

# Somerset SACRE Constitution

June 2023

## Contents

1. What is SACRE? .....	3
2. What is Religious Education? .....	3
3. What is the function of SACRE? .....	4
4. Membership .....	4
5. Voting .....	6
6. Co-opted Members .....	7
7. Constitution .....	7
8. Syllabus Conference .....	7
9. Chair and Vice Chair .....	8
10. Meetings .....	8
11. Agendas and Papers .....	8
12. Support to SACRE .....	9
13. Code of Conduct .....	9

## 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 a council. The requirement to convene a SACRE is set out in legislation (Section 390 – 397 of the 1996 Education Act).
- 1.2. The purpose of SACRE is to provide advice to the local authority in relation to Religious Education and statutory requirements to provide a daily act of religious worship. Religious Education is the only National Curriculum subject that is not statutorily prescribed by the Department for Education. It remains a local responsibility to set a syllabus for local schools. This is because 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. The roots of SACRE lie in the 1944 Education Act and were later reformed and reconstituted in the 1988 Education Reform Act.

## 2. What is Religious Education?

- 2.1. The Ofsted Review of RE from May 2021 states:
 

“In religious education (RE), pupils enter into a rich discourse about the religious and non-religious traditions that have shaped Great Britain and the world. RE in primary and secondary schools enables pupils to take their place within a diverse multi-religious and multi-secular society. At its best, it is intellectually challenging and personally enriching. It affords pupils both the opportunity to see the religion and non-religion in the world, and the opportunity to make sense of their own place in that world.”
- 2.2. [2013 review of Religious Education](#) proposed the following purposes for any curriculum, that all pupils:
  - 2.2.1. Know about and understand a range of religions and worldviews, so that they can:
    - describe, explain and analyse beliefs and practices, recognising the diversity which exists within and between communities and amongst individuals
    - identify, investigate and respond to questions posed, and responses offered by some of the sources of wisdom found in religions and worldviews
    - appreciate and appraise the nature, significance and impact of different ways of life and ways of expressing meaning.
  - 2.2.2 Express ideas and insights about the nature, significance and impact of religions and worldviews, so that they can:

- explain reasonably their ideas about how beliefs, practices and forms of expression influence individuals and communities
- express with increasing discernment their personal reflections and critical responses to questions and teachings about identity, diversity, meaning and value, including ethical issues
- appreciate and appraise varied dimensions of religion or a worldview

2.2.3 Gain and deploy the skills needed to engage seriously with religions and worldviews, so that they can:

- find out about and investigate key concepts and questions of belonging, meaning, purpose and truth, responding creatively
- enquire into what enables different individuals and communities to live together respectfully for the wellbeing of all
- articulate beliefs, values and commitments clearly in order to explain why they may be important in their own and other people's lives.

2.3. The commissioned review of RE by the religious Education Council, published in 2018 'Religions and Worldviews: The Way Forward' highlights the point that:

"Young people today are growing up in a world where there is increasing awareness of the diversity of religious and non-religious worldviews, and they will need to live and work well with people with very different worldviews from themselves".

This report is forming the basis of ongoing discourse around the nature and future of RE, as a key subject to support and equip young people for the challenges of a modern world.

### 3. What is the function of SACRE?

3.1 As set out in the legislation (paragraph 391), the function of SACRE is to:

- advise the local authority on matters that the local authority sees fit to refer, where these relate to:
  - a. religious worship in schools
  - b. religious education
- compile and submit an annual report
- decide whether the LA's Agreed Syllabus for RE needs to be reviewed and require that the LA does so ensure the local agreed syllabus is reviewed every five years with an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC).

### 4. Membership

4.1. The basis for the membership of any SACRE is set out in the relevant legislation. SACRE is to comprise four groups representing, respectively:

- a) such Christian denominations and other religions and denominations of such religions that, in the opinion of the Authority, will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area

- b) the Church of England
  - c) such associations representing teachers as, in the opinion of the Authority, ought to be represented, having regard to the circumstances of the area
  - d) the Local Authority.
- 4.2. On any question to be decided by the council only the representative groups on the council shall be entitled to vote, and each representative group shall have a single vote.
- 4.3. The local authority must appoint named persons to each of the four groups and is responsible for seeking reasonable assurance that individuals are representative of the views or perspective that they represent. All appointments must be made on the basis of a nomination by a suitable organisation. The local authority will devise the manner in which it will seek nominations in cases where there is no single constituted organisation within the county, and will consult SACRE on this methodology.
- 4.4. On resignation or removal by the local authority an appointed person shall be replaced by the local authority for the remainder of the term of office by another representative.
- 4.5. In the case of a member who, without the consent of SACRE, has failed to attend SACRE meetings for a continuous period of twelve months, the local authority may remove them or SACRE may recommend their removal by the local authority.
- 4.6. Terms of office for members of SACRE will be 4 years at which point they will either be reappointed or replaced. While practise would be for two four-years terms to be the agreed limit, it is recognised that there may be challenges in filling the position at the end of the second term. Where a member is willing to continue in a post that would become vacant after active recruitment, they are welcome to do so until such time as a replacement can be found.

<b>Representative Group</b>	<b>Groups to be represented</b>	<b>Voting</b>	<b>Term of office</b>
A) Christian and other religious representation	Baptist	One vote for group	4 Year Term
	Buddhist		
	Catholic Denomination		
	Evangelical		
	Hindu		
	Humanist		
	Jewish		
	Methodist OR URC OR Congregational Denomination		
	Muslim		
	Other Christian Denominations as agreed by the membership		
	Pagan		
	Quaker		
Sikh			

B) Church of England	Diocesan (Education)	One vote for group	4 Year Term
	Diocesan (General)		
	LA Maintained		
	Member of the Clergy		
	Trust		
C) Education representation (representatives must be serving practitioners)	Early Years (EYC)	One vote for group	4 Year Term
	Post-16		
	Primary (SAPH)		
	PRU/AP		
	Secondary (SASH)		
	Special (SENSE)		
	Trade Union (JCNC)		
D) Local authority representation	Assistant Director for Education Partnerships and Skills	One vote for group	While in post
	Associate Executive member for Education		
	Curriculum Manager		
	Executive member for Children's Services		
	Other Elected Member		4 Year Term
	Other Elected Member		4 Year Term
Local authority Support	Administrative Clerk (Democratic Services)	Non-voting	While in post
	Primary RE Advisor		
	Secondary RE Advisor		
	Supervising Clerk (Children's Services)		

## 5. Voting

- 5.1. In the interests of achieving consensus SACRE should only take a vote of the four groups when it is necessary to make a formal record of the position of the council, or if there are opposing views. Because SACRE is an advisory group, it cannot make a decision, but it can record a position in a matter on which it is advising the local authority.
- 5.2. Each group has one vote on any matter where voting is deemed appropriate. Each group is free to determine for itself how to decide what its vote may be. However, if a group has not advised the local authority of alternative methods of determining one vote, that vote will be decided by a majority of votes within the group. A tied vote will be recorded as an abstention.
- 5.3. Only group members present in the meeting may vote.
- 5.4. SACRE will be considered quorate if there are two members of each group in attendance, and those in attendance in Group A must include one member of a non-Christian perspective.
- 5.5. Arrangements for voting will be agreed at the start of the meeting and take into account the format of the meeting. Time for voting must allow the opportunity for groups to discuss the matter prior to voting.

## 6. Co-opted Members

- 6.1. SACRE can appoint people to the council through co-option. Co-opted members have the right to speak but not to vote. Any member of the council may propose a member for co-option. A co-opted member may serve up to two three-year terms. A member is co-opted if at least three of the four groups votes to co-opt them. A member may be co-opted without voting if no group member objects to their co-option. A member may only be proposed for co-option if they will represent a view or perspective not already represented on the council, to a maximum of six co-opted members.

## 7. Constitution

- 7.1. The local authority has a legal duty to comply with the relevant legislation. The constitution is devised by the local authority and the local authority may change it at any time but it should consult with SACRE before doing so.
- 7.2. The constitution should be reviewed annually by the Clerk in order to ensure it is still up to date and fit for purpose. The clerk should propose changes to the constitution to SACRE for consultation before changes are adopted by the local authority.
- 7.3. This review will take place in advance of the summer term meeting where governance arrangements for the coming academic year will be confirmed.

## 8. Syllabus Conference

- 8.1. An Agreed Syllabus Conference is a legislative requirement under Schedule 31, see: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/schedule/31>
- 8.2. A conference to review the syllabus must be convened every five years. SACRE may vote to require the local authority to convene a review within that time. The syllabus is agreed by committees representing the same groups as are represented by SACRE. The membership of SACRE and the ASC may be the same or may differ, but the membership is appointed by the local authority.
- 8.3. The syllabus must reflect that the religious traditions are in the main, Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of other principle religions represented in Great Britain.
- 8.4. The syllabus can only be adopted by a unanimous vote of all four committees.

## 9. Chair and Vice Chair

- 9.1. A Chair and two vice-chairs will be elected from among the membership of the Local Authority Committee. However, where this is not practicable the local authority may appoint a Chair or Vice-Chair for a period of time.
- 9.2. The Chair and Vice-Chairs will be elected from three of the four groups within SACRE.
- 9.3. The Chair and Vice-Chairs will be appointed for a period of two years after which time an election will be held among the membership.
- 9.4. The Chair and Vice-Chairs will form a SACRE Exec group with LA officers and RE Advisors who could be consulted on urgent matters
- 9.5. This group will meet three weeks prior to each meeting to discuss and compile the agenda.

## 10. Meetings

- 10.1. SACRE will normally meet in public three times a year. The local authority will publish the dates and times of meetings in advance of each academic year, for the academic year, giving at least one month's notice of any new meeting date. Meeting times will be determined by the local authority, in consultation with SACRE. Priority will be given to timing (and location where relevant) that is conducive to the participation of a wide range of professionals and school-based staff.
- 10.2. Meetings will take place virtually except where it has been agreed by the local authority that an in person meeting is required.
- 10.3. SACRE will meet informally, not in public, for the purposes of continuous professional development. These will be facilitated by the local authority and will be in person.
- 10.4. Only full and co-opted members of SACRE may speak in meetings. Members of the public must submit questions to the clerk to receive a response as part of the scheduled agenda (Public Question Time). Questions will be considered if submitted by the Friday preceding the meeting to allow time for responses to be prepared.

## 11. Agendas and Papers

- 11.1. The agenda for SACRE meetings must give priority to items raised by the local authority. Members may submit requests for agenda items to the Clerk for consideration at the agenda setting meeting.
- 11.2. The agenda will be determined in consultation with the SACRE Chair, Vice Chairs, Clerk and relevant LA officers and advisors. It will be published to SACRE members as well as on the public website one week before a



meeting. Any papers for review and consideration will be circulated to members one week before a meeting.

- 11.3. A draft record of the meeting will be agreed with the Chair within one month following a meeting. Draft records of meetings will be circulated to members following this agreement and again with agendas and papers one week prior to the subsequent meeting.

## 12. Support to SACRE

- 12.1 The local authority will allocate a portion of the Central Schools Service block to fund SACRE and associated matters, specifically but not exclusively:

- One or more advisors on Religious Education (this is not expected to be a full-time role but a number of days each year should be funded for this work)
- Funding for the provision of resources to schools (eg Resources Boxes through the School Library Service)
- Subscriptions or expenses association with participation in Religious Education-related organisations or events

- 12.2 The local authority will provide support in kind for the promotion and development of Religious Education and the operation of SACRE:

- A nominated service and/or strategic manager with responsibility for curriculum matters including Religious Education
- A Clerk to SACRE with responsibility for administration and communication with members

## 13. Code of Conduct

- 13.1 Somerset SACRE encourages all its members 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
- 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 membership body which they represent so that debate is fully informed
- actively challenge and resist stereotyping

13.2 The purpose of SACRE is to facilitate inter-faith dialogue and improve the quality of provision in RE and collective worship for all pupils in Somerset. To this end, members must actively promote the following principles:

- The purpose of Religious Education is to understand religion, not to be religious. Therefore members of SACRE must take a dispassionate view of religion as a field of study.
- Any and all worldviews must be accorded the same respect, while recognising the special status of Christianity in the nation's culture.
- Principles of equality and human rights are paramount, and therefore in their role, members of SACRE must be prepared to withhold any views inconsistent with equality and human rights and must accept the presence of views they find challenging where not to do so would compromise the rights of others.

13.3 Members of SACRE must feel they form part of an environment where challenge is welcomed but without any threat, either implied or real. Should any member of SACRE feel that dialogue has crossed the line from challenge into threat, they may raise an informal concern with the local authority through the Clerk and this will be addressed with the relevant member informally by an appropriate officer. If the individual raising the concern is still dissatisfied with the outcome, they may make a formal complaint to the Executive Member and a formal investigation will be undertaken by an officer without connection to SACRE. The aim in all circumstances will be to seek a more positive engagement and culture. However, should this prove unachievable the local authority may remove a member from the council or alternatively will refer the matter to the nominating organisation.