



**Notice of a public meeting of
SACRE (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education)**

To: SACRE members

Group A

Such Christian denominations and other religious denominations as, in the opinion of the Authority, will approximately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area.

Karen Vincent (Faith/Catholic)

Penny Coppin-Siddall (Faith/ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints)

Imam Amar (Faith/Muslim)

Ben Rich (Vice Chair) (Faith/Jewish)

Group B

A groups of persons representing The Church of England.

Sue Bland (CoE)

Joseph Everdell (CoE)

Group C

A group of persons to represent such associations representing teachers as, in the opinion of the authority, ought to be represented, having regard to the circumstances of the area.

Taco Michiels (Joseph Rowntree School)

Andy Tod (Ralph Butterfield Primary School)

Diane Norton (York St John University)

Group D

A group of persons representing the City of York Council. In this case of Elected Members appointment to this group should ensure political balance and state which political group they represent. As an alternative, the Council may appoint representatives such as a governors association.

Cllr Robert Webb (Chair) (City of York Council)

Cllr Emilie Knight (City of York Council)

Cllr Martin Rowley BEM (City of York Council)

Cllr Sarah Wilson (City of York Council)

LA Officer

Maxine Squire (Assistant Director Education and Skills,
City of York)

Date: Tuesday, 15 October 2024

Time: 6.00 pm

Venue: West Offices - Station Rise, York YO1 6GA

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest (Pages 1 - 2)

At this point in the meeting, Members are asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary interest or other registerable interest they might have in respect of business on this agenda, if they have not already done so in advance on the Register of Interests. The disclosure must include the nature of the interest.

An interest must also be disclosed in the meeting when it becomes apparent to the member during the meeting.

[Please see attached sheet for further guidance for Members]

2. Minutes and matters arising from the minutes (Pages 3 - 10)

To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2024.

3. Analysis of SACRE Annual Reports (Pages 11 - 40)

To analyse SACRE Annual Reports.

4. Update on SACRE development plan

Update on the strands of the development plan, linked to the Ofsted subject report.

- 5. School Survey 2024**
A school survey for Religious Education in York.
- 6. Collective Worship Guidance** (Pages 41 - 54)
To consider Collective Worship Guidance.
- 7. Correspondence on complaints/determinations**
A verbal update will be given on complaints received and the determinations in respect of those complaints.
- 8. Any Other Business**
- 9. Future meeting dates**
27 January 2025 at 6pm at Wet Offices
11 March 2025 at 6pm at West Offices
15 July 2025 at 6pm at West Offices

Democracy Officer

Angela Bielby

Contact Details:

Telephone – (01904) 552599

Email – a.bielby@york.gov.uk

For more information about any of the following please contact the Democracy Officer responsible for servicing this meeting:

- Registering to speak
- Business of the meeting
- Any special arrangements
- Copies of reports

Contact details are set out above.

Alternative formats

To request reasonable adjustments or to provide this document in an alternative language or format such as large print, braille, audio, Easy Read or BSL, you can:



Email us at: cycaccessteam@york.gov.uk



Call us: **01904 551550** and customer services will pass your request onto the Access Team.



Use our BSL Video Relay Service:
www.york.gov.uk/BSLInterpretingService



Select 'Switchboard' from the menu.



We can also translate into the following languages:

我們也用您們的語言提供這個信息 (Cantonese)

এই তথ্য আপনার নিজের ভাষায় দেয়া যেতে পারে। (Bengali)

Ta informacja może być dostarczona w twoim własnym języku. (Polish)

Bu bilgiyi kendi dilinizde almanız mümkündür. (Turkish)

یہ معلومات آپ کی اپنی زبان (بولی) میں بھی میا کی جاسکتی ہیں۔ (Urdu)

Declarations of Interest – guidance for Members

- (1) Members must consider their interests, and act according to the following:

| Type of Interest | You must |
|---|--|
| Disclosable Pecuniary Interests | Disclose the interest, not participate in the discussion or vote, and leave the meeting <u>unless</u> you have a dispensation. |
| Other Registrable Interests (Directly Related) OR Non-Registrable Interests (Directly Related) | Disclose the interest; speak on the item <u>only if</u> the public are also allowed to speak, but otherwise not participate in the discussion or vote, and leave the meeting <u>unless</u> you have a dispensation. |
| Other Registrable Interests (Affects) OR Non-Registrable Interests (Affects) | Disclose the interest; remain in the meeting, participate and vote <u>unless</u> the matter affects the financial interest or well-being: (a) to a greater extent than it affects the financial interest or well-being of a majority of inhabitants of the affected ward; and (b) a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest. In which case, speak on the item <u>only if</u> the public are also allowed to speak, but otherwise do not participate in the discussion or vote, and leave the meeting <u>unless</u> you have a dispensation. |

- (2) Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to the Member concerned or their spouse/partner.
- (3) Members in arrears of Council Tax by more than two months must not vote in decisions on, or which might affect, budget calculations, and must disclose at the meeting that this restriction applies to them. A failure to comply with these requirements is a criminal offence under section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

This page is intentionally left blank

City of York Council

Committee Minutes

| | |
|-----------|--|
| Meeting | SACRE (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education) |
| Date | 8 July 2024 |
| Present | Penny Coppin-Siddall (Faith/ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) Ben Rich (Vice Chair) (Faith/Jewish) |
| | <u>Group B</u> Sue Bland (CoE) |
| | <u>Group C</u> Taco Michiels (Joseph Rowntree School) Andy Tod (Ralph Butterfield Primary School) Diane Norton (York St John University) |
| | <u>Group D</u> Cllr Robert Webb (Chair) (City of York Council) Cllr Emilie Knight (City of York Council) Cllr Sarah Wilson (City of York Council) |
| | <u>LA Officer</u> Maxine Squire (Assistant Director Education and Skills, City of York Council) |
| Apologies | Imam Ammar (Group A) Karen Vincent (Group A) Ian Hodgson (Group A) Daryoush Mazloum (Group A) Joseph Everdell (Group B) Cllr Rowley (Group D) |

65. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest (6.02pm)

Apologies for absence were received and accepted for Councillor Rowley BEM, Imam Ammar, Joseph Everdell, Karen Vincent, Ian Hodgson and Daryoush Mazloum. There were no declarations of interest.

66. Minutes and matters arising from the minutes (6.02pm)

Resolved: That the minutes of the meetings held on 22 January 2024 be approved with the amendments as listed in the 19 March 2024 minutes and 19 March 2024 be approved and signed as an accurate record subject to Diane Norton's name being amended from Naughton and Diane Norton, not Sue Bland attending the conference as detailed in minute 61.

Matters Arising:

- Minute 60: Cllr Knight would feedback on drafting SACRE leaflets after seeking additional support from Interfaith.
- It was agreed that Diane Norton would arrange a visit to the maintained schools RE group with Maxine Squire.
- Update on Interfaith week: Penny Coppin-Siddall reported that work on Interfaith week was in progress. In York, Interfaith Week was to begin on 9 November 2024 with the opening activity to be an informal breakfast on from 9.00 – 10.00am on 9 November. This would be followed by an activity at Clifton Ings at 10.30am. Penny Coppin-Siddall undertook to share the Interfaith Week Plan with SACRE Members. It was noted that it was the 35th anniversary of Interfaith Week in York.
- Request for information for schools: The Chair and Maxine Squire had received two requests from external organisations to send information to schools. They suggested that SACRE put together a catalogue of events from different organisations to send to schools. It was suggested that the RE Hub could be accessed to support the information in the catalogue. It was acknowledged that it was not SACRE's role to promote different faiths. Following discussion it was;

Resolved: That Maxine Squire would arrange for a link to the RE Hub on the SACRE webpage and that Members would feedback comments on this to her.

Reason: In order to direct schools to the RE Hub for further information.

67. Monitoring of Standards (6.17pm)

Maxine Squire reported that the Ofsted 'Deep and meaningful? The religious education subject report' (April 2024) found that there was a good quality of RE across a range of schools. It also found that there was a need for good RE subject knowledge, access to support for

training in the subject, time in the curriculum and a curriculum that builds understanding and progression. Maxine Squire noted that there was national syllabus for RE, which made it difficult for Ofsted to develop a national framework. She added that in it's report, Ofsted noted that there was a wide variety in childrens understanding of RE with there sometimes being an overemphasis on the peripheral parts of RE. Ofsted were also concerned that depending on the skills of the teacher and how RE was taught, sometimes pupils understanding of RE was superficial.

It was noted that part of the role of SACRE in York was to understand how RE was delivered and to consider the quality of RE in York schools. Members discussed the findings of the Ofsted Report. Andy Tod gave an update on the local primary RE network and it was noted that a number of teachers had asked for some of the information that was shared when the York RE syllabus was launched. It was also reported that at the NASACRE conference there was some training available and there was a national content standard for RE in England. Members noted the need to look at the York RE syllabus in line with the national standards in RE and the need to offer development to RE teachers. During discussion it was suggested that SACRE could look at different syllabuses used by Academies. The Chair raised the suggestion of young people meeting with SACRE annually. Following discussion it was;

Resolved: That;

1. Maxine Squire would circulate the Ofsted 'Deep and meaningful? The religious education subject report and national standards' to Members
2. Members to feedback to the Chair what could be provided to schools between the syllabus conferences.

Reason: To support SACRE's monitoring of RE standards in York schools

68. Review of SACRE development plan (6.31pm)

Maxine Squire reported that there was a number of task and finish pieces of work underway, including Cllr Knight looking at a York SACRE leaflet. It was:

Resolved: That;

1. There would be a full update on the strands of the development plan, linking to the Ofsted subject report at the next meeting.
2. Members write a sentence or two about themselves for the SACRE website regarding who they were and why they were on SACRE.

Reason: In order to review the development plan.

69. Quality Kite Mark training for organisations or places of worship offering visits into schools (6.34pm)

Diane Norton reported that she had discussed the Quality Kite Mark training with a member of Kirklees SACRE and they had suggested that the organisations be referred to the RE Hubs for training on school visits. The Chair noted that links to RE Hubs would be good practice.

Resolved: That the update be noted.

Reason: To support organisations training on school visits.

70. Feedback on SACRE school visits (6.36pm)

It was reported that there had been two visits to schools. Sue Bland, Cllr Knight and the Chair had visited St Oswald's Primary School and Ben Rich, Cllr Knight and the Chair had visited Fishergate Primary School. It was noted that the Headteacher and Chair of Governors at St Oswald's Primary School had requested feedback on the visit and Chair noted that he would write a summary of the visit to feedback to the school.

Members' feedback on the visits was that:

- The visits were uplifting and they came away pleased that the children were learning well and kind to all religious views.
- They were looking forward to visiting secondary schools.
- They enjoyed the visits and were impressed with the engagement of children.
- The formalised curriculum at St Oswald's was good and at both schools pupils were incredibly engaged.
- In both settings the whole class was engaged with children being given the opportunity to ask questions.
- There was a Christian focus at St Oswald's as it was a CoE school and Fishergate was a diverse school where the

emphasis of ethos came across strongly and non religious world views came up at the Fishergate visit.

Members discussed visits to secondary schools. Maxine Squire undertook to contact Fulford School regarding a SACRE visit. It was reported that there would be a discussion regarding SACRE visits to schools at the next primary RE network meeting. ;

Resolved: That;

1. SACRE visit two secondary schools during the 2024-25 academic year and two primary schools during the 2025-26 academic
2. SACRE Members that visited St Oswald's and Fishergate Primary Schools would write a report to feedback to those schools.

Reason: In order for SACRE to see how RE is delivered in their visits to schools.

71. Feedback from the NASACRE Conference (6.52pm)

Taco Michiels and Diane Norton gave feedback on the sessions and workshops they attended at the 2024 NASACRE Conference. They noted that the message from the conference was collaborative working and how SACREs could facilitate it. It was noted that NASACRE was changing to a charity as a result membership fees may need to increase. It was noted that during the conference, reference was made to 'Activist SACREs in 2024 - 35+ things a good SACRE can do!' During discussion an update was given on Higher Education providers delivering RE teacher training.

Members discussed take up and delivery of RE at GCSE and A Level in York. It was explained that at secondary school this depended on where RE was placed in option blocks. It was noted that this would be examined as part of the review of RE monitoring in the Autumn term. Regarding the RE GCSE offer in York it was explained that most secondary schools offered the half or full GCSE with faith schools tending to offer to the full GCSE. A Member explained how RE was delivered at their secondary school. Members then;

Resolved: To examine the Activist SACREs in 2024 - 35+ things a good SACRE can do! At the next meeting.

Reason: In order to see how SACRE can support schools.

72. RE Hubs newsletter (7.11pm)

Members received the RE Hubs newsletter. Members gave feedback on the font which Maxine Squire undertook to feedback to Olivia Seymour. It was suggested that a reference to the Hubs could be included in the SACRE leaflet and Cllr Knight agreed to look at this as part of the leaflet.

Resolved: That the RE Hubs newsletter be received.

Reason: In order to be kept up to date on the RE Hubs.

73. NASACRE Update (7.13pm)

Members received NASACRE Update 39.

Resolved: That NASACRE Update 39 be received.

Reason: In order to be kept up to date on the work of NASACRE.

74. Correspondence on complaints/determinations (7.13pm)

It was reported that there had been no complaints to SACRE.

Resolved: That Members be updated on complaints.

Reason: In order to be kept updated on complaints to SACRE and determinations of complaints.

75. Any Other Business (7.14pm)

SACRE Membership

Following an approach to a Member from Mark Jones, York Buddhist Centre, to join SACRE it was:

Resolved: That Mark Jones, York Buddhist Centre, be invited to join SACRE as a Buddhist representative on Group A.

Reason: In order to widen representation on SACRE.

Youth SACRE

Cllr Wilson reported that she had begun looking at Youth SACREs and at other SACREs there was a Youth Voice to SACREs. It was suggested that Interfaith Week could be a starting point for this.

Following consideration, it was:

Resolved: That Cllr Wilson continue to develop working on a potential Youth SACRE of all age groups and no more than ten Members with Penny Coppin-Siddall with the potential Youth SACRE to be started during Interfaith Week.

Reason: In order to develop the work of SACRE.

Teaching of RE in other subjects

A Member reported a matter of a faith being taught incorrectly in a history lesson. Maxine Squire advised that that faith was part of the GCSE history curriculum. Members discussed the teaching of RE in different subjects. It was confirmed that complaints would be dealt with through schools' own complaint procedures.

Guidance document on Collective Worship

Maxine Squire reported that this was last considered by SACRE in 2017. It was:

Resolved: That the Guidance document on Collective Worship be included on the next meeting agenda.

Reason: In order to consider the Guidance document on Collective Worship.

76. Future meeting dates (7.31pm)

15 October 2024 at 6pm at West Offices

27 January 2025 at 6pm at Wet Offices

11 March 2025 at 6pm at West Offices

15 July 2025 at 6pm at West Offices

Cllr Webb, Chair

[The meeting started at 6.00pm and finished at 7.32pm].

This page is intentionally left blank



Department
for Education



**ANALYSIS OF SACRE ANNUAL REPORTS 2022-2023
FOR THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STANDING
COUNCILS ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (NASACRE)**

Report written by: Dr David Hampshire FRSA

Date: 10 June 2024

ANALYSIS OF SACRE ANNUAL REPORTS 2022-2023 FOR THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STANDING COUNCILS ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (NASACRE)

PROLOGUE

During the period of analysis and writing of this report the death of Lesley Prior was announced. Lesley was a well-respected former Chair of NASACRE, as well as EFTRE. All of the reports in this analysis were completed before her death but she was referenced in ten reports. This is one tribute from one report:

‘... this year we have had to acknowledge the retirement through ill health of our wonderful RE Adviser, Lesley Prior. It is hard to put into words all that Lesley has done for us and for the many other SACREs which have had the benefit of her support for so many years. We miss her help and support for us, and we know that she would have greatly enjoyed the new areas of work that we have moved into with the Faith Direct days and the joint RE award for primary schools which will shortly be launched. Thank you, Lesley.’

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| PROLOGUE | 1 |
| 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | 2 |
| 2. RECOMMENDATIONS | 3 |
| 2.1 NASACRE AND SUPPORT FOR SACRES | 3 |
| 2.2 NASACRE DISCUSSION WITH THE DFE | 4 |
| 2.3 ADVICE TO LAS CO-PRODUCED BY NASACRE AND DFE | 4 |
| 3.1 INTRODUCTION | 4 |
| 3.2 METHODOLOGY | 5 |
| 3.3 ETHICS | 6 |
| 3.4 DECLARATION OF INTEREST | 6 |
| 3.5 CAVEAT | 6 |
| 4.1 SACRE MEETINGS | 6 |
| 5.1 SUPPORT FOR SACRES | 7 |
| 5.1.1 PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT..... | 7 |
| 5.2 FUNDING FOR SACRES | 7 |
| 5.3 ATTENDANCE AND QUORACY | 8 |
| 6. ADVICE TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITY | 9 |
| 6.1 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION | 9 |
| 6.2 AGREED SYLLABUS REVIEW | 11 |
| 6.3 COLLECTIVE WORSHIP..... | 12 |
| 7 ADVICE TO SCHOOLS | 12 |
| 7.1 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION..... | 12 |
| 7.2 COLLECTIVE WORSHIP..... | 13 |
| 8 MONITORING RE, PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS AND COLLECTIVE WORSHIP | 13 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 8.1 GENERAL COMMENTS | 13 |
| SACRE MONITORING RE AND COLLECTIVE WORSHIP | 14 |
| MONITORING PRIMARY, KS3 RE AND NON-EXAMINED RE | 14 |
| <i>Monitoring GCSE and GCE A Level Religious Studies</i> | 16 |
| <i>Complaints and Withdrawals from RE</i> | 16 |
| <i>Providing, Supporting and Monitoring Training for RE (including Agreed Syllabus implementation)</i> | 16 |
| COLLECTIVE WORSHIP | 17 |
| 9. DETERMINATIONS AND WITHDRAWALS | 18 |
| DETERMINATIONS | 18 |
| WITHDRAWALS | 18 |
| 10 OTHER FEATURES OF SACRE ANNUAL REPORTS | 18 |
| DEVELOPMENT PLANS | 18 |
| COMMUNICATION WITH SCHOOLS | 18 |
| REGULAR IN PERSON MEETINGS WITH TEACHERS SUPPORTED BY SACRE | 19 |
| RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION (RSE) AND HEALTH EDUCATION | 19 |
| DEMOGRAPHIC DATA | 20 |
| 11 CONCLUSION..... | 21 |
| APPENDIX 1: CATEGORIES USED TO ANALYSE SACRE ANNUAL REPORTS | 22 |
| APPENDIX 2: SACRES REPORTING BY CATEGORY (MAXIMUM N69/100%) | 23 |
| APPENDIX 3: RESEARCH ETHICS | 24 |
| APPENDIX 4: RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ANALYSIS OF SACRE ANNUAL REPORTS 2020 – 2021 AND 2021 - 2022..... | 25 |
| 2.1 NASACRE | 26 |
| 2.2 NASACRE DISCUSSION WITH THE DfE | 26 |
| 2.3 ADVICE TO LAS CO-PRODUCED BY NASACRE AND DfE..... | 26 |

1 Executive Summary

1.1 In 2024 Sixty-nine SACREs submitted their annual report for 2021 – 2022, five less than in 2023. This figure is similar to the number submitted in 2021 (n68). It is of note though that some SACREs have only submitted a report once (n27), more twice or three times (n30/n31) but only 20 in all four years that reports have been collected.

There is no clear reason why this is the case but there is a need to contact those SACREs that have not submitted a report to the DfE or NASACRE to find out which SACREs have produced reports, and which have failed to do so, where those SACREs are responsible for submitting report to the Secretary of State¹.

1.2 Whilst the restrictions relating to the Covid-19 pandemic ended in February 2022 the impact of the pandemic continued to affect the work of some SACREs. This is usually in relation to work delayed.

1.3 A notable feature of the reports for 2022 – 2023 covered in this report was the issue of vacancies. At times this is to do with SACRE constitutions, which specify the number of SACRE members in each Group (or Committee in Agreed Syllabus Conferences) where places have not been filled. It might be reasonable for Local

¹ This would exclude the States of Jersey and the Isle of Man.

Authorities, as appointing bodies, to review these constitutions not only to ensure that SACREs are fit for purpose but also, they can reasonably expect to appoint the numbers required.

1.4 The issue of vacancies has the knock-on effect of the issue of quoracy. Nearly 20% of all SACREs that submitted a report noted that one or more meetings were inquorate during the period under report. Given that just under 60% of reports give any detail about attendance this is likely to be a larger issue than highlighted in this report.

1.5 Collective worship continues to be the most problematic area for SACREs relative to their statutory responsibilities, with at least ten SACREs making no reference to collective worship monitoring or advice, with only eight SACREs giving any advice of this matter to their local authorities.

1.6 One feature of around a third of reports was reference to Census 2021 data release and the changing patterns of religious and belief identity. These were predominantly larger urban areas and London boroughs. In a sense there is a justification for the place of RE and collective worship as a positive response to these changes. It is not easy, though, to understand why some reports also include statistics about ethnicity and language. What is not clear is the 'so-what?' of the inclusion of these statistics in reports.

1.7 As noted in 2023 SACREs continue to support schools and communities, in some areas, beyond their statutory remit and this shows how valued they are as providing something unique within a local authority. A number of SACREs reported how they made links with local inter faith and faith and belief forums. None of these reports were written after the closure of the Inter Faith Network for the UK, which had a key role in promoting and supporting Inter Faith Week. Nevertheless, 31 reports directly mentioned Inter Faith Week activity and involvement during the year under report and it will be interesting to see the impact of the closure of the Network on this feature of national life.

1.8 NASACRE was mentioned in 68 of the 69 reports submitted and these mentions were overwhelmingly positive. One SACRE felt the self-evaluation tool far too detailed but the majority appear to have found it extremely useful. The national conference was also referenced as a positive, along with online seminars offered by the NASACRE Executive.

2. Recommendations²

2.1 NASACRE and support for SACREs

- i. To look at ways to support SACREs where vacancies are an issue, how these might be managed and the advice that SACREs should give to their LAs as the appointing bodies.

² Appendix 4 contains the Recommendations from the last two reports, some of these are still pertinent and are not duplicated here.

- ii. That the NASACRE executive develop a resource with examples of the ways that SACRE advice has had impact through a series of case studies. These could be used to encourage all SACREs to look at ways of evidencing their impact in their LAs.

2.2 NASACRE discussion with the DfE

- i. The DfE, with NASACRE, should write to local authorities with regard to SACRE vacancies and issues relating to inquorate meetings, and how these are managed.
- ii. The issue of SACRE budgets being used to buy licences for an agreed syllabus should be discussed, given that it is clear from legislation that agreed syllabuses are publicly available documents adopted by the local authority.

2.3 Advice to LAs co-produced by NASACRE and DfE

- i. The issue of inquorate meetings has been identified in this report. As members of SACRE are appointed by the LA it is clearly an LA responsibility to ensure that SACREs can not only meet but also perform their functions. Therefore, NASACRE and the DfE should work together to bring this to attention of LAs and agree advice that should be given to all LAs to ensure that in quoracy.
- ii. To ensure that those SACREs and LAs which wish to continue to support Inter Faith Week have the link to the Faith and Belief Forum's portal³ to be able to register their events.

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The NASACRE Executive, with the agreement for the Department for Education (DfE) commissioned, an analysis of SACRE Annual Reports published in 2020 – 2021 and repeated the exercise in for 2021 - 2022⁴. This is the third report commissioned on that basis.

3.1.2 Due to changes in local government the number of SACREs in England has increased from 153 to 154. This has a marginal effect on percentages where comparisons are made. Sixty-nine SACREs submitted reports by 5th June 2024. It was noted in the previous report that in the first year that this research was commissioned 57 SACREs had submitted reports for analysis. The low number of submissions in the first year was attributed to the Covid-19 Pandemic and the increase in the previous year with signs of institutional recovery from the pandemic. There is, then, a question as to why there was not an increase of submissions in this reporting cycle, given that 72 SACREs submitted reports in the previous year (2021 – 2022). Whilst the pandemic officially ended in England on 21 February 2022 with the publication of the COVID-19 Response: Living with COVID-19 guidance⁵, 44 SACREs (66.7%) still referenced the impact of the pandemic as having an effect on their work.

³ <https://www.interfaithweek.org/>

⁴ See Appendix 4 for the recommendations in the 2020 – 2021 and 2021 – 2022 reports.

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-living-with-covid-19>

3.1.3 There is a recommended format for SACRE annual reports, which is available from [NASACRE](https://www.nasacre.org.uk) but not all SACREs use this format some using earlier formats and others being peculiar to a SACRE. Some reports ran to 31 pages, with appendices, whilst others were 9 pages. The analysis of the report published in 2022 did not use the NASACRE recommended format rather it identified 21 categories as the basis for data collection and analysis, see Methodology below, this has now increased to 25 categories. These categories were initially discussed with NASACRE's Executive Assistant during the process of data collection. See Appendices 1 and 2 for the categories used for analysis in this report. This format has been replicated in 2024 so that it is possible compare the three years with the addition of three further categories, the scrutiny of school websites, the theme of diversity and the issue of vacancies.

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Reports were received from 3 March to 5 June 2024. As noted above the methodological approach was identical to that used in 2022 and 2023 (see also Appendix 1 and Appendix 2) but three categories were added, detailed notes on attendance and regular in person meetings with teachers.

- Attendance
- Detailed notes on attendance
- Professional support
- Religious Education:
 - Advice to the local authority
 - Advice to schools⁶
- Collective worship:
 - Advice to the local authority
 - Advice to schools⁷
 - Determinations
- Monitoring:
 - Complaints (RE and CW)
 - Religious Education
 - Collective Worship
- Agreed Syllabus Review
 - Training for implementation of the syllabus
- SACRE funding
- Examination performance
 - GCSE
 - A Level
- Covid-19
- Communication with schools and others
- Regular in person meetings with teachers
- Collaboration with other bodies
- Development Planning

⁶ Schools here refers to maintained non-denominational and controlled schools and academies and free schools without a religious foundation.

⁷ Schools here refers to non-denominational schools and academies and free schools without a religious foundation.

- Relationships and Sex Education/Health Education (RSE/RSHE)
- Diversity
- SACRE Vacancies

3.2.2 The latter were added relative to the frequency they featured in reports received. These indicated areas that SACREs were working in in their authorities. Where statistical analysis appeared above or below what might be expected from the range in other categories they were revisited to check and amended as necessary.

3.2.3 There was an obvious difficulty in collating the data as SACREs do not report in the same way under the same category. As noted in the previous reports some SACREs under advice to schools reported training for schools, whereas some SACREs reported no advice to schools but put training in a different part of the report. Therefore, it was necessary to interpret what SACREs had done under the general framework provided by NASACRE and the legal requirement to report to the Secretary of State for Education. How this was done and where will become apparent in the report as necessary.

3.3 Ethics

See Appendix 3 for details.

3.4 Declaration of interest

The author has written SACRE annual reports for a number of authorities in the past. No work for a local authority or SACRE was undertaken during the period from agreeing to do this research to its completion. The author declares no interest relevant to this research. and has refrained from making judgements on the reports submitted.

3.5 Caveat

It does not follow that SACRE Reports report fully on their support or activities, given that some are relatively short. This report is based only on what SACREs stated. Where quotes from reports have been used these have been anonymised.

SACRE meetings are subject to The Religious Education (Meetings of Local Conferences and Councils) Regulations 1994⁸. SACREs must produce an annual report⁹ and send to the Secretary of State by December 31st in any calendar year¹⁰

4.1 SACRE meetings

4.1.1 Just over 66% of SACREs mentioned the pandemic or Covid-19 in their reports, and whilst restrictions were lifted in February 2022 (see 3.1.2 above) the impact of the pandemic was sustained. The pandemic has, in some cases changed the ways that SACREs have operated. One SACRE report notes:

⁸ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1994/1304/contents/made>

⁹ Section 391(6) and (7), Education Act 1996.

¹⁰ Section 391(10), Education Act 1996 as amended by Education Act 2011 c21 Schedule 8 Abolition of the QCDA: consequential amendments.

We have now left the coronavirus pandemic behind and are embracing new opportunities and challenges whilst retaining some aspects of operational change that this brought about, for example a hybrid of remote and in person meetings.

4.1.2 There is also the issue of work that SACREs would have initiated, such as requesting the Local Authority to convene and Agreed Syllabus Conference or the launch of a syllabus, that have had to be rethought in terms of time scales.

The locally agreed syllabus (LAS) is nearing the end of its 5-year cycle, and the local authority had previously agreed that although the process would begin within the required timeframe, the impact of the pandemic meant that it was sensible to aim for a launch somewhere between September 2024 and April 2025.

4.1.3 As required by statute SACRE and ASC meetings must meet in public, with the exception on certain business specified in *Statutory Instrument 1994: 1309*. It was not clear from reports whether SACREs and ACSs were meeting in public or how this was managed in terms of hybrid meetings.

5.1 Support for SACREs

5.1.1 Professional support

Professional support for SACREs is mixed. Some SACREs retain the services of an LA RE Advisor whilst others buy in consultancy, there is clearly a mixed economy. Some SACREs have support in terms of a clerk but not an advisor:

The LA supports the SACRE by providing professional and administrative support from an experienced clerk. This arrangement has been in place for several years. There is currently no RE adviser attached to the SACRE, but this expertise is being sought.

Others clearly have support from a school improvement specialist but not necessarily one that has any experience of religious education or collective worship.

Nevertheless 94.2% of SACREs reported that they had professional support from an advisor, consultant, consultancy and/or a clerk. As in the previous year under report some professional support came from the Church of England's Diocesan Team in the absence of a local authority advisor or consultant.

5.2 Funding for SACREs

5.2.1 As in the previous report the majority of SACREs (87.0%) reported funding available but under half of those (40.6%) specifying a figure or, in some cases, a detailed budget. Interestingly, one SACREs simply noted:

We were extremely grateful to receive funding from an Educational Foundation, which allowed SACRE to purchase the new Agreed Syllabus.

Indicating that the local authority was not meeting its statutory duty in relation to a locally agreed syllabus, as the implication is that if monies were not forthcoming then there would be no agreed syllabus.

Four reports also mention licence fees for the use of its own syllabus, one stating:

The new agreed syllabus and supporting materials have been provided for schools free of charge. This has been funded using SACRE funding supplemented by curriculum support funding for RE, which has been payment for 5-year licence for the Agreed Syllabus for 90 schools at a total cost of £6,372 (£1,274.40 annually), representing 19% of the total annual budget.

Some SACREs published their costed development plan along with the syllabus. What was not clear was the relationship between the costed plan and SACREs budget.

5.2.2 NASACRE's FOI request on SACRE funding continued to be referenced in some reports as a benchmark against which to judge their own funding by the local authority.

5.3 Attendance and quoracy

5.3.1 88.4% of annual reports reported on attendance at SACRE meetings for the period of the reports, in line with the previous year. As in previous year there were a number of different ways of doing this:

- Giving a full list of SACRE members by Group and identifying which meeting they attended.
- Attendance reported as percentage for each group for each meeting.
- By member, but not by group.
- In a special appendix to the report but not submitted as part of the report.
- By providing hyperlinks to the minutes of meetings so that they could be viewed by those interested.
- Noting that all meetings were quorate but giving no detail.
- Noting apologies but not attendance.

5.3.2 Over half of the reports (59.1%) added detail to their reporting on attendance, but as can be seen from 5.3.1 this was varied. Twelve SACREs noted inquorate meetings, two of these more than once. The fragility of SACREs was exemplified by one report which wrote:

The first two meetings were quorate, but the third meeting of the year became inquorate part way through the meeting, when the one member of Group B in attendance had to leave for another meeting.

Another report noted:

Meetings have been consistently quorate, apart from very rare and unavoidable occasions.

But giving no context within the body of the report.

Technology itself can cause problems, where meetings are online or hybrid:

The first meeting of the year was not quorate due to technical issues, but all other meetings have been quorate.

This sometimes having a direct impact on a SACRE's statutory role:

Members were unable to agree renewal of determination as a meeting was not quorate. The consensus from all the representatives present agreed to renew the determination.

Significantly just over 30% of SACREs that gave details about attendance reported inquorate or not quorate meetings in the year under report. Two of those having the majority of meetings inquorate. This does not take into account one SACRE which is effectively self-appointed but now receiving support from its LA.

5.3.3 72.7% of SACREs, though, included some form of development plan, some of which were costed. What was less common was any reporting on the development plan or equivalent. This is an increase over previous years.

5.3.4 *The Religious Education (Meetings of Local Conferences and Councils) Regulations 1994: UK Statutory Instruments 1994 No. 1304 (see footnote 7).*

No SACRE reported on issues relating to SI 1994: 1304.

6. Advice to the local authority

6.1 Religious Education

6.1.1 NASACRE's guidance on SACRE Annual Reports¹¹ states:

The main purpose of the annual report is to hold the LA to account, by informing the Secretary of State and key partners what advice SACRE gave the LA during the year and how that was responded to; this includes advice on RE and Collective Worship in those schools for which the LA has responsibility.

This is consonant with government advice based on the requirements of the Education Reform Act 1988¹² and subsequent consolidated legislation.

6.1.2 During the year under report 40.6% of SACREs reported that they had advised the LA on matters relating to RE. As in the previous year it did not follow that advice was given even if it was referenced in the report, this was generally a result of the use of headings from the NASACRE Annual Report Framework and not using the headings as check for the text that followed.

6.1.3 There was, though, evidence that the 2023 NASACRE Conference and the previous iteration of this report was having an impact of some SACREs' practices. Five reports referenced the conference, one stating:

¹¹

https://nasacre.org.uk/file/nasacre/SACRE_Annual_Reports_necessary_desir.pdf#:~:text=The%20main%20purpose%20of%20the%20annual%20report%20is,responsibility.%20Suggested%20structure%20to%20the%20annual%20report%3A%201.

¹²

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/281929/Collective_worship_in_schools.pdf see paragraphs 98 - 100.

In his latest review of annual reports for the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE), Dr David Hampshire stated that “SACREs rarely evaluated the impact of their advice or actions”. While we have always taken care to gather evidence, we have not always documented it in our annual reports. That changes this year.

6.1.4 As in previous years some SACRE reports conflated the work of the RE advisor with that SACRE, so that professional advice given to the local authority by the advisor was reported as advice from SACRE. A distinction between SACRE’s advice and the professional advice given by the advisor, which may not have been discussed by SACRE at all, should be made. As an example, one report stated:

Advice was given on behalf of SACRE by RE Consultants to the Local Authority.

But it was not clear that SACRE had discussed the advice given.

6.1.5 A further issue might be identifying what constitutes the LA in relation to its work. One SACRE noted:

The RE Facilitator provided advice to the LA regarding national updates around the Religion and Worldviews approach, as well as ongoing feedback from the REC Worldviews project.

But in what context it is not clear. Advice was not confined to the curriculum, the same SACRE reports:

SACRE also provided guidance to the LA regarding issues around religious dress and prayer spaces within schools.

6.1.6 A number of SACREs appeared frustrated that they were not able to give advice to the LA due to a lack of information upon which to base advice, for instance:

SACRE has not been in a position to give advice to the LA on RE standards, though conversations with the LA officer at RE network meetings have shown that the LA is aware of some of the schools where standards are not as high as they might be. These conversations will be ongoing.

It was clear in terms of access to examination data some SACREs struggled to access data either in relation to when the annual report was written or simply lack of access to the data. This was highlighted as an issue in accessing data from Academies in the LA.

6.1.7 in the 2023 report it was noted that one SACRE reported that there were 23 vacancies and stated:

SACRE needs to ensure there continues to be consistent attendance and needs more teacher representatives.

As a result of this the issue ‘vacancy’ was examined in each report submitted. Over half of SACREs (53%) noted vacancies in their report. At times this appears to be in

relation to difficulties in engaging with specific faith communities, one SACRE reported:

The free church vacancies have remained hard to fill, and Group B has seen one member on extended leave.

One SACRE, which does not give any detail about its membership, simply states:

SACRE still has a number of vacancies especially representing the different faiths and beliefs in the borough and from schools.

Making it difficult to estimate the size of the problem.

6.1.8 As in previous years it was not evident in the majority of reports, other than in response to advice to convene an Agreed Syllabus Conference, that local authorities had responded to the advice of SACREs. Although one SACRE clearly set out how the LA had responded to its advice. As noted in 2022 and 2023, in the majority of cases it appears that the conversation is one way. Similarly, this may be more of an issue of reporting than the LA not engaging. It may help if LAs stated how they had responded to their SACRE's advice in full council so that there is a record of them meeting their statutory duty.

6.2 Agreed Syllabus Review

6.2.1 53.6% of SACREs reported that a review of the agreed syllabus was planned, in process or completed in the year under report. As in previous years SACREs reported on their advice to the LA that the syllabus needed reviewing in line with statute¹³ and that there were funding implications to that. Issues relating to shared syllabuses between authorities caused by the pandemic appear to have been largely overcome.

One SACRE noted:

Review of the locally agreed syllabus is well underway following a decision to postpone due to the impact of the pandemic in schools.

6.2.2 SACRE members have a key role, drawing on their own knowledge and understanding, to support the agreed syllabus review process:

The current Secretary of local Inter Faith Group sits on SACRE and gives regular updates on local activities which are circulated. This is a useful resource for RE teachers, and has also been invaluable as a resource for review of materials in the revised Agreed Syllabus.

Feedback from a range of activities with SACRE representatives on the current RE syllabus has shown that the current syllabus is too open and that some of the questions do not translate well to different traditions. Teachers have asked for there to be more detail and direction in the next syllabus.

¹³ In line with The Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education (Prescribed Period) Order 1999: UK Statutory Instruments 1999 No. 1728.

6.3 Collective Worship

6.3.1 11.6% of SACREs reported that they had given advice to the local authority with regard to collective worship, which is an increase on the previous year (8.3%). There is an issue highlighted in many reports that there is a lack of access to data on collective worship. One SACRE states:

It is the responsibility of SACRE to monitor schools' statutory responsibility to hold Collective Worship. Whilst there are many schools across the county that offer impactful Collective Worship, there is also some variation in the system.

What is of note here, though, is that it is not a responsibility of a SACRE to monitor collective worship, it is the responsibility of the LA. It is the responsibility of SACRE to advise. SACREs perform a number of functions, one of which is to hold the LA to account. Shifting a responsibility to a SACRE does not remove the LA's responsibility, and this is an area to be addressed by government.

It has been noted that some SACRE members are well-placed to support collective worship in schools and opportunities for discussion about this will be included on the agenda in 2023-24.

6.3.2 Whilst no formal investigation has been undertaken to establish a correlation in this report, it would appear that schools are more often confronted with the issue of worship and how to cater pupils' needs in areas where faith is an active feature of the lives of some pupils. One SACRE reported on issues affecting schools:

Matters concerned with Acts of Worship and of pupils' requesting space for prayer/private reflection.

This issue is then seen as one relating to diversity and inclusion:

The Integration Lead, Community, Equality & Cohesion Resilient Communities outlined the report. Members enquired as to the level of resource available to facilitate inclusion within schools and how often schools visited places of worship. The Integration Lead, Community, Equality & Cohesion Resilient Communities advised that the service targeted its support according to need as resource was limited. In terms of visits, this varied across school provision and often relied on volunteers to facilitate them.

Neither of these quotes relates specifically to collective worship as required by legislations or academies funding agreements but are clearly in the purview of some SACREs as they explore their role in the local authority.

7 Advice to schools

7.1 Religious Education

7.1.1 69.6% of SACREs reported on advice that they have made available to schools, some of which was produced by SACREs before the period under report. The most common type of advice related to the implementation of the Agreed Syllabus:

SACRE's advice to schools during this academic year has prioritised the changes to the Agreed Syllabus and signposting to the implementation training.

As in previous years advice has been developed by SACREs on how schools respond to the fast during Ramadan, often drawing on local expertise:

In April 2022 SACRE collaborated with the Council of Mosques to create a guidance document for Primary and Secondary schools on the observance of Ramadan and how it can best be accommodated in schools. This was the first time SACRE had sent out guidance to schools jointly with the Council of Mosques.

7.1.2 As noted in last year's report SACREs also continued to report on making available national initiatives such as the RE Quality Mark (REQM) (25) and the WIRE award (Widening Diversity in Religious Education) (6).

7.2 Collective Worship

7.2.1 59.4% of SACREs reported that they had provided advice on collective worship to schools. As in the previous report much of this was signposting schools to existing resources such as model policies, protocols around visitors to collective worship, policies on withdrawal and advice on topics and resources for collective worship.

Some SACREs have updated their guidance and are thinking about the next steps:

Updated guidance has been produced and sent to all schools especially to remind them of the statutory nature of collective worship. A CPD session online has been provided and follow up conversations have been held. Our next task with this is to produce an Inclusive Collective Worship Award which schools can apply for similar to the one we provide for RE.

7.2.2 As in 2021 – 2022 SACREs were more likely to give advice to schools on collective worship than they were to give advice to the local authority 63.9% compared to 8.3%, and this followed a similar pattern in 2020 – 2021.

8 Monitoring RE, public examinations and collective worship

8.1 General comments

8.1.1 In all areas monitoring of RE, public examinations and collective worship has increased, but there are still challenges.

8.1.2 As local authorities and schools have recovered from the pandemic more opportunities for monitoring have arisen and SACREs are moving back towards the pre-pandemic era. The reliance on Ofsted reports as the only source of information has greatly decreased. Where SACREs have reported issue these mostly to academies and academy chains. Given that it is the statutory responsibility of an LA to secure the education of each child in the local authority's area this is clearly an issue for the LA more than SACRE specifically. Hence, SACREs should be approaching the LA on this issue and reporting on the response they receive.

8.1.3 One way that SACREs have monitored RE and collective worship is by undertaking school website trawls to look for evidence such as policies and curriculum plans¹⁴. This was true for 37.9% of SACREs that submitted a report this year.

SACRE Monitoring RE and Collective worship

8.2. As noted in the previous report the date of the publication of a report had an effect on a SACREs ability to monitor RE and collective worship in schools. This was only true in relation to the release of public examination data in this reporting cycle. There was evidence that some SACREs had picked up pre-pandemic issues now that the pandemic was effectively over. All of the following examples relate to collective worship. One SACRE noted:

A review of policies and school application materials was completed following robust discussions held in 2019 regarding how SACRE might respond to a request for a determination and we believe we are ready should one arise.

One stated:

Having recently been remodelled SACRE has not as yet monitored collective worship but is seeking appropriate ways to do this. A working party was created in June 2023 to begin the work on this area.

But there is still a reliance in some areas on Ofsted data as the only source of information:

Ofsted have not raised any concerns with regards to the compliance with the law or standards in relation to collective worship in the LA's schools.

Given that Ofsted would not actually comment on this issue this is not surprising. This latter comment does raise some concerns about how SACRE members understand the inspection process and how reports focus their findings.

Monitoring primary, KS3 RE and non-examined RE

8.3.1 Monitoring primary and KS3 RE is well below the monitoring of GCSE. Only 52.2% of SACRE reports mentioned their monitoring of primary, KS3 and non-examined RE (the latter those pupils who do not follow a GCSE course) in comparison to 82.6% that report on GCSE. Fewer report on A Level, and in part that is because some LAs do not have schools with 6th Forms and in part due to options available in 6th Forms.

8.3.2 Some SACREs were engaging in consultations with teacher and pupils or aspiring to:

More opportunities should be found to hear from pupils as well as teachers.

¹⁴ see: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-maintained-schools-must-publish-online#curriculum> and <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-academies-free-schools-and-colleges-should-publish-online#curriculum>

In conjunction with the drafted survey ..., we will request student and teacher voice. Additionally, we will plan for another teaching conference, whereby we can elicit additional feedback.

There is a possible issue with this approach, though. Asking pupils about their experience of RE is not the same as understanding pupils' levels of attainment or the quality of the curriculum and teaching in the school. One SACRE noted its involvement with a national piece of research in this area:

In the summer term of 2022, the County Inspector/Adviser was involved with a national project collecting children's voices 7 – 11 year olds, talking about their RE experience.

Another SACRE reported:

SACRE conducted a student voice survey. 8 primary schools and 1 secondary school took part. This was positive and questions linked to a national survey for comparison. This is something we are looking to develop next year.

But it was not clear what the focus of the survey was. Likewise:

In addition, the SACRE is continuing its exciting collaboration with the Council for Students and aims to develop these links to ensure that the student voice on RE and collective worship in primary and secondary schools is heard across the city.

In all twelve SACRE reports referenced pupil, student or youth voice as a way of engaging with young people.

8.3.3 In 2020 – 2021 nearly 40% of SACREs used Ofsted reports as the only way of monitoring RE schools and this reduced to about 20.8% in 2021 – 2022. In this year it was clear that very few SACREs used Ofsted as the only way of monitoring schools but 58% of SACREs referenced Ofsted reports in their report. As noted in the previous year's report it did not follow that this exercise was useful as reports may not mention RE at all or include schools which come under SACREs remit. Thirteen SACREs reported on data from SIAMS reports:

During the December meeting consideration was given to a report by diocesan advisor which provided an update on SIAMS inspections. Members were advised that only one inspection had taken place, due to an increase in the number of inspectors taking retirement during the pandemic and difficulties in training new inspectors during school closures. It was expected that the number of inspections would increase as trainee inspectors completed the necessary training. During the summer term the diocesan advisor confirmed that a higher number of SIAMs inspections had taken place. Most schools were rated 'Good', and some received 'Excellent' classifications.

8.3.4 Eleven SACREs continued to report workforce survey to see the number of hours of RE being taught per year in each school and as in the previous year some SACREs used this as a basis for advice to the LA, naming schools that appeared to have no or little RE.

School workforce Data Nov 2022 (reported June 2023)

As a result of SACRE's analysis of this data..., they have advised the local authority to investigate the following issues: ...where there is no reported provision in a particular year group.

This was sometimes reported under 'standards in RE' data and, in some reports, there appeared to be a conflation of provision with standards.

8.3.4 As in the previous reports, schools and academy websites (see footnote 13) and online and in-person network meetings were also important sources of information for SACREs. 87.9% of reports mentioned regular meetings with teachers.

Monitoring GCSE and GCE A Level Religious Studies

8.4.1 In this year 82.6% of reports gave an analysis of GCSE results and 50.7% A Level results, this is up substantially previous years¹⁵.

Complaints and Withdrawals from RE

8.5.1 In this reporting year 78.3% of SACREs monitored complaints and 62.3% withdrawal compared to 70.8% and 55.6% in 2021 – 2022 and 56 and 30% in the previous year. This indicates that SACREs are returning to a more normal pattern of monitoring as the pandemic gets further away.

Providing, Supporting and Monitoring Training for RE (including Agreed Syllabus implementation)

8.6.1 In the year under report 88.4% of SACRE annual reports referenced training support for teachers, compared to 93.1% and 71.4% in the previous years. Training was provided by a range of providers and where there were exiting relationships with an organisation, such as providing a consultant or co-designing an agreed syllabus training was likely to be provided by that organisation.

8.6.2 Monitoring the impact of training was less common, with only 17.4% of SACREs in 2022 – 2023 commenting on how well training was received. With some SACREs included comments by teachers to show how they valued the training they had received. This was a marked improvement on the reports submitted in 2022 where only 5.4% of SACREs did this form of monitoring but significantly lower than in 2023 31.9% reported on this.

8.6.3 As noted in the 2022 report the role of SACREs in ensuring the quality of resources and training courses in the delivery of the agreed syllabus has long been expected of SACRE, as can be seen in Education Reform Act 1988 s11 (2) consolidated in the [1996 Education Act](#) and reflected in the comment in [Circular 1/94](#):

It is for a LEA to decide what matters it wishes to refer to its SACRE; but the 1988 Act says that these should include, in particular, methods of teaching, the choice of teaching material and the provision of teacher training.

¹⁵ In 2020 – 2021 35% of SACREs reported on attainment in GCSE and 19% A Level 19% attainment. This had substantially increased in 2021 – 2022 to 65.3% reporting on GCSEs and 29.2% A Level. The level of detail changed from SACRE to SACRE, with some giving global figures and others school by school breakdown.

Noting that the LA should take a lead on this and positively decide what it should refer to SACRE. Given that the LA remains responsible for the quality of education provision for the children who live in the authority this extends to Academies and even other authorities where appropriate¹⁶.

Collective worship

8.7.1 36.2% of SACREs mentioned monitoring of collective worship. One of the issues relating to reports is that monitoring is conflated with advice to the LA, see: 6.3.1. SACREs are employing different strategies.

Proactive monitoring included

During the year, the SACRE has conducted its own surveys to monitor Collective Worship. Noting that: Schools were very positive in the survey about the support they received for RE and Collective Worship.

A review of policies and school application materials was completed following robust discussions held in 2019 regarding how SACRE might respond to a request for a determination and we believe we are ready should one arise.

Planned monitoring included:

Having recently been remodelled SACRE has not as yet monitored collective worship but is seeking appropriate ways to do this. A working party was created in June 2023 to begin the work on this area

Guidance is offered to schools and Ofsted reports are scrutinised in order to keep up to date with current issues and concerns. It has been difficult for schools to maintain an effective programme of collective worship during the pandemic and one of SACRE's key priorities in the coming year will be to remind, facilitate and support schools. This will include offering light-touch review conversations with practical suggestions.

An example of passive monitoring:

Ofsted have not raised any concerns with regards to the compliance with the law or standards in relation to collective worship in the LA's schools.

8.7.2 As in the previous report at least ten SACRE reports made no mention of collective worship guidance, monitoring or advice at all.

8.7.3 Some SACREs again used website analysis to see if collective worship was happening in schools in the local authority:

8.7.4 As noted in 2023 it was not clear that monitoring led to advice, rather it was ensuring compliance with the requirements placed on school by statute or funding agreement. It may be worth SACREs reflecting on the information they have received and forming advice for the local authority for non-denominational schools, including academies.

¹⁶ [The Children Act 2004 c. 31 Part 2 General Section 10 \(2\):](#)

9. Determinations and withdrawals

Determinations

9.1 Of the 91.3% of SACREs that mentioned determinations in their annual reports the vast majority reported that there had been no applications for a determination. Where determinations had been made SACREs reported on each application and the period to which the determination applied.

Withdrawals

9.2 62.3% of reports mentioned withdrawal. Where details of the groups likely to withdraw their child were included in the annual report this usually related to RE and not collective worship, although it is possible to infer that where a report stated, for example, children of Jehovah's Witness parents were withdrawn from RE they would be likely to be withdrawn from collective worship.

9.3 Some SACREs have been clear to signpost their guidance on withdrawal, emphasising what schools must do, such as:

This guidance also contains advice to schools about the parental right to withdraw their child(ren) from RE. Schools are also reminded that their school prospectus and/or website should display clear information about withdrawal and how any parents might make such a request.

and it is clear that in some areas this is an issue relating to community cohesion:

The purpose of the guidance package is to advise schools of their statutory obligations if a parent does request the withdrawal of their child from RE or collective worship, but also to offer a range of actions, drawn from our experience and from the advice of the Local Authority Community Cohesion Team, which would reduce the likelihood of such a situation arising in the first place.

10 Other features of SACRE annual reports

Development plans

10.1 It was notable that some SACREs published their development plans (72.7% in 2023 63.9% and 12.5% in the previous years) and in some instances these were used as a basis for self-evaluation. On the whole SACREs did not report on their progress in terms of the development plan within the body of the report, although one SACRE RAG rated the plan. As noted in 5.1.2 there is no obvious relationship between costed development plans and the financing and budgets of SACRE.

Communication with schools

10.2 71.2% of SACREs that submitted a report in 2024, compared to 69.4% in 2023, used e-newsletter or e-bulletins to communicate with schools. As in previous years the frequency of these bulletins varied but mostly, they were termly. The impact of these was not reported on. It was obvious that some SACREs did communicate with schools but did not report on how this was done.

Regular in person meetings with teachers supported by SACRE

10.3.1 One feature of SACRE in 2021 – 2022 as the nation came out of the pandemic was the reporting on in person meetings with teachers, as indicated in some of the monitoring reported on above (8.3.6). 84.7% of SACREs reported on these in the form of online events, in person events, monitoring visits and training. Importantly, these were not simply one-off events but a programme of events which served multiple purposes, this was an increase 78.6% in the previous year. For the reports scrutinised in 2024 this had risen further to 87.9%.

10.3.2 In relation to teachers' meetings and future possibilities on SACRE reported:

SACRE has not been in a position to give advice to the LA on RE standards, though conversations with the LA officer at RE network meetings have shown that the LA is aware of some of the schools where standards are not as high as they might be. These conversations will be ongoing.

10.3.3 One Chair of SACRE in their introduction noted:

At grass root levels attendance of schools at RE subject leaders' meetings is excellent and the feedback has been very positive. I am delighted that this year saw the Primary Network meetings being extended to create a Secondary Network to support the secondary sector.

Showing that the proven worth of networks in one phase of education can lead to their development in others.

These networks are facilitated in a number of ways, especially the Local NATRE hubs.

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education¹⁷

10.4.1 In the previous report it was noted that since the change in the law regarding relationships and sex education 8 SACREs (11.1%) reported an involvement in RSE in 2023, this is twice the number in comparison to the previous year's report. The involvement of SACREs relate to their relationships with faith communities and indicates the trust that these communities have in SACREs.

10.4.2 As in both 2021 and 2022 and 2020 – 2021 there was a recognition that SACREs do not have a remit for RSE/RSHE but that they can make a valuable contribution to this issue due to their connections across communities within the authority.

10.4.3 No report submitted in 2023 made reference to RSE/RSHE with this exception:

Collective worship continues to take many forms including thought for the day, with the inclusion of Relationship and Health Education, and well-being aspects.

And it is interesting that whilst collective worship is not considered part of the curriculum it can still make an important contribution to the education of pupils.

¹⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>

Demographic data

10.5.1 The 2023 report highlighted the inclusion of census data in SACRE annual reports. As a result, the scrutiny of reports submitted for this report looked at references to local diversity within annual reports. In all 63.6% of reports referenced diversity in some way. It would be reasonable to expect demographic data relating to religion and belief and some SACREs showed a discussion on the analysis of the Census 2021 data release one SACRE noting:

Regional data can be found here which demonstrates that some areas of the local authority are far more religiously diverse than others.

What was not clear in most cases was the implications for SACRE or RE and collective worship.

One SACRE did note caution about the Census question:

It is also worth noting that other sources suggest that the question on the census is hindering accurate recording of both the religious and non-religious population. This is especially the case when many people do not self-identify with a specific organised religious or non-religious worldview or have other reasons for not wanting to record a religious identity.

10.5.2 Some reports included statistics about language:

There are 12 different languages spoken in primary schools and 7 different languages spoken in secondary schools by at least 500 pupils across all of the borough's schools, and in total there are 173 languages spoken by at least 1 pupil. This, with the ethnicity break down within schools, shows there is a rich diversity within the borough's schools that the teaching of Religious Education must embrace.

Quite what that means, though is not clear. Does this mean that resources for RE need to be made available in the languages found across the LA? Or, is language to be taken as an indication of religious tradition?

Similarly, one report states:

70% of pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds. Over one hundred languages are spoken by pupils attending the authority's school and 50% of these speak English as an additional language.

The implications of this do not appear to be drawn out.

Only in one local authority does this data appear to have made a difference, and that in relation to SACRE membership, with the inclusion of an Alevi representative.

10.5.2 Some SACREs highlighted diversity in terms of teaching about specific religions, especially the teaching of Christianity at GCSE, or having it as theme in the agreed syllabus.

10.5.3 One SACRE had introduced a specific agenda item to each SACRE meeting, such as:

We made diversity and equality an agenda item at every meeting.

This has been underpinned by the way some SACREs have engaged with the Diversity, Inclusion and Equality teams in their LAs.

10.5.4 It should be noted, though, that of the 34 SACRE reports that referenced the Census 2021 only seven were in non-urban LAs. The issue of diversity appears most prominent where there are substantial minority groups, both in terms of religions and ethnicity (the latter including language).

11 Conclusion

11.1 This year's report has focused on the same methodology as the 2023 and 2022 reports, which allows some measure of comparison and contrast. The data set is slightly smaller than in the previous year and the increase in the number of SACREs by one has had a marginal effect on percentages.

9.2 SACREs continue to serve their local authorities with no financial or other reward, other than being appointed as members of a statutory body that can have a direct impact on schools, teachers, pupils and their communities. Without a doubt SACREs are still recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic's effects but on the whole they are moving closer to business as usual. This has led to new ways to contact teachers and online platforms have continued to be beneficial to the work of SACREs.

9.3 As noted in 2023 some SACREs are working hard despite the lack of support from their local authorities, supporting teachers, organising training and finding ways to engage with schools. No doubt the academisation process has diminished some local authorities and focused their work more narrowly but SACREs still have the power to stay relevant and may be one of the few ways that teachers have an opportunity encounter the local authority other than in relation to Safeguarding.

9.4 Therefore, SACREs should be celebrated for what they do, especially where their task appears thankless. Reading sixty-nine SACRE Annual Reports between April and June 2023 has been a great privilege and, whilst not underestimating the challenges they have, a real insight into the good will and hard work of many SACRE members across England.

Dr David Hampshire FRSA FRAI
10 June 2024

Appendix 1: Categories used to analyse SACRE Annual Reports

1. Attendance
2. Detailed Notes on attendance
3. Professional support
4. Budget specified
5. RE Advice to the LA
6. RE Advice to schools (including non-LA)
7. CW monitoring
8. CW Advice to the LA
9. CW Advice to schools
10. Withdrawal
11. Determinations
12. Complaints monitored
13. Monitoring Primary RE
14. Monitoring Secondary RE:
 - a. non-examination
 - b. Standards GCSE
 - c. Standards A Level
15. Agreed Syllabus Review
16. Training and support for AS implementation and RE
17. Monitoring training for schools
18. Covid-19
19. Communication (newsletter)
20. Regular in person meetings with teachers
21. Development Plan
22. Collaboration/links to other bodies
23. RSE/Health Education
24. Diversity
25. SACRE vacancies

Appendix 2: SACREs reporting by category (maximum n69/100%)

| Category | Number of SACREs reporting in set categories | Percentage of SACREs reporting in set categories |
|---|--|--|
| Attendance | 61 | 88.4 |
| Detailed notes on attendance | 39 | 59.1 |
| Professional support | 65 | 94.2 |
| Funding/Budget | 60 | 87.0 |
| Budget specified | 28 | 40.6 |
| RE Advice to the LA | 28 | 40.6 |
| RE Advice to all schools | 48 | 69.6 |
| CW monitoring | 25 | 36.2 |
| CW Advice to the LA | 8 | 11.6 |
| CW Advice to all schools | 41 | 59.4 |
| Withdrawal | 43 | 62.3 |
| Determinations | 63 | 91.3 |
| Complaints monitored | 54 | 78.3 |
| Monitoring Primary RE | 36 | 52.2 |
| Secondary Standards: non-examination | 36 | 52.2 |
| Standards GCSE | 57 | 82.6 |
| Standards A Level | 35 | 50.7 |
| Agreed Syllabus Review | 37 | 53.6 |
| Training and support for AS implementation and RE | 61 | 88.4 |
| Monitoring training for schools | 12 | 17.4 |
| Monitoring Ofsted as a source of information | 40 | 58.0 |
| Covid-19 | 44 | 66.7 |
| Communication (newsletter) | 47 | 71.2 |
| Regular in person meetings with teachers | 58 | 87.9 |
| Development Plan | 48 | 72.7 |
| Collaboration/links to other bodies | 64 | 97.0 |
| RSE/Health Education | 1 | 1.5 |
| Checking schools' websites for compliance | 25 | 37.9 |
| Diversity | 42 | 63.6 |
| SACRE vacancies | 35 | 53.0 |

Note: percentages are rounded to the first decimal point.

Appendix 3: Research Ethics

The author is a member of the British Educational Research Association and the British Sociological Association, and the Ethical standards expected by both bodies were applied during the research; see,

British Educational Research Association:

<https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018>,

and

British Sociological Association:

https://www.britsoc.co.uk/media/24310/bsa_statement_of_ethical_practice.pdf.

During the research no local authority, SACRE, SACRE member, clerk to SACRE or RE Advisor or consultant was contacted for comment. SACRE Annual Reports are public documents the working presumption was that they were intended to be read by the interested public.

All data has been anonymised and no SACRE singled out for comment, a list of reports submitted to NASACRE and/or DfE are available on request and appear on the NASACRE website, when submitted. Where SACRE reports are quoted this has been for illustrative purposes not to make a judgement on the report used or the particular SACRE.

Appendix 4: Recommendations from the Analysis of SACRE Annual Reports 2020 – 2021 and 2021 - 2022.

Recommendations to NASACRE Executive

On the basis of the evidence it is recommended that NASACRE discusses the following recommendations.

2020 - 2021

2.1 NASACRE support for SACREs

- i. Advice should be developed for SACREs on advising their local authority on RE and collective worship and reporting on how the LA responded to advice¹⁸.
- ii. Advice developed on how SACRE annual reports could have a greater focus on the impact of their work, showing their value as statutory bodies.
- iii. NASACRE could develop a series of case studies to support SACRE members' training, exemplifying ways that SACREs have been creative in working with schools and other partners and the impact that this has had.
- iv. Revisit the annual report proforma on a regular basis.

2.2 NASACRE discussion with the DfE

- v. Discuss the ongoing strategy for ensuring 100% return on SACRE Annual reports as required by legislation.
- vi. Clarify what the response of the DfE would be where SACREs reported that the LA had not followed the advice of SACRE or where a SACRE could not function as a result of the lack of support from the LA.
- vii. Discuss how government can clarify and support the role of SACREs in relation to non-denominational academies in light of LA responsibilities to parents/guardians and their children in the authority¹⁹, with a view to revising current guidance which is now 10 years old²⁰.
- viii. Discuss the need to update *Religious education in English schools: non-statutory guidance 2010*²¹ and *Circular 1/94*²², both of which remain on the government's website as current advice.

2.3 Advice to LAs co-produced by NASACRE and DfE

- ix. Produce a guide for LAs, with the support of the DfE, to ensure authorities meet their statutory responsibilities.

¹⁸ [The local authority is responsible for securing the standard of education for pupils in or from the authority that includes religious education and collective worship.](#)

¹⁹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/section/10>

²⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/re-and-collective-worship-in-academies-and-free-schools/religious-education-re-and-collective-worship-in-academies-and-free-schools?msclkid=3a97f159d07511ec9cb4ba4b39523eed>

²¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/religious-education-guidance-in-english-schools-non-statutory-guidance-2010?msclkid=3a98619ed07511ec9a84ffc6a5aa5dc4>

²²

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/281929/Collective_worship_in_schools.pdf?msclkid=abf0da16d07711ecba73b170373fca63

- x. Advise LAs as to the continued nature of SACREs as statutory bodies appointed by the LA and that SACREs should at least have the same support and status as other local authority committees²³.

2021 - 2022

2.1 NASACRE

- i. Guidance for SACREs is produced on how to focus an annual report on the impact of SACRE's work by reporting on any actions taken in the previous year and the outcomes of those actions, including advice.
- ii. Guidance for SACREs on how they should not confuse the advice given by professionals, in their own right, with advice given by SACRE as a statutory body.

2.2 NASACRE discussion with the DfE

- iii. NASACRE should request the DfE to approach the Secretary of State to write a letter of thanks to all those SACREs that have submitted a report for 2021 – 2022²⁴.
- iv. NASACRE should formally ask the DfE to write to Local Authorities whose SACREs that have not submitted an Annual Report in the last three years to enquire why this is case and request that these reports be sent to the DfE.

2.3 Advice to LAs co-produced by NASACRE and DfE

- v. That co-produced advice be produced for local authorities on good practice in supporting SACREs, including funding, officer support, the appointment of members and the role of each group in relation to those they represent.
- vi. Co-produced advice should also be developed for members of Group D as appointed by the local authority, representing the local authority and being an advocate for SACRE to the local authority and its elected members.

²³ In line with the requirements of [The Religious Education \(Meetings of Local Conferences and Councils\) Regulations 1994](#).

²⁴ The NASACRE Executive will be sent a complete list of all SACREs that have submitted a report to the DfE and/or NASACRE with this report.

This page is intentionally left blank

New SACRE Annual Report framework

Format for the new Annual Report. NASACRE in conjunction with the DfE will be doing a national analysis of Annual Reports using this framework from September 2021.

1. An introduction including:

- Table of contents
- Words from the Chair of SACRE
 - welcoming new members, celebrating successes, thanks, etc.
- Overview, number of times SACRE has met and attendance at meetings, venues, and a brief overview of content of these meetings including Self-evaluation too – link to SACRE Development plan
- Overview as above for the ASC if this is currently sitting, working groups, progress
- *Executive summary (if report is over 10 A4 pages long this might be helpful as a separate document, so readable for schools?)*

2. A section on RE (statutory responsibilities) including:

- The local agreed syllabus and RE in schools, including whether any academies have adopted the LAS
 - Monitoring the AS, relationship with an AS review
 - Work of the ASC and associated working parties if this is currently sitting showing progress, links to other work nationally or locally
- Standards and monitoring of RE
 - This can include monitoring by scrutinising exam data, conversations with schools, teacher groups, website trawls, presentations from teachers. What has SACRE done and how has the monitoring helped SACRE to commend successes and support improvements?
 - Have any schools applied for or achieved REQM awards?
- Teacher training and materials and advice for schools
- Other information (withdrawals and how the SACRE monitors, advises or supports schools with this, complaints)
- Advice to the LA

3. A section on Collective Worship (statutory responsibilities) including:

- Standards and monitoring of CW
 - This can include monitoring by scrutinising Ofsted reports, conversations with schools, teacher groups, website trawls, presentations from teachers. What has SACRE done and how has the monitoring helped SACRE to commend successes and support improvements?
- Determinations
 - How many are current and how many have been applied for and what happened? Link to Determination Process documents online. Is that refreshed, or does it need updating?

- Teacher training provided (locally or national training circulated to schools) materials and advice for schools
 - Other information (withdrawals and how the SACRE monitors, advises or supports schools with this, Complaints)
 - Advice to the LA
4. A section on links with other bodies
- National bodies, e.g. NASACRE, the REC, central faith and belief organisations
 - Local bodies, e.g. Dioceses, Inter Faith Groups, Peace Walks, HMD events
5. A section on other areas of SACRE involvement locally
- Governor training
 - Advice on issues within the community, e.g. Ramadan advice for schools in partnership with the local communities
6. A section on SACRE's own arrangements (**statutory responsibilities**) including:
- Professional and administrative support and how the LA supports the SACRE (clerking, adviser, links to council initiatives)
 - Membership, representation & recruitment - quoracy, issues and successes with recruitment
 - Training for SACRE (and ASC) members
 - Finance given to SACRE for its work
7. Appendices
- Table of GCSE – short and full, A/S & A Level RS results
 - Details on CPD provided to schools
 - Any LA/SACRE policy statements on RE or CW
 - Development plan tied to funding
 - Circulation details for this AR

Appendix 4: Collective Worship- Self-evaluation toolkit

Collective Worship (CW) should be an affirmative and celebration of the values and ethos of the school.

CW in a school is 'good' when:

- it is held daily or as often as possible (as space and timetabling allows)
- it is in addition to any secular assemblies
- it is well-planned, imaginative, inspiring and challenging
- it involves high levels of participation by learners
- it evokes a positive response from those attending
- it is sensitive to the beliefs and traditions of all faiths and none represented in the school, recognising and affirming the family and culture background of learners
- it makes the collective worship an inclusive activity for all
- it significantly contributes to the development of the social, moral, spiritual and cultural areas of school life
- it educates learners into the experience of what worship might be
- learners respond to shared human experiences of celebration, happiness, joy, sadness, etc.
- it celebrates and explores the ethos of the school so that learners can recognise their responsibilities to others and reflect on community and personal values.

A school may want to discuss the nature and impact of CW with learners and adults in the school in order to complete the self-evaluation below.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP SELF EVALUATION TOOLKIT

| Statement | Comment | Rating 1 - outstanding 2 - good 3 – requires improvement 4 - inadequate |
|--|---------|---|
| <p>Legal Considerations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is collective worship held daily for all learners? • If not, how often do pupils take part in an CW? • What importance is given to CW in the School Improvement Plan? • Are parents informed in the school prospectus of their right to withdraw | | |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>their child from CW?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent are parents made aware of the purposes of CW? • Does the school have a policy for CW? • To what extent are the governors aware and involved in the policy and monitoring of CW? | | |
|--|--|--|

| Statement | Comment | Rating 1 - outstanding 2 - good 3 – satisfactory 4 - inadequate |
|---|---------|---|
| <p>Planning for Collective Worship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there effective planning for CW eg. themes? • Does the planning include opportunities for a range of visitors? • Is a range of approaches used effectively? • Is there planning for learners to be involved? • How appropriate is the material to the age and stage of development of the learners? • Does planning identify and support the different groups for CW eg tutorial or class groups? • How effectively is CW evaluated and monitored? • How well-resourced is the school to assist those who lead CW? • Have staff who are involved with CW attended any recent CPD? • To what extent does CW support and affirm the values of the school? • Does CW make a | | |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| significant contribution to the SMSC learning and development of learners? | | |
|--|--|--|

| Statement | Comment | Rating 1 - outstanding 2 - good 3 – satisfactory 4 - inadequate |
|---|---------|---|
| <p>Learners' Attitudes to CW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well do learners respond to CW? • How often do learners contribute to CW? • How are the views of learners heard eg. do they enjoy and value CW? • To what extent do adults take part in CW and speak positively about the experience? • Are learners able to suggest themes and subject matter, approaches etc? | | |

| Statement | Comment | Rating 1 - outstanding 2 - good 3 – satisfactory 4 - inadequate |
|---|---------|---|
| <p>To what extent do learners and staff of all faiths and none derive inspiration, spiritual growth and affirmation from CW?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are pupils and adults encouraged to express their views on CW? • Does CW provide opportunities for reflection? • How helpful do members of the school community | | |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>find such quiet times?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To what extent do learners from a variety of faith or non-faith backgrounds feel that their own faith or non-belief has been recognised, affirmed and respected? | | |
|--|--|--|

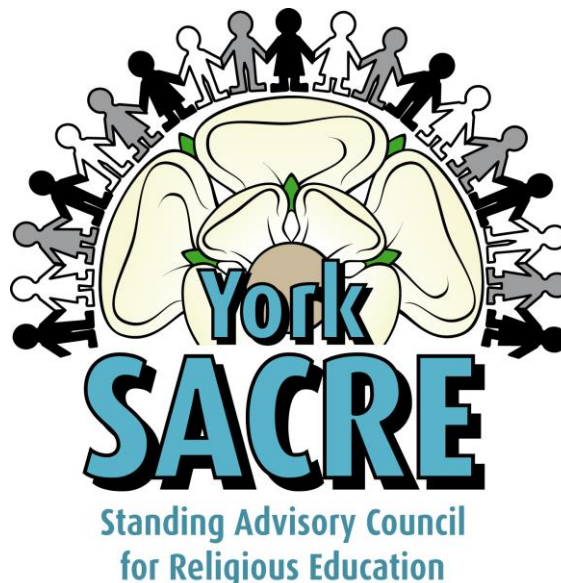
| |
|---------------------|
| Action Plan: |
| |



Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Guidance to schools on Collective Worship

2017



Background

20 years ago, in January 1994, the Department for Education (DfE) published *Circular 1/94*. This set out to explain the practical implications of the law as it applied to religious education and collective worship. The parts of *Circular 1/94* that dealt specifically with religious education were replaced by new guidance published in January 2010. However the parts of *Circular 1/94* covering collective worship stayed unchanged, continuing to represent the DfE's official view. This remained the case until, in effect, the circular was withdrawn.

In October 2012, the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE) and the Association of Religious Education Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants (AREIAC) released the following joint statement explaining the new position:

“The view of NASACRE and AREIAC is that collective worship can and should be an inclusive experience which, when done well, can make a valuable and highly positive contribution to life in general in all schools. All schools and academies should be meeting the legal requirements for collective worship. However, we are aware that in attempting to do so many institutions experience difficulties which stem from statements which appear in *Circular 1/94*. The circular is thus often a barrier to good collective worship. For this reason NASACRE and AREIAC advise that schools and academies should not use *Circular 1/94* but that their provision for collective worship should be guided by the legal requirements as set out in the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) and confirmed in the 1996 Education Act.”

Previous guidance published by York SACRE sought to help schools to provide inclusive, meaningful and relevant daily acts of collective worship that met both the letter and spirit of the law as interpreted by *Circular 1/94*. Now that schools are no longer constrained by advice contained in the circular (although they are still bound by the legal requirements), SACRE is issuing this new guidance with the intention that it will provide practical assistance and help raise the quality of collective worship in schools.

The notion of ‘collective worship’ was introduced by the 1944 Education Act, which stated that “the school day in every county school and every voluntary school shall begin with collective worship on the part of all the pupils in attendance”. This legislation was passed at a time when England was an overtly Christian country where the great majority of the population were regular churchgoers. By 2010, the percentage of UK citizens who attended church regularly had dropped to 6%. Over the past 60 years there has also been a significant decline in Church of England baptisms from approximately 67% of UK babies in 1950 to 19% in 2010. ¹

In view of the changes to British society (and schools) that have occurred since 1944, many people hold the view that collective worship is now an outmoded concept. Many prefer the term ‘spiritual reflection’, which supports the requirement for schools to promote pupils’ spiritual development. In providing structured time for daily spiritual reflection, schools will be providing something important for the wellbeing of pupils and other participants; something that is unique and distinctive; something that is different from, but complementary to ‘assembly’.

¹ Figures obtained from Church Society website

Ofsted: School Inspection Handbook, August 2016 (updated)**Extracts from 'Inspection of religious education and collective worship' as applies to collective worship. (P69/71)****'Schools with a religious character'**

If a voluntary or foundation school is designated as having a denominational religious character ('a school with a religious character'), then denominational religious education, the school ethos and the content of collective worship are inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005. An academy designated as having a religious character by the Secretary of State is inspected in an equivalent way by virtue of a provision in the academy's funding agreement.

In schools with a religious character, section 5 inspectors must not comment on the content of religious worship or on denominational religious education (RE). Inspectors may visit lessons and assemblies in order to help them evaluate how those contribute to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their personal development, behaviour and welfare.

'Schools without a religious character'

In the case of other maintained schools and academies where religious education (RE) is being provided in line with the legislation that underpins the locally agreed syllabus, RE is inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

These schools must conform to the legal requirements for non-faith schools:

A school can reflect the religious backgrounds represented in its community in its collective worship, as long as the majority of provision is broadly Christian. Alternatively, the family backgrounds of some or all pupils may lead the headteacher and governing body to conclude that broadly Christian collective worship is not appropriate. The headteacher can apply to the local Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) to have the broadly Christian requirement disapplied and replaced by collective worship distinctive to another faith. The headteacher must consult the governing body before doing so. Academies need to apply to the Secretary of State via the Education Funding Agency (EFA).

Academies without a defined religious character must provide collective worship that is 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character'. Inspectors should note any requirements of the academy's funding agreement.

Ofsted Aug 2016

Legal requirements

All state schools must provide a daily act of collective worship for all registered pupils up to the age of 18. Whereas for maintained schools this requirement is enshrined within legislation, for academies the requirement forms part of their funding agreement. Faith schools (both maintained and academies) will provide collective worship in accordance with their trust deed, or in accordance with the tenets of their faith.

The summary below applies to maintained schools and academies without a religious character. Special schools have to meet the requirements “so far as is practicable”. The requirements fall into two categories: those relating to management and organisation and those relating to style and character.

Requirements relating to management and organisation

- Subject to the right of withdrawal, all registered pupils must “on each school day take part in an act of collective worship”. This applies to all pupils in reception classes, including those below compulsory school age. It also applies to all sixth form students in schools.
- Parents have the right to withdraw their children from collective worship and sixth formers have the right to withdraw themselves. Teachers also have the right not to attend. The right of withdrawal can be exercised for any reason: it does not have to be on grounds of conscience. Teachers should not be disqualified from employment or discriminated against in terms of pay or promotion if they choose not to attend collective worship. However, both pupils and teachers may be required to attend assembly, which is distinct from collective worship.
- Acts of collective worship can take place at any time during the school day. Time spent on collective worship generally lies outside curricular time and cannot count as part of the taught school day.
- For collective worship, pupils can be grouped in various ways: as a whole school or in groups (or a combination of groups) which the school uses at other times (class groups, tutor groups, year groups, house groups, key stage groups, etc). Pupils cannot be put into special groups just for collective worship unless a ‘determination’ has been granted (see last bullet point below).
- Responsibility for ensuring that the legal requirements are met rests with the headteacher, in consultation with the governors.

Requirements relating to style and character

- **Most acts of collective worship in any one school term must be “wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character”**. An act of worship is such if it “reflects the broad traditions of Christian belief without being distinctive of any particular Christian denomination”.
- Acts of worship must be appropriate for the pupils, in that they must take account of pupils’ ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds. If a school feels that the requirement for broadly Christian worship is inappropriate for some or all of the pupils, the headteacher can apply to the local Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) for a ‘determination’ to have this requirement lifted or modified for some or all of the pupils².

2. See Appendix 2 for details on determinations

Two imperatives

In order to meet the legal requirements regarding the style and character of daily collective worship, schools will need to comply with the following imperatives:

- 1. Collective worship must always be inclusive.**
- 2. Collective worship must usually be broadly Christian.**

1. Collective worship must always be inclusive

The use of the term 'collective' rather than 'corporate' to describe the nature of worship in schools is significant. It is a deliberate acknowledgement of the fact that schools comprise a collection of individuals from diverse backgrounds with widely differing beliefs. Corporate worship takes place among a unified 'corpus' or body of people with shared beliefs and common forms of worship. It is what takes place in churches on Sundays, synagogues on Saturdays and mosques on Fridays. Collective worship in schools is fundamentally different from this.

The law requires schools to ensure that acts of collective worship are appropriate for all their pupils in that they must take account of their ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds. Christians, adherents of other religions, atheists and agnostics are all to be accommodated in daily collective worship.

Implications

- Collective worship should be appropriate for all pupils (and others present), whatever their religious commitments or lack of religious commitments.
- Collective worship should respect the wishes of religious believers by providing those who want to engage in prayer with the opportunity to do so, while giving others the opportunity to engage in meaningful personal reflection.
- Collective worship should celebrate and affirm difference and diversity.
- Pupils (and others present) should not be placed in positions where they are made to feel uneasy, or less than honest, or where their personal integrity is not respected. It is important to try and avoid the 'squirm' factor with regard to collective worship.
- Pupils (and others present) should not be asked to pay lip-service to faith statements which they may not understand or to which they do not themselves adhere.
- Hymns and prayers should be used with care and sensitivity.
- Few (if any) parents, sixth formers or teachers should find it necessary to exercise their right of withdrawal.

2. Collective worship must usually be 'broadly Christian'

The law requires that most acts of collective worship in any one school term must be "wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character".

What then is meant by worship that is 'broadly Christian'? The law provides a partial explanation: an act of worship is considered to be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character if it (a) reflects the broad traditions of Christian belief and (b) is not distinctive of any particular Christian denomination.

With regard to (a), the law does not define the broad traditions of Christian belief nor does it explain how these traditions can, at the same time, be applied to collective worship that is to be inclusive of those of others faiths or none. Two observations might be made here.

- 1) Most religious or non-religious philosophies are concerned with the same ultimate questions and share many common values.
- 2) Each of these philosophies (or theologies) offers their own distinctive answer to the questions and place their values within a different framework.

Shared values usually embrace environmental concerns (ecology, pollution, stewardship of the earth's resources), a concern to address the human capacity for prejudice, cruelty, war and alienation and a recognition of the value of every individual (irrespective of disability, age, gender, race, economic status, etc). Also shared are concerns to promote justice, peace and harmony and explore human yearnings for the 'better' and the 'spiritual'. Collective worship offers a context in which these values (and their various philosophies and theologies) can be affirmed and explored.

Collective worship in non-faith schools is not permitted to be distinctive of any particular Christian denomination. This reinforces the point made earlier: that collective worship in schools is not intended to replicate denominational worship in church. It is completely legitimate for, say, Anglican or Roman Catholic schools to celebrate Eucharist or Mass; but denominational practices such as these are not appropriate in non-faith schools.

Implications

- Collective worship that is 'broadly Christian' is inclusive in that it deals with universal human values and issues that concern us all, Christians and non-Christians.
- What happens in non-faith schools during collective worship should not replicate denominational church worship.
- The law allows considerable flexibility and freedom in respect of the requirement that most acts of collective worship must be broadly Christian. However, in order to show they are meeting the legal requirements, schools will need to document their daily acts of collective worship in sufficient detail to be able to demonstrate that the majority of these reflect broad Christian values and beliefs.
- By interpreting 'broadly Christian' in an inclusive way, few (if any) schools should find it necessary to apply to SACRE for a 'determination' for the requirement for 'broadly Christian' worship to be lifted or modified.

Six principles

YORK SACRE believes that acts of collective worship or spiritual reflection should be meaningful and relevant to all those present. In order for this to be the case, SACRE has identified six principles which schools should apply with regard to daily collective worship.

Collective worship should:

- 1. promote a sense of community;**
- 2. be educational;**
- 3. promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development;**
- 4. be a special time;**
- 5. enable participants to be actively involved;**
- 6. be of high quality.**

Principle 1.

Collective worship should promote a sense of community

It has been said that collective worship is the time when the school becomes aware of itself. It is the time when members of the school community gather together to affirm who the school is and what it stands for. For many, the most valuable feature of collective worship is that it promotes this sense of community. Regardless of the legal requirement for daily collective worship, most schools would wish to hold regular 'assemblies' to enable pupils and staff to develop a sense of belonging to a community with a shared sense of purpose. Any formal collective activity which makes explicit and which honours and celebrates the things that the school considers to be important or of worth could be legitimately termed collective worship.

Implications

- Collective worship can be used as a time to make explicit the values and assumptions which underpin the day to day life of the school. Notions of justice, fairness, equality of opportunity, the value and worth of each individual, mutual respect, respect for the environment, co-operation, etc can be explored and affirmed as part of collective worship.
- Collective worship can be used as a time to celebrate individual and group achievements.
- The law permits pupils to be grouped for collective worship in various ways, but if it is to develop a sense of itself as a community, on regular occasions the school should endeavour to come together as a whole school, with all pupils, teachers and other staff present. In many secondary schools this will not be possible because of restrictions imposed by the size of the school hall. However, for special occasions such as Christmas, some secondary schools hold acts of collective worship for the whole school in larger venues such as the local parish church.

Principle 2.**Collective worship should be educational**

Schools are first and foremost educational establishments. The core business of schools is teaching and learning. SACRE believe that collective worship should be regarded as an educational activity, a learning experience for the pupils.

Implications

- Collective worship is to do with opening up rather than closing down. It is to do with the exploration of a range of possibilities. It does not seek to bring pupils to a particular point of view; rather it seeks to enable each participant to come to a more mature stance in respect of her or his own developing viewpoint.
- Collective worship should be used as a time to inform, to develop and deepen understanding and to promote the acquisition of skills. The knowledge and understanding that is developed will be dependent on the content of the act of worship. Among the many skills that collective worship helps to develop are included a range of interpersonal and social skills, listening skills and importantly the ability to be still, to be quiet and to reflect inwardly.
- The contribution of collective worship to pupils' personal development merits separate consideration, and this is explored in Principle 3 below.
- Collective worship also provides an obvious but often overlooked forum for learning about the nature of worship:
 - learning about religious worship: why people worship, how people worship and who or what is being worshipped
 - learning that many Christians and adherents of other faiths find fulfilment, meaning and purpose in worship
 - learning that many people do not feel the need to worship
 - learning about the inclusive way in which collective worship at the school is conducted, why those present are explicitly invited either to reflect or pray, why the particular forms of words that are used to introduce hymns and prayers are deployed.

Principle 3.**Collective worship should promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development**

Collective worship or spiritual reflection has much to contribute to the SMSC development of children and young people. OFSTED has always recognised this and in forming judgements about SMSC development in schools, inspectors take account of collective worship. SACRE believe that

collective worship has an important and distinctive contribution to make to the spiritual development of children and young people. Worship is by definition a spiritual activity: the response of human beings to what is perceived as holy, sacred or divine. Collective worship also has much to contribute to moral, social and cultural development. It provides opportunities for pupils to reflect on issues of morality and ethics, justice and fairness, good and evil, right and wrong. 'Collective' worship is by definition an inclusive, social activity: one that promotes a sense of community. Collective worship can help to develop pupils' awareness of beauty and heighten aesthetic and intercultural awareness.

Implications

- Collective worship should sensitise pupils to the spiritual dimension of existence: to feelings of awe and wonder, to the fact that life is ultimately mysterious and that there is perhaps more to it than the day-to-day, the here and now, the immediately apparent.
- Collective worship should 'feed the spirit' by enabling pupils to reflect in an appropriate atmosphere upon the beauty, intricacy and grandeur of the natural world and upon a range of inspirational writings, music and works of art drawn from a variety of cultures. Many of these will be derived from the world's great religious traditions.
- Collective worship should enable pupils to explore moral issues and questions about meaning and purpose. It should help pupils to develop their own beliefs, values, attitudes and moral codes. It should enable pupils to appreciate and respect the beliefs, lifestyles and religious practices of others.
- Schools should be aware of the need to help pupils where issues have been raised that are sensitive and provide a safety net for any pupil that may be adversely affected.

Principle 4.

Collective worship should be a special time

Collective worship should be a special time with its own distinctive atmosphere, one that is conducive to spiritual activities such as contemplation, quiet reflection and, for those for whom it is appropriate, prayer. Collective worship should be seen as providing an oasis of calm, a breathing space in the busy whirl of school activity. It is a time to gather, to be still and to reflect in an atmosphere of peacefulness and quietness.

Implications

- Schools should give consideration to using a simple ritual to mark the transition from assembly or other activity to collective worship. There should be a change in mood and atmosphere. Playing quiet, calming background music and lighting a candle helps to create a suitable ambience.
- The setting should be made as attractive as possible: a vase of flowers can make a tremendous difference. It helps if there is a visual focus, either an image projected onto a screen or a real object related to the theme of the act of worship: a loaf of bread, a glass of water, a lump of rock, a piece of wood, a mobile phone, a teddy bear, etc.
- The pupils should be seated comfortably, even if this means going through the effort of putting out chairs for older pupils. Seating can be used in a variety of creative and imaginative ways. The seating arrangements should be flexible: different seating arrangements are appropriate for different styles of collective worship. Some primary schools have experimented with allowing pupils to sit where they want: friends, brothers and sisters from different classes are able to sit side-by-side during this special time.
- The distinctive atmosphere of collective worship should not be disturbed by distractions such as the giving out of notices or reprimands, or the clatter from the kitchens.

Principle 5.**Collective worship should enable participants to be actively involved**

The law requires that all pupils should 'take part' in collective worship rather than simply attend. This should not be taken as meaning that all pupils, regardless of their own beliefs, should join in with the singing of hymns and saying of prayers. If the requirement were to be interpreted in this way, it would be counter to the spirit of statements made earlier in this document such as the following:

- Pupils (and others present) should not be placed in positions where they are made to feel uneasy, or less than honest, or where their personal integrity is not respected. It is important to try and avoid the 'squirm' factor with regard to collective worship.
- Pupils (and others present) should not be asked to pay lip-service to faith statements which they may not understand or to which they do not themselves adhere.

This is not to say that hymns and prayers should not be used in collective worship; rather that they should only be used with care and sensitivity.

What then is meant by 'taking part'? SACRE believe that taking part implies active involvement. Pupils should not be passive recipients of an accepted wisdom or orthodoxy; rather they should be encouraged to use collective worship as a time during which they can reflect upon, question, weigh up, accept or reject the beliefs and spiritual and moral issues that are being raised.

Implications

- Built into the structure of each act of collective worship, there needs to be the opportunity for the pupils to respond to whatever is presented. Providing a time of silence during which pupils can respond in ways that are appropriate to each individual (through prayer or reflection) is one way that this might be achieved. Depending on practicalities, pupils can also be given the opportunity to respond through answering questions, discussion, writing or drawing.
- Pupils themselves should be given opportunities to participate in the planning, delivery and evaluation of collective worship.

Principle 6.**Collective worship should be of high quality**

If the aspirations identified earlier in this document are to be met and if collective worship is to be a high quality experience for pupils, then time, effort and resources will need to be devoted to it. There should be a whole-hearted commitment to providing the same high standards that mark other such events as concerts, open evenings, etc.

Implications

- Every school should have an agreed policy for collective worship, showing how it intends to provide high quality daily collective worship that meets the legal requirements and the principles identified in this document. This policy should be reviewed regularly. A sample policy is available for schools to adapt (Appendix 1)
- Each act of collective worship should be carefully planned and, in order to avoid duplication and repetition, briefly documented. A further reason for keeping a short written record of each act of worship is to be able to demonstrate that most acts of worship in any one term are "broadly Christian in character".

- High quality acts of worship require appropriate resources. The school will need to build up a suitable collection of readings, inspirational and thought provoking quotations, poems, prayers, songs, sound recordings, film extracts, images, etc.
- Collective worship can often be enhanced by inviting visitors to contribute. Many schools in York make excellent use of a variety of visitors in order to enrich their provision. Appropriate people from the community can be involved in collective worship, and invited by the headteacher, in consultation with the co-ordinator, to attend or lead acts of worship. Pupils may also help lead acts of worship.
- Visitors leading assemblies and collective need to remember that schools are essentially inclusive places of education rather than places of worship associated with a particular religion.
- The quality of collective worship ultimately depends on the people who are responsible for its co-ordination and delivery. All schools should have a designated co-ordinator of collective worship. The planning, delivery, evaluation and documentation of daily collective worship should be rigorously carried out and it should be recognised that whoever is responsible for its coordination has a demanding and time-consuming task to perform.
- It is helpful to keep brief records of Collective Worship so that a school can demonstrate it has provided a variety of good experiences and opportunities for pupils, more easily evaluate its own provision and quality, check that the majority of acts are of a broadly Christian character, more easily report to the governing body and avoid repetition for pupils.
- In order to ensure that acts of collective worship are meeting the needs of pupils, children and young people should be key participants in the evaluation of collective worship.
- Through observation the Headteacher, and governing body should monitor, evaluate and review the implementation and delivery of the school's collective worship policy.

In conclusion, collective worship makes an important contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. It prepares pupils for the challenge, opportunities and responsibilities of adult life in a multi-faith and multi-cultural society.

Supporting documents:

Appendix 1: Model policy

Appendix 2: Applying for a determination

Appendix 3: Resources and themes to support collective worship

Appendix 4: Collective worship self-evaluation

Training or Advice available:

York SACRE is pleased to give advice on collective worship when asked. SACRE will also make known any training events through the usual channels.

This document has been adapted from North Yorkshire's SACRE's Collective Worship Guidance with their permission.

Any enquiries or communication in respect of this guidance should be addressed to sacre@york.gov.uk