

NEWHAM STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)



TERMS OF REFERENCE AND CONSTITUTION

Mission Statement

Under the 1988 Education Reform act every Local Authority (LA) is required to set up and run a SACRE. The remit is to advise the LA upon matters connected with the religious education (RE) and collective worship (CW) to be given in accordance with an agreed syllabus and in particular, as to methods of teaching, the choice of books and the continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers. SACRE is a broadly based community consultative organisation and should be representative of the diverse community of Newham.

Composition

SACRE is made up of four panels/groups:

- LA Panel – up to 6 representatives appointed to represent the LA made up from councillors and governors and education department.
- Church of England Panel – up to 6 representatives of the Church of England (the established church of England).
- Other Faiths' Panel – up to 15 representatives of local faith representatives apart from the Church of England, and representatives of other religions in the area.
- Teachers' Panel – up to 10 representatives from Newham schools representing primary and secondary as well as maintained and academy schools.

Function and purpose

The SACRE provides an opportunity for people from the educational and religion/worldview communities to work together in an imaginative and creative way to help develop RE and CW of pupils in Newham schools. It can provide an interfaith forum focused on the educational needs of the area. To this end SACRE will:

- Produce and publish an Agreed Syllabus for RE every five years
- Produce an annual report on the work of SACRE for the DfE and the borough
- Encourage the implementation of the Agreed Syllabus and in this regard to monitor the production of teaching resources and support material
- Produce advice for schools on CW

- Review the provision for RE and CW in schools within the Borough
- Give advice on methods of teaching Agreed Syllabus RE including the choice of teaching materials
- Advise the LA on the provision for training for teachers in RE and CW
- Monitor inspection reports on RE, CW and SMSC
- Consider complaints about the provision and delivery of RE and CW referred to it by the LA
- Sponsor or support any activity or project which it deems to be consistent with the other terms of reference mentioned in this document
- Produce a development plan to guide the work and set objectives for future development

Legal Duties

Its main function is to advise the LA on matters related to Collective Worship in community schools and some other schools and on the Religious Education given with the Agreed Syllabus. The SACRE can:

- Keep under review the effectiveness and appropriateness of the Agreed Syllabus until such time (and no later than five years after the publication of the last Agreed Syllabus) it decides to require the LA to convene an Agreed Syllabus Conference to institute a formal review
- Advise on methods of teaching, choice of teaching material and the provision of training for teachers
- To advise on the effective and creative implementation of the collective worship requirements of the Education Act 1996 and consider requests by schools for determinations
- The SACRE must publish an annual report of its work and this to be sent to DfE and NASACRE
- Demonstrate to OFSTED or any other Government body how SACRE supports RE and CW as well as general policies of religion and worldview inclusion
- Meet at least 3 times each year

Bodies and Organisations Responsible for Nomination of Members

The overall purpose of this is to ensure that all key religious groups are represented on the SACRE:

- Church of England
- Diocesan Director of Education based at Chelmsford
- Free Church association
- Roman Catholic Education Service.
- Buddhist, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, and Jewish Communities plus any other which becomes known
- Humanists UK
- The local secretaries of all teachers unions
- Teacher representatives from primary and secondary schools
- The local council
- The local governors association
- Student RE Matters representation – through their executive
- Other local authority organisations which have links with religious communities in Newham. If it is difficult to gain formal nomination then the SACRE, at its discretion can appoint individuals to represent religious communities.

SACRE Meetings

There will be at least three meetings each year. The minutes and agenda will be decided by SACRE and sent out by the council to all SACRE members. For a meeting to be quorate it will need to have present at least one representative from the four committees that would form an ASC. Meetings will be quorate whether virtual, hybrid or face to face.

The Agenda will be agreed by the SACRE and the Chair ensuring that all relevant items are being addressed throughout the year. Notice of meetings, minutes and agenda will be sent out by the LA to representatives. Items on the agenda may include examination of OFSTED reports on the teaching of RE and on matters of Spiritual, Moral, Cultural and Spiritual Development that are raised in reports. It may also consider determinations if a local school requests that its worship provision should not be 'broadly Christian' but represent a dominant religious group within that school. In addition to the above the SACRE may set up a small subcommittee to advise the whole SACRE on matters of policy and development.

Termination of membership

Where a member has not attended two consecutive meetings without giving apologies the SACRE clerk will formally write to them to state that their membership will be terminated, and the clerk will be contacting the members nominating body to ask for a new representative.

Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC)

An Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) is convened in order to produce an Agreed Syllabus for RE. It should take into account any guidelines provided by the DfE or any other statutory or non-statutory guidance. It is a separate legal entity from a SACRE. It contains the same four committees as a SACRE. Also it can be made up from SACRE members but need not do so. There is no provision for co-opted members. The LA can appoint the Chair of the ASC or the LA may allow the ASC to choose its own Chair. The LA's responsibility to convene an ASC implies a duty to provide funds for its work. This is laid down in Education Act 1 '996 Chapter 111 Schedule 31'.

Role of SACRE Members Representing Religion and Worldview Communities

- Should present a positive image of the religion and worldview they represent
- Ensure that other members of their communities including parents with children at school are aware of the work and role of SACRE
- Represent any issues of concern to parents and other community members
- Create opportunities within SACRE meetings to raise awareness of issues of sensitivity in the teaching of RE to the children of their religion and worldview community
- Advise on issues relating to the teaching and content of RE supporting schools in their best endeavours to develop their teaching
- Support schools by helping to provide names of people suitable to resource teachers in the classroom or school assembly
- Form Committee A and B during an Agreed Syllabus conference

Role of SACRE Members Representing Teachers

- Ensure that the needs of the schools and teachers are considered by SACRE in their discussions
- Provide information about the context in which RE is taught
- Ensure that the associations they represent are informed about the work of SACRE
- Create opportunities for other teachers to learn about the work of SACRE and give them the opportunity to have their views expressed at SACRE meetings
- Consult other teachers on matters of particular importance to the work of SACRE
- Form Committee C during an ASC

Role of SACRE Members Representing the LA

- Bring to the meeting the breadth of education issues and concerns that elected members have and place the role of RE within it
- Support RE in the various committee and structures of the LA
- Bring the voice of governors to all SACRES considerations around RE and CW
- Give political support to the teaching and resourcing of RE and CW

- Appreciate the issues raised by a multi faith, multicultural society and reflect these concerns within the LA
- Bringing the public dimension to debates about RE provision and support
- Form Committee D during and ASC

Publicising the work of SACRE

- Publish an annual report of its work specifying any matters on which it has advised the LA, broadly describing the nature of that advice, and setting out the reasons for offering advice on any matters which were not referred to it in the first place by the LA
- Ensure proceedings are reported to all appropriate committees of the LA and the office of the Chief Executive
- Meetings are open to the public and notice of SACRE meetings should be published on the LA website, along with its minutes

SACRE may wish to:

- Make an annual presentation to the Assembly of the council on the work of SACRE before presentation of annual Report to Chief Executive.
- Disseminate an understanding of the educational role of RE and Collective Worship and to encourage the active involvement of local religious groups and organisations
- Create a summary of annual report on the work of SACRE to be sent to schools for informing teachers and parents and to be published in the News and other appropriate organs of communication

Last reviewed January 2022

Appendix 1

The Law concerning LA, SACRE, RE and CW

Taken from '[Religious Education in English schools: Guidance from the DfE 2010](#)'

The role and responsibility of the LA

Each LA must:

- establish a permanent body called a standing advisory council on religious education (SACRE).¹ LAs must appoint representatives to each of four committees, representing respectively:
 1. Group A: Christian denominations and such other religions, worldviews and religious denominations as, in the authority's opinion, will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area
 2. Group B: the Church of England
 3. Group C: teacher associations
 4. Group D: the LA
- establish an occasional body called an agreed syllabus conference (ASC) to review the agreed syllabus for RE adopted by the LA.² This may have common membership with the SACRE but is a separate entity and must therefore be separately convened
- institute a review of its locally agreed syllabus within five years of the last review, and subsequently every five years after the completion of each further review
- appoint members of the committees represented on the ASC³
- ensure that the composition of Group A on a SACRE and Committee A on an ASC is broadly representative of the proportionate strengths of the denominations and religions in the area. The statutory provisions recognise that there will be occasions when the interest of efficiency overrides the requirement for directly proportionate representation ⁴
- take all reasonable steps when appointing a person to be a member of a group on a SACRE or a committee of an ASC to represent any religion, denomination or association, to ensure the person appointed is representative of the religion, denomination or associations in question.⁵
- To ensure that people being considered for appointment to SACREs and ASCs are representative, it is normal for LAs to seek nominations from the organisations that have a right of representation on each of the groups or committees. While LAs should seek nominations separately for membership of SACREs and ASCs, as these are separate organisations with different functions, they may request that consideration be given by nominating bodies to nominating the same individuals for membership of both the SACRE and the ASC. There is nothing restricting membership of the LA group (SACRE) or committee (ASC) to elected members. LAs are free to include senior LA officers or others whom they consider can appropriately represent the authority.
- An LA should fund and support a SACRE and an ASC satisfactorily in line with the duty to constitute or convene each of these bodies and to enable them effectively to carry out their functions.

An LA may:

- decide on matters to refer to its SACRE, including in particular methods of teaching, choice of teaching material and provision of teacher training⁶
- give its SACRE a role in the local statutory complaints procedure under Section 409 of the Education Act 1996.

The role and responsibility of a SACRE

A SACRE must:

- advise the LA on RE given in accordance with the agreed syllabus, and on matters related to its functions, whether in response to a referral from the LA or as it sees fit. ⁷
- publish an annual report on its work and on actions taken by its representative groups, specifying any matters on which it has advised the LA, broadly describe the nature of that advice, and set out reasons for offering advice on matters not referred to it by the LA. ⁸
- send a copy of the report to the DfE and NASACRE. ⁹
- meet in public unless confidential information is to be disclosed. ¹⁰
- make minutes of its meetings available for inspection at the LA's offices (so far as the minutes relate to the parts of meetings that were open to the public). There are also provisions about public access to the agenda and reports for meetings.¹¹

A SACRE should:

- monitor the provision and quality of RE taught according to its agreed syllabus, together with the overall effectiveness of the syllabus
- provide advice and support on the effective teaching of RE in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus; provide advice to the LA and its schools on methods of teaching, the choice of teaching material and the provision of teacher training
- in partnership with its LA, consider whether any changes need to be made in the agreed syllabus or in the support offered to schools in the implementation of the agreed syllabus, to improve the quality teaching and learning of RE
- offer advice to the LA, and through the LA to schools, concerning how an existing agreed syllabus can be interpreted so as to fit in with a broad, balanced and coherent curriculum.

A SACRE may:

- require its LA to review the agreed syllabus and, if after discussion a vote is taken on this matter, the LA group on SACRE is not entitled to cast a vote.¹² A majority decision by the three other committees is sufficient
- decide to advise the LA on matters related to its functions to the LA – equally, an LA may decide to refer matters to its SACRE ¹³
- co-opt members who are not members of any of the four groups ¹⁴ – such co-opted members may provide educational expertise, young peoples' views or religious and non-religious views that reflect a diverse multi-cultural society.

However, on any question to be decided by a SACRE, its constituent groups each have a single vote but co-opted members do not have a vote.¹⁵

Decisions within a group do not require unanimity. Each group must regulate its own proceedings, including provision for resolving deadlock. Many SACREs have chosen to adopt a constitution to regulate their proceedings and ways of working.

The role and responsibility of an ASC

Every LA is required to establish and support an occasional body called an agreed syllabus conference (ASC).

An ASC must:

- produce and recommend to the LA an agreed syllabus for RE which is educationally sound and meets legal requirements – as indicated earlier, this process should take account of the illustrative primary programme of learning and secondary programme of study but is in no way bound by them
- with any sub-committee it may appoint,¹⁶ meet in public, subject to exceptions in relation to confidentiality ¹⁷
- unanimously recommend a syllabus for adoption by the LA (each committee having a single vote) - there are provisions for the Secretary of State to become involved where an ASC is not unanimous ¹⁸
- include on any sub-committee at least one member of each of its constituent committees.

An ASC may specify what must be taught through the locally agreed syllabus.

In recommending a syllabus the ASC may not specify the amount of curriculum time that must be allocated to RE by schools, but they may provide an estimate of how much time their syllabus would require, to help schools to plan their timetable.

Membership of an ASC

- An ASC is required to be made up of four committees ¹⁹
- Committee A – Christian denominations and such other religions and religious denominations as, in the opinion of the LA, will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area;
- Committee B - the Church of England
- Committee C - teacher associations
- Committee D - the LA.

There is no legal provision for an ASC to include co-opted members, but it can seek the advice it considers appropriate from those it considers appropriate, to inform the development of effective RE provision in its area.

The agreed syllabus

The locally agreed syllabus is a statutory syllabus of RE prepared under Schedule 31 to the Education Act 1996 and adopted by the LA under that schedule. It must be followed in maintained schools without a designated denomination.

Once adopted by the LA, the agreed syllabus sets out what pupils should be taught and can include the expected standards of pupils' performance at different stages.

Every locally agreed syllabus must reflect that the religious traditions of Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain.²⁰

The law does not define what the principal religions represented in Great Britain are. ASCs can decide which are the principal religions represented in Great Britain, other than Christianity, to be included in their agreed syllabus.

Agreed syllabuses in any community school and any foundation, voluntary-aided or voluntary-controlled school without a religious character cannot require RE to be provided by means of any catechism or formulary which is distinctive of a particular religious denomination.²¹

This prohibition does not extend to the study of catechisms and formularies.

SACRE membership

SACREs have many opportunities to engage all their members as stakeholders and ambassadors of RE. Increasingly, LAs and SACREs are adopting innovative good practice by co-opting representatives of pupils on their SACREs, or by having parallel young people's SACREs. However, on any question to be decided by a SACRE, its constituent groups each have a single vote but co-opted members do not have a vote.³⁴ Decisions within a group do not require unanimity. Each group must regulate its own proceedings, including provision for resolving deadlock. Many SACREs have chosen to adopt a constitution to regulate their proceedings and ways of working.

Footnotes references:

- 1 Section 390, Education Act 1996
- 2 Schedule 31(2), Education Act 1996
- 3 Schedule 31(4), Education Act 1996
- 4 Section 390, Schedule 31(4), Education Act 1996
- 5 Schedule 31(7), Education Act 1996; Section 392(2), Education Act 1996
- 6 Section 391(1)(a), Education Act 1996
- 7 Section 391(1)(a), Education Act 1996
- 8 Section 391(6) and (7), Education Act 1996
- 9 Section 391(10), Education Act 1996
- 10 Religious Education (Meetings of Local Conferences and Councils) Regulations 1994, SI 1994/1304
- 11 Religious Education (Meetings of Local Conferences and Councils) Regulations 1994, SI 1994/1304
- 12 Section 391(3), Education Act 1996
- 13 Section 391(3), Education Act 1996
- 14 Section 390(3), Education Act 1996
- 15 Section 390(7) and Section 391(4), Education Act 1996
- 16 Schedule 31(6), Education Act 1996
- 17 Regulation 3, S1 1994/1304
- 18 Schedule 31(10), Education Act 1996
- 19 Section 390(2) Education Act 1996; Schedule 31, para 4, Education Act 1996
- 20 Section 375, Education Act 1996
- 21 Para 3 of Schedule 19 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998

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