

Notes of the meeting of Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) held in Conference Room 2 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Friday 11 July 2025 at 2.00 pm

Chairperson:

Geoff Sallis Humanism representative

Voting members present in person:

Louise Barker	Secondary school teacher representative
Pete Hulme	Bahá'í Faith
Councillor Rob Owens	Herefordshire Council
Ruth Stanier	Quaker faith representative
Barry Stevens	Church of England representative
Councillor John Stone	Herefordshire Council

Voting members in attendance remotely:

Councillor Justine Peberdy Herefordshire Council

Support officers:

Ben Baugh
Stephen Pett

Herefordshire Council
Consultant to SACRE

1. WELCOME AND THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

The Chairperson welcomed attendees to the meeting and, referencing a passage from *Middlemarch* by George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans), shared a thought for the day about the benefits of seemingly insignificant actions and the quiet dedication of individuals to the wellbeing of society.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Caroline Ault (Bahá'í faith representative), Mark Harrington and Jonathan Nicholas (Church of England representatives), Raoul Smith (Jewish faith representative), and Tracey Westlake (Primary school teacher representative). Apologies were also noted from Pam Howell (School Improvement Advisor, Herefordshire Council). Councillor Justine Peberdy was not present in person but attended the meeting remotely.

3. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Peter Hulme was present as the substitute for Caroline Ault.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting were received.

With attention drawn to minute 23, the Chairperson reported on a discussion about school workforce data with Deborah Weston from the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education. It was noted that, as the information collected from schools by the Department for Education was not compulsory, there were challenges with the data

and it may be difficult to obtain additional information from schools given existing pressures.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairperson.

5. WRITTEN PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No written questions had been received.

6. AGREED SYLLABUS LAUNCH: PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Stephen Pett reported on the Herefordshire Agreed Syllabus Launch: Primary Schools that had taken place at The Bishop of Hereford's Bluecoat School on 10 July 2025, the key points included:

- i. The primary conference had been attended by 75 delegates from 56 schools.
- ii. Feedback on the overall value of the conference was very positive (68% excellent and 32% good).
- iii. Many attendees appreciated that the syllabus had not changed drastically and welcomed the updates that had been made, including the new 'learning tool' icons.
- iv. A draft summary of the evaluations received to date was circulated in the meeting room, with minor negatives noted about the room temperature and the duration of a meditation session.

Comments were made about the positivity and enthusiasm of the attendees, and thanks were expressed to Stephen Pett and everyone involved in the event.

In terms of schools that had been unable to attend the conference, there was a discussion about: options for distributing the revised syllabus, either as an email attachment or as a link to enable the document to be downloaded; the potential for an online 'twilight session' to outline the changes and the resources available; and opportunities to promote future attendance, utilising feedback from the recent conference. It was noted that these matters would be explored by Stephen Pett with Pam Howell.

7. AGREED SYLLABUS LAUNCH: SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Stephen Pett reported that the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Agreed Syllabus Launch: Secondary Schools had taken place at the University of Worcester on 25 June 2025, the key points included:

- a. The secondary conference had been attended by 7 Herefordshire delegates from 6 schools (31 delegates from 22 schools overall).
- b. Feedback on the overall value of the conference was very positive (73% excellent and 27% good).
- c. As with the primary conference, several attendees had commented positively that the syllabus had not changed too much.
- d. Delegates valued the discussion and networking opportunities provided through the conference; it was noted that a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) Secondary – Religious Education course was available through the university.

The Chairperson commented on the depth of knowledge of the delegates and the benefits of the venue, albeit acknowledging that it involved additional travel for some.

It was noted that options for distributing the revised syllabus to secondary schools would be considered.

8. CIRCULATING THE AGREED SYLLABUS

This matter was discussed during items 6 and 7.

9. NATIONAL RE UPDATES (SUMMER 2025)

Stephen Pett presented the National RE Updates for SACRE from RE Today.

With reference made to the [Curriculum and Assessment Review: Interim Report](#), it was noted that the ambition for 'high standards for all' was stimulating debate in the RE community, particularly in terms of policy options such as the inclusion of RE in the National Curriculum and / or the introduction of a National Content Standard for RE. Points made by SACRE members included: the value of RE to help individuals to make informed life choices; risks around a more prescriptive or politicised approach to the subject; and the need for pupils to be able to explore creative and diverse ideas in safe spaces.

10. ROUNDTABLE UPDATES

The Chairperson commented that various papers were referenced at the Agreed Syllabus Launch: Secondary Schools and said that it would be helpful for SACRE to have access to such resources. Stephen Pett agreed to provide a recommended reading list.

It was reported that Stephen Pett and Tracey Westlake had discussed the potential to celebrate excellence in schools, perhaps through a SACRE run award; reference was made to similar awards in Bristol and Gloucestershire. This suggestion was welcomed by the Chairperson, as it would provide an opportunity to raise the profile of the work being undertaken by local teachers. This was likely to be discussed at the next meeting.

11. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was noted that a poll had been circulated to SACRE members to identify dates for future meetings, with the intention to hold meetings on different weekdays and times to accommodate as many participants as possible. The following dates were confirmed:

[Monday 10 November 2025, 10.00 am](#)

[Wednesday 25 March 2026, 10.00 am](#)

[Monday 22 June 2026, 10.00 am](#)

The meeting ended at 2.48 pm

Chairperson