
Meeting	SACRE (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education)
Date	15 July 2025
Present	<u>Group A</u> Dee Boyle Mark Jones Fleur Kennedy Colin Lewisohn <u>Group B</u> Sue Bland <u>Group D</u> Cllr Bob Webb (Chair) Cllr Sarah Wilson
In Attendance	Maxine Squire (Assistant Director, Education and Skills, City of York Council)
Apologies	Ben Rich (Vice-Chair), Penny Coppin-Siddall, Joseph Everdell, Taco Michiels, Diane Norton, Karen Vincent.

Cllr Wilson was elected as Vice-Chair for the meeting in the absence of Ben Rich (Vice-Chair), who had given apologies. The meeting was inquorate.

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

Apologies were received from Ben Rich (Vice-Chair), Karen Vincent, Penny Coppin-Siddall, Joseph Everdell, Diane Norton, and Taco Michiels. There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes and matters arising from the minutes (6.03 pm)

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 May 2025 would be approved at a future meeting.

Matters arising: It was noted that members would receive updates on the School Survey and from Interfaith at the present meeting. Regarding the

outstanding action in relation to emailing secondary RE teachers about an online meeting, it was noted that Maxine Squire and Taco Michiels would be discussing this further. It was confirmed that a meeting had been held in relation to the SACRE development plan, which was also on the agenda at the present meeting.

3. School Survey 2025 (6.05 pm)

Maxine Squire gave an update on the forthcoming annual School Survey, due to be sent out during the autumn term. A focused survey was proposed to gather views on the current locally Agreed Syllabus leading into the Agreed Syllabus review process; the use of an e-survey was being explored with a view to increasing the number of responses. Results would be brought to an Agreed Syllabus conference, where representatives from the four SACRE groups would be invited to put forward their views.

It was confirmed that the survey would go out to all schools in York, including those not following the Agreed Syllabus. Feedback from teachers was valued and the survey would be shared through the maintained schools RE subject network; while resources were limited, an online consultation would also be offered to teachers to gather verbal feedback. Previous feedback suggested that the syllabus commissioned from RE Today was popular with teachers, including non-subject specialists due to the large range of resources provided.

It was noted that members had previously agreed that question 5 should refer to 'core religions and belief systems'. Subject to this amendment members indicated their approval of the survey questions.

4. Update from Interfaith (6.20 pm)

Dee Boyle provided a verbal update on behalf of Interfaith, confirming that planning for 2026 was underway with an emphasis on being as inclusive as possible, noting challenges around securing teacher participation in Interfaith Week and in raising the profile of Interfaith with schools. It was confirmed that Humanist membership of Interfaith would be welcomed, individually or as a group. Interfaith responded to contact from schools and a team could be provided to cover all faiths, and information on Interfaith was circulated to schools, including in the weekly email from CYC Education.

It was noted that reference to Interfaith would be added to the CYC SACRE webpage.

5. Review and renewal of SACRE development plan (6.26 pm)

Maxine Squire updated members on the SACRE Development Plan, noting that the Chair and Vice-Chair had evaluated actions against the current 2022-24 plan. A template plan for 2025-27 had been drafted, and it was suggested that SACRE focus in that period on the effectiveness of the locally Agreed Syllabus; on improvement in standards and quality of teaching and provision in RE, including continuing professional development; and on promotion of community cohesion through the work of SACRE being more visible, and continuing to build close links with faith groups and Interfaith. There was a need to ensure the plan was kept achievable and within the sources available to SACRE.

Members indicated support for the three objectives. It was noted that SACRE briefing materials could be proactively sent out to faith groups, and information about SACRE being provided through school bulletins could be explored. The Executive Member noted he was happy to discuss the role of SACRE with interested faith groups.

With reference to evaluating the effectiveness of the Agreed Syllabus, the Executive Member suggested that this could include receiving feedback from the current Schools Survey, committing to a future survey, developing the new syllabus, and adding in an annual agenda item for RE teachers to feed back on the quality and effectiveness of the new syllabus. It was noted that RE was a statutory subject, and the feedback mechanism to the Department for Education was via SACRE's annual report. It was suggested that views around particular parts of the syllabus could be sought to identify if any extra support might be needed.

Regarding standards, the importance of the new syllabus conference, online teacher meetings on the new syllabus, and continuing school visits, with an emphasis on secondary schools, were highlighted. It was noted RE Hubs signposted resources and links to faith groups locally and regionally, and that the SACRE website could be used more actively to add links and update member details.

With reference to community cohesion, close working with Interfaith and a continued commitment to maintaining a wide range of membership on SACRE was emphasised, as well as recommitting to seeking young people's views on RE teaching on an annual basis. It was noted that the Agreed Syllabus conference would provide an opportunity for further communications with schools and the wider city, and suggested that young

people's representation could be further considered, including the possibility of working with York Youth Council.

Maxine Squire confirmed she would update the development plan to take members' comments and suggestions into account.

6. Review of the Agreed Syllabus (6.49 pm)

Maxine Squire updated members on the five-year review of the locally Agreed Syllabus. It was confirmed that in common with many other local authorities York's Agreed Syllabus was currently commissioned from RE Today to reflect the local context. Following consultation and evidence gathering, SACRE and the Agreed Syllabus Conference would need to decide whether to retain, amend or replace the syllabus. Of the options available, a bespoke syllabus would be difficult to achieve in the timescale given available resources; re-commissioning from RE Today would allow updates to be made and retain use of RE Today's resources; alternatively a syllabus could be commissioned from another provider. Re-commissioning was the recommended option subject to RE Today being able support the process.

It was noted that the process had been started comparatively late and where possible the timeline would be expedited, but resources were very limited. Feedback on the syllabus from the annual School Survey was generally very positive, although additional resources had been requested in some areas. It was confirmed that faith schools used their own agreed diocesan syllabus.

Maxine Squire confirmed that she would progress with work on recommissioning given members' expression of a strong preference for that option.

7. NASACRE Update (7.01 pm)

The latest NASACRE briefing was noted, and a member provided feedback on recent NASACRE virtual training. It was noted that York SACRE's NASACRE membership was in the process of being reconfirmed.

8. Correspondence on complaints/determinations (7.02 pm)

It was noted that no complaints had been received, and no determinations submitted. It was noted that headteachers would be reminded of their duties in relation to RE and the need to submit determinations to SACRE.

9. Any other business (7.03 pm)

Joseph Rowntree Visit – Wednesday 8 October

Following previous school visits at Fishergate and St Oswald's Primary Schools, it was noted that an invitation had been received for a visit to Joseph Rowntree School on 8 October to observe the delivery of RE teaching at Key Stages 3 and 4, and arrangements would be made for SACRE members to attend.

10. Future meeting dates (7.07 pm)

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on 14 October 2025.

Cllr B Webb, Chair

[The meeting started at 6.01 pm and finished at 7.07 pm].