACRE's constitution
- The composition of Group A should be broadly proportionate to the religions and worldviews (denominations) represented in the local area

Decision making

After discussions many SACREs come to agreement about issues without the need for a vote except in very rare circumstances.

However when votes need to be taken:

- Each of the four groups has equal voting rights: one vote per group
- Decision within a group about how that vote is to be cast do not require unanimity
- Each group has to regulate its own proceedings, including provision for resolving deadlock
- Co-opted members do not have a vote

SACRE annual reports

- The Annual Report should include details of the SACRE's activities, including advice given to the LA and to schools and any monitoring that has been undertaken in the past year
- The Report explains how the SACRE has fulfilled its responsibilities, evaluated its practice and used the resources at its disposal effectively
- In the best practice, SACRE's work would be linked to a development plan
- The Report can be used to publicise the work of SACRE with schools, governors, elected members and the general public

The role of SACRE

SACREs are responsible for oversight of the religious education and collective worship in their local schools. Levels of responsibility vary.

For example:

- In voluntary aided schools, RE is determined by the governors and taught according to the school's trust deed, not necessarily the Agreed Syllabus
- In all schools with a religious character, collective worship can be reflective of that religion
- In academies (even those which follow the LA agreed syllabus)

Questions



Schools and RE:

Type of school	Religious education is
Community and Voluntary controlled (VC) schools	taught according to the local authority's agreed syllabus and comes within SACRE's remit.
Voluntary aided (VA) schools	determined by the governors in accordance with the trust deed and reflects the religious character of the school.
Foundation schools with or without a religious character	taught according to the local authority's agreed syllabus.
Trust schools	taught according to the local authority's agreed syllabus.
Academies	Is part of the curriculum, but is taught according to the school's funding agreement.

Type of school	Collective worship
Community	follows the 1996 Education Act and the majority is 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character'.
Voluntary controlled (VC) and Voluntary aided (VA) schools	reflects the Christian character of the school.
Foundation schools without a religious character	follows the 1996 Education Act and the majority is 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character'.
Academies	Collective worship is determined by the academy's funding agreement but must be every day for pupils not withdrawn in whole or in part by their parent.

Local Authority responsibilities

- Ensure there is a SACRE
- Ensure all four groups are represented on the SACRE
- Establish an occasional body called an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) and appoint members to it
- Ensure there is an Agreed Syllabus, reviewed every five years
- Ensure funds and support are in place to enable SACRE to fulfil its duties
- Take note of and respond to advice from the SACRE

Local Authority responsibilities

Appointing members

It is the LA's responsibility to appoint members of the SACRE and the ASC.

The LA should:

- Seek nominations from the organisations to be represented
- Ensure those appointed are representative of the religion, worldview, denomination or sponsoring group in question

It is good practice for the SACRE to review its constitution periodically to ensure membership is appropriately representative and to advise the LA of any necessary amendments

In summary

SACREs:

- Are statutory bodies which all local authorities have to have and support
- Are representative of the local community
- Are responsible for RE and CW in most schools
- Are instrumental in ensuring quality experiences for all pupils in RE and CW
- Have to report annually to the DfE and NASACRE
- Have the potential to contribute to social harmony and community cohesion

Questions



Activity



What makes an effective SACRE?

Look at the grid overleaf.

In pairs or groups discuss how you would rate each of the characteristics of an effective SACRE.

Agree on a ranking for them, the most important first and the least significant last, discarding any that you think are inappropriate.

An effective SACRE ...

... plans and evaluates its work rigorously.	
... is representative of the variety of beliefs within the local community.	
... has members who understand the difference between RE and religious indoctrination and focuses its work appropriately.	
... promotes inclusivity and social cohesion.	
... is well attended by committee members and consistently quorate.	
... is well chaired.	
... is one that works strategically.	
... is able to secure adequate funding from its LA.	
... has a good partnership with the LA.	
... is one that uses its resources wisely and efficiently.	
... has professional RE advice and support from the LA.	
... demonstrates a hands-on approach with schools and their staff.	
... is committed to making RE relevant, interesting, appropriate, exciting and thoroughly enjoyable.	
... is one where there is good listening and communicating.	
... gives information in plain English.	
... has a committed membership.	
... is able to offer schools advice and support through well informed members.	
... is generally aware of issues related to pupils' progress in RE.	
... is representative of the interests of the local community.	
... constantly seeks to self-evaluate and improve.	
... is proactive not passive.	
... provides or secures relevant training for RE teachers.	
... monitors its schools' RE provision and offers them support in self-review.	
... works to develop strong partnerships between SACRE members in order to model the cohesion they believe that should develop in their community.	
... advises its LA on RE, CW and the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and social cohesion.	
... encourages and values the contribution of all its members and ensures they all know that they are appreciated.	
... responds readily to national or international issues relating to its sphere of interest.	

Activity



What makes a good SACRE member?

Look at the grid overleaf.

In pairs or groups consider how you would rate each of these characteristics of a good SACRE member and agree on a ranking for them, the most important first and the least significant last, discarding any that you think are inappropriate.

A good SACRE member ...

... listens to all views and ideas.	
... seeks to understand the views of other members, rather than simply promoting his/her own agenda.	
... is willing to contribute to discussions.	
... understands his or her role as a SACRE member.	
... thinks his or her point of view is important.	
... is committed to SACRE meetings.	
... is well informed about the work of their SACRE.	
... works harmoniously with other members.	
... has time to spend in school.	
... listens more than he or she speaks.	
... wants to build good partnerships with other SACRE members.	
... is keen and able to communicate with teachers and pupils.	
... takes an active participative approach, following lines of enquiry of personal interest.	
... supports and encourages local schools to aspire to high standards in RE and collective worship.	
... is prepared to bring issues to SACRE from their faith, belief or other sponsoring group.	
... cares about pupils' learning and their personal development.	
... is confident about everything to do with RE and CW in schools.	
... takes an active part in meetings.	
... is able to offer relevant experiences.	
... understands and believes in the positive value of RE and CW in schools.	
... keeps in touch with national issues in RE and CW.	
... knows about local faith communities.	
... has the ability and confidence to question perceived wisdom.	
... takes an interest in key RE and CW issues facing schools.	
... works to create a bridge between SACRE, local communities and local schools.	

Questions



Links from the chat

- Here is a link to the non-statutory guidance for SACRE and RE <https://nasacre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/2010-RE-Guidance-DCSF.pdf>
- Here is the link to useful documents including analysis of previous reports <https://nasacre.org.uk/useful-documents/>
- This is where you can find examples of good practice of policies, guidance and terms of reference from various SACRE <https://nasacre.org.uk/shared-space/>