

# Agenda

## Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)

Date: **Monday 22 June 2026**

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Time: **10.00 am**

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Place: **Conference Room 2 - Herefordshire Council, Plough  
Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE**

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Notes: Please note the time, date and venue of the meeting.

For any further information please contact:

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If you would like help to understand this document, or would like it in another format, please call Ben Baugh, Democratic Services Officer on 01432 261882 or e-mail [ben.baugh2@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:ben.baugh2@herefordshire.gov.uk) in advance of the meeting.

# Agenda for the meeting of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)

## Membership

Chair	Geoff Sallis	Humanism representative
Vice-Chair	Louise Barker	Secondary school teacher representative
Members	Carolyn Ault	Bahá'í faith representative
	Mark Harrington	Church of England representative
	Jatinderpal Loyal	Sikh faith representative
	Jonathan Nicholas	Church of England representative
	Councillor Rob Owens	Herefordshire Council
	Councillor Justine Peberdy	Herefordshire Council
	Raoul Smith	Jewish faith representative
	Ruth Stanier	Quaker faith representative
	Barry Stevens	Church of England representative
	Councillor John Stone	Herefordshire Council
Tracy Westlake	Primary school teacher representative	

## Agenda

		Pages
1.	<p><b>WELCOME AND THOUGHT FOR THE DAY</b></p> <p>To welcome members to SACRE and to receive a thought for the day.</p>	
2.	<p><b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b></p> <p>To receive any apologies for absence.</p>	
3.	<p><b>NAMED SUBSTITUTES</b></p> <p>To receive details of any substitutes.</p>	
4.	<p><b>MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING</b></p> <p>To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2026.</p>	7 - 10
5.	<p><b>MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES</b></p> <p>To explore matters arising from the minutes, including:</p> <p><b>i. SACRE membership</b></p> <p>With the help of Carolyn Ault, two potential candidates have come forward to represent jointly the Muslim faith; further details will be provided to SACRE members in a supplement.</p> <p>SACRE members are invited to identify appropriate contacts for local faith groups in order to invite nominations in respect of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group A: Buddhist; Free Church; Hindu; a representative of other faiths as a whole; and Roman Catholic</li> <li>• Group C: Special education sector representative.</li> </ul> <p><b>ii. Local RE Award</b></p> <p>To note progress with the development of an award scheme for schools.</p> <p><b>iii. Documents for information</b></p> <p>The following documents will be provided to SACRE members in a supplement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An example copy of the Spotlight bulletin; and</li> <li>• 'A Guide to People and Places: Supporting RE and experiencing faith in Herefordshire schools'.</li> </ul>	
6.	<p><b>WRITTEN PUBLIC QUESTIONS</b></p> <p>To respond to any written questions from members of the public.</p>	
7.	<p><b>THREE COUNTIES SECONDARY RE CONFERENCE 2026</b></p> <p>To receive an update on the Secondary RE Conference.</p>	
8.	<p><b>HEREFORDSHIRE PRIMARY RE CONFERENCE 2026</b></p> <p>To discuss the rescheduling of the Primary RE Conference.</p>	

**9. NATIONAL RE UPDATES**

To receive National RE Updates for SACRE from RE Today, Summer 2026 for Herefordshire SACRE.

**10. ROUNDTABLE UPDATES**

To receive any verbal updates on religious education matters in Herefordshire from SACRE members.

**11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

To agree the date of the next meeting:

Wednesday 18 November 2026, 10.00 am; or

Wednesday 25 November 2026, 10.00 am / 2.00 pm

A poll will be circulated to SACRE members for this purpose, along with potential dates for future meetings in March 2027 and June / July 2027.

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- Attend all council, cabinet, committee and sub-committee meetings unless the business to be transacted would disclose 'confidential' or 'exempt' information.
- Inspect agenda and public reports at least five clear days before the date of the meeting. Agenda and reports (relating to items to be considered in public) are available at [www.herefordshire.gov.uk/meetings](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/meetings)
- Inspect minutes of the council and all committees and sub-committees and written statements of decisions taken by the cabinet or individual cabinet members for up to six years following a meeting.
- Inspect background papers used in the preparation of public reports for a period of up to four years from the date of the meeting (a list of the background papers to a report is given at the end of each report). A background paper is a document on which the officer has relied in writing the report and which otherwise is not available to the public.
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- Have access to a list specifying those powers on which the council have delegated decision making to their officers identifying the officers concerned by title. The council's constitution is available at [www.herefordshire.gov.uk/constitution](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/constitution)
- Access to this summary of your rights as members of the public to attend meetings of the council, cabinet, committees and sub-committees and to inspect documents.

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The Herefordshire Council office at Plough Lane is located off Whitecross Road in Hereford, approximately 1 kilometre from the City Bus Station.

Directions, parking, and public transport information is available at [www.herefordshire.gov.uk/directories/council-offices/plough-lane/](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/directories/council-offices/plough-lane/)





Group C: Special education sector representative

It was reported that the council's constitution (paragraph 2.9.21 refers) identified that 'Other than for the Roman Catholic and Free Church representatives, the representatives should, as far as possible, be nominated by the appropriate local faith group.' It was suggested that the appropriate groups be approached for nominations initially and, if there were any remaining vacancies, SACRE members would be asked to utilise their networks to identify other potential nominees.

**Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Vice-Chairperson in the Chair.**

Action 1: That appropriate groups be approached to seek nominations for vacant SACRE positions.

## 28. WRITTEN PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No written questions had been received.

## 29. HEREFORDSHIRE SACRE ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25

Further to the discussion at the last meeting ([minute 17](#) refers), the revised SACRE annual report 2024/25 was received; this has been updated to include the Chair's foreword, updates from the Diocese of Hereford, minor amendments made at the last meeting, and Appendix 3: Herefordshire examination results.

**Resolved: That the SACRE Annual Report 2024/25 be agreed.**

Action 2: That the SACRE Annual Report 2024/25 be made available electronically.  
[see [Herefordshire SACRE Annual Report 2024-25 \(link\)](#)]

## 30. LOCAL RE AWARD

Further to the discussion at the last meeting ([minute 20](#) refers), it was noted that a sub-group of SACRE would meet remotely on Friday 27 March 2026 to consider the details for a local RE award scheme for schools.

Stephen Pett commented on the potential for a bronze award initially, requiring evidence of the completion of three activities. It was noted that silver and gold awards could be developed subsequently, requiring evidence of the completion of further activities, plus demonstration of the consequential impacts on practice and on pupil responses. It was suggested that the scheme could be launched at the primary RE conference.

The key points of the discussion included:

- i. The potential to present certificates to schools during assemblies, and to publicise the awards at the annual conferences and through the local authority bulletin for schools, Spotlight. It was suggested that an example copy of Spotlight be circulated to SACRE members for information.
- ii. The need to update the document 'A Guide to People and Places: Supporting RE and experiencing faith in Herefordshire schools' and for this to be made available to schools. Carolyn Ault and Louise Barker offered to review the document and to contact listed representatives to identify any necessary revisions.

**Resolved:** That the sub-group of SACRE be delegated to confirm the details for a local RE award scheme.

Action 3: That the following be made available to SACRE members:

- An example copy of the Spotlight bulletin for information; and
- 'A Guide to People and Places: Supporting RE and experiencing faith in Herefordshire schools'

[to be circulated to SACRE members alongside the next agenda]

### 31. THREE COUNTIES SECONDARY RE CONFERENCE

Stephen Pett outlined arrangements for the Three Counties Secondary RE Conference to be held on Tuesday 30 June 2026, including sessions on: 'Going beyond the proof text at GCSE'; 'Winning commitment for GCSE RS'; 'Raising achievement at GCSE'; 'News and resource updates'; and 'TeachMeet'.

SACRE members endorsed the conference programme, particularly the focus on GCSE and the opportunities to explore practical strategies to recruit and support students, especially boys. A comment was made about the challenges to recruit and retain specialist RE teachers.

**Resolved:** That the arrangements for the Secondary RE Conference be noted.

### 32. HEREFORDSHIRE PRIMARY RE CONFERENCE 2026

Stephen Pett outlined provisional arrangements for the Primary RE Conference to be held in July 2026, including sessions on: 'Disciplinary knowledge / ways of knowing in RE'; 'Green religion: case studies on caring for the Earth'; 'Bringing diverse, authentic voices into the classroom'; and 'Build vocabulary, empower learning in RE (and everywhere else)'.

Comments from SACRE members included: the push to embed oracy and enhance vocabulary knowledge across the curriculum; further to disciplinary knowledge / ways of knowing, it was suggested that the approach to assessment be explored; with reference to 'Green religion', attention was drawn to '[EcoJudaism - Our Faith In The Planet \(link\)](#)'

**Resolved:** That the arrangements for the Primary RE Conference be noted.

### 33. NATIONAL RE UPDATES

Stephen Pett introduced the National RE Updates from RE Today, Spring 2026 for Herefordshire SACRE.

*Curriculum and Assessment Review*

Further to the update at the last meeting ([minute 21](#) refers), about the [Curriculum and Assessment Review Final Report \(link\)](#), it was reported that an Expert Advisory Group was in place and key reference groups had been established. Following extensive engagement activity, it was expected that draft programmes of study for RE would be submitted soon to the Secretary of State. Notwithstanding the potential for complications during subsequent consultation and legislative phases, it was noted that the sector was largely positive about the developments.

Comments were made by SACRE members about the potential for the teaching of a diverse range of religions and worldviews in more schools, and the importance of using

appropriate terminology. It was reported that the next phase may include the development of exemplar materials to support the delivery of the National Curriculum.

#### *National Association of Standing Advisory Councils (NASACRE)*

Attention was drawn to the NASACRE training session 'So, you've joined your local SACRE...' to be held on 25 June 2026.

It was reported that NASACRE was campaigning to safeguard a role for local SACREs in National Curriculum RE provision.

#### *UK Supreme Court Rules in RE and Worship in Northern Ireland Schools*

Stephen Pett outlined the key findings of the judgment that were relevant to schools in England, including that RE must be 'objective, critical, and pluralistic', and the right of withdrawal was a legal right for parents.

It was noted that parents did not have to meet any criteria before a withdrawal request was granted, consequently schools may need to enhance prospectuses to explain the subject more thoroughly and to consider what alternative provision could be put in place.

The Vice-Chairperson suggested that [National RE Updates for SACRE \(link\)](#) could be shared with local schools.

**Resolved: That the National RE Updates, Spring 2026 be noted.**

### **34. ROUNDTABLE UPDATES**

SACRE members were invited to contribute verbal updates on religious education matters in Herefordshire, the key points included:

1. Tracy Westlake commented on recent contacts from schools and efforts to signpost them to relevant resources, and re-iterated the value of exploring oracy and vocabulary matters at the primary RE conference.
2. Carolyn Ault commented on a visit to a local school.
3. Councillor Peberdy suggested that consideration could be given to a briefing for councillors on RE in Herefordshire, particularly in view of developments arising from the Curriculum and Assessment Review, perhaps following the local government elections in May 2027. It was also suggested that the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People could be invited to attend SACRE annually.

### **35. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next scheduled meeting was noted: [Monday 22 June 2026, 10.00 am](#).

SACRE was invited to consider options for meeting dates in 2026/27. It was suggested that a poll be circulated to explore optimal date and time preferences for meetings in November 2026, March 2027, and June/July 2027.

The meeting ended at 11.05 am

**Chairperson**

# National RE Updates for SACRE from RE Today Summer 2026

## Curriculum and Assessment Review

The Curriculum and Assessment Review published their long-awaited report into changes to the curriculum in November 2025. Draft Programmes of Study were drafted earlier in the year, and widespread consultation with teachers and members of faith and belief communities led to a high level of agreement, before being handed to the DfE at the end of March.

We await the DfE's response and the public consultation on the Programmes of Study. Draft legislation will need to be written. The intended timeline is that the RE programmes would be ready in time to be included in the draft National Curriculum in spring 2027, ready for teaching from September 2028.

## EBacc and Accountability

The Curriculum and Assessment Review reported that the EBacc has constrained pupil choice post 14 (page 124). In November 2025, when the government responded to the Curriculum and Assessment Review, teachers of RE and other stakeholders were pleased to see that the damage inflicted on Religious Studies at GCSE by the English Baccalaureate might be addressed in the proposed changes to accountability measures. The DfE committed to reviewing Progress 8 and Attainment 8 with a breadth area made up of four GCSEs which will have to include subjects from two of the following

- Humanities (including Religious Studies)
- Creative Subjects
- Languages

Sadly, the revised structure which is currently the focus of a consultation, signals a U-turn, by adding science to the two breadth boxes that were offered for two of Creative, Humanities and Languages. RS is included in the Humanities alongside History and Geography.

NATRE encouraged SACREs to respond to the consultation – see details here:

<https://natre.org.uk/news/respond-now-to-protect-rs-and-curriculum-breadth/>

## New Government Cohesion Paper includes RE

A new cross-government publication from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government signals a renewed and significant focus on Religious Education as part of the UK's wider social cohesion agenda.

*Protecting What Matters: Towards a more confident, cohesive and resilient United Kingdom* explicitly links RE to building understanding, respect and shared values, committing to 'drive up standards in the teaching of Religious Education' and stating that government will 'carefully consider including Religious Education in the national curriculum, subject to the sector reaching consensus.'

The paper also recognises the role of SACREs at a national level, highlighting their contribution to local communities and signalling greater attention to their work through improved use of annual reports.

For teachers of RE, this matters. It places the subject firmly within current government priorities, not only as a curriculum area but as a key contributor to community cohesion and public understanding of religion and belief. It also reinforces the importance of the sector's ongoing work to build consensus around a high-quality national entitlement for all pupils.

The infographic on the next page draws out the key messages for the RE community.

## NATRE Primary RE Survey: call for teachers

NATRE carries out a survey of primary schools every two years. The Primary Survey is a chance for teachers to make sure the reality of RE in their classroom is heard where it counts. This evidence is used directly with government and Ofsted to influence decisions on curriculum, training and support. Previous surveys have exposed gaps in RE time and training, and driven national attention as a result. With major decisions about the future of RE underway, primary teachers must not be invisible.

All participating schools will receive a free NATRE resource and be entered into a prize draw.

It is helpful to have as many primary schools participating as possible, so SACRE may choose to make schools in the Local Authority aware of this survey. The survey itself takes just a few minutes, is completely anonymous, and is open until 31 July. Every response makes a difference.

Complete the survey here: [www.surveymonkey.com/r/3B7VF2R](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/3B7VF2R)

## NASACRE and Local Government Reorganisation

NASACRE is raising awareness with the Local Government Association and the Department of Education about the impact that the reorganisation of local government will have on SACREs. They have produced guidance for SACREs about the impact of this which can be downloaded from [Advice-for-SACREs-about-Local-Government-Reorganisation.pdf](#)

## The NASACRE Conference and AGM

The annual conference for National Association of SACREs was held in Birmingham on 18 May. It brought together teachers, advisers, councillors and religion and belief community representatives from across England to explore a theme that feels more vital than ever: *SACREs – Bringing communities together*. From the opening welcome to the final reflections, the day highlighted the unique role SACREs play in strengthening relationships, supporting high-quality RE and fostering social cohesion.

- Dr Vanessa Ogden spoke about the nation-building role of schools, and how SACREs are 'anchors for social harmony'.
- Deborah Weston, Chair of the RE Policy Unit, reported on the current situation on the proposed national curriculum for RE (still with the DfE, at time of writing).
- Amy Ark of the Faith and Belief Forum talked about how positive classroom encounters reduce prejudice and build empathy.

A write-up of the event can be found here: <https://nasacre.org.uk/2026/05/22/bringing-communities-together-reflections-from-the-nasacre-conference-2026/>

# RELIGIOUS EDUCATION & SACREs IN PROTECTING WHAT MATTERS

Key points from the MHCLG publication

## 1 COHESION & PURPOSE OF RE



1. RE is explicitly linked to social cohesion.

The paper situates RE within a wider education offer that supports cohesion, stating that education reforms will

“strengthen citizenship, British history, and religious education.”

This places RE alongside subjects seen as central to building shared understanding and social cohesion.



2. Faith and belief literacy is positioned as a public good.

The paper emphasises that improving understanding of religion and belief can promote

“inclusivity, understanding and respect.”

RE is implicitly part of this wider aim to strengthen religious literacy.



3. RE sits within a broader values and cohesion agenda.

The positioning of RE alongside aims such as promoting tolerance and tackling division reflects the paper's wider concern with

“a more confident, cohesive and resilient United Kingdom.”

RE is therefore embedded in a cross-government cohesion strategy.

## 2 STANDARDS & CURRICULUM DIRECTION



4. Government commits to raising standards in RE.

The document includes a clear commitment to

“drive up standards in the teaching of Religious Education.”

This is one of the most direct policy statements on RE in the paper.



5. Possible inclusion of RE in the National Curriculum is signalled.

The paper states:

“We will carefully consider including Religious Education in the national curriculum, subject to the sector reaching consensus on the content and approach to delivery.”

This frames inclusion as conditional on sector agreement rather than a confirmed reform.



6. Supportive direction, but limited operational detail.

While the language is positive—e.g. “drive up standards” and “carefully consider including” RE in the national curriculum—the paper does not set out implementation mechanisms, funding, or timelines. The commitment remains high-level and contingent, particularly on

“the sector reaching consensus.”

## 3 SACREs – ROLE & RECOGNITION



7. SACREs are explicitly recognised at national level.

The executive summary commits to

“promote the role of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs)”

This is a notable acknowledgement of SACREs within a cross-government policy document.



8. Focus on SACRE annual reports as a national evidence base.

The paper adds that this will be done by

“supporting improved analysis of their annual reports to better understand the role they play in communities.”

This elevates SACRE reporting as a tool for national insight, not just local accountability.



9. SACREs are framed as contributors to community cohesion.

Through the emphasis on understanding their

“role... in communities”

the paper implies SACREs are valued not only for syllabus and standards work, but also for their contribution to cohesion and inter-faith understanding.

## 4 POLICY POSITIONING



10. RE gains cross-government (not just DfE) visibility.

Because the commitments sit within a Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government publication rather than a DfE-only document, RE is being recognised as relevant to community policy, integration and resilience, not solely curriculum policy.



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

### OVERALL POLICY SHAPE



RE is positioned as a cohesion tool



SACREs are positioned as community actors



National Curriculum inclusion is possible but conditional



Direction is positive but not yet operational



Commitment remains high-level and contingent, particularly on “the sector reaching consensus.”

## NASACRE Training

NASACRE (National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education) continues to work to celebrate, support, strengthen and promote the work of local SACREs and represents their interests at a national level, including training for SACRE members.

NASACRE are offering training throughout the Spring Term to support the work of SACREs and for those undertaking specific roles in a SACRE. Places can be booked by emailing [admin@nasacre.org.uk](mailto:admin@nasacre.org.uk)

- 25 June 6.30-8.00 – So, you've joined your local SACRE...
- 17 Sept 6.30-8.00 – So, you've joined your local SACRE...

Both free session for any SACREs to attend

- 20<sup>th</sup> October 7-8pm SACRE annual reports: updates to the content and opportunities
- Free session for any SACREs to attend, specifically for those completing Annual Reports.
- November 2026 (various) 6.30-8.00. NASACRE in conversation (regional events)
- Free session – specifically for Chairs, Vice Chairs, SACRE consultants and LA link officers

## Events and publications to note

### Hannah Rich, *Beyond the Classroom: Informal Religion and Worldviews Education in the UK* (Theos, 2025)

This report shows that people learn about religions, beliefs and worldviews not only in schools but throughout everyday life — in youth and community work, arts and culture, public services, sport, the media, higher education and interfaith activity. It maps where this informal religious education is happening across the UK and highlights strong local examples alongside significant gaps.

Provision varies widely: diverse areas tend to offer more natural encounters and stronger interfaith networks, while elsewhere there is often hesitation or uncertainty about discussing religion and belief. The report argues that improving confidence and religious literacy across all sectors would create more opportunities for informal learning and help build a more cohesive society.

The report is available at: [www.theosthinktank.co.uk/research/2025/11/13/beyond-the-classroom-informal-religion-and-worldviews-education-in-the-uk](http://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/research/2025/11/13/beyond-the-classroom-informal-religion-and-worldviews-education-in-the-uk)

### Westhill/NASACRE Awards

The deadline for the next round of these awards is **28 February 2027**. SACREs wishing to apply are encouraged to start thinking about what they might like to achieve now. Organisers are especially looking for projects promoting unity, community and diversity. SACREs can bid for up to £12 000 for projects which will be completed by summer 2029.

The new 2-year cycle allows for SACREs to take more time over projects, creating the opportunity to develop ideas more fully and to bid for a larger grant. NASACRE hopes that this will allow for projects to have greater impact and leave a greater legacy. More information about the bid process and the criteria for the 2027 round will follow soon.

## Jewish Culture Month

The Board of Deputies has launched Jewish Culture Month from 16<sup>th</sup> May – 14<sup>th</sup> June 2026 – the Jewish month of Sivan. It celebrates British Jewish culture, community and creativity. So far, over 100 events are planned across the country, spanning food, comedy, art, architecture, fashion and more.

National institutions spotlighting their Jewish treasures include the British Museum, Tate Britain, Tate Modern, National Portrait Gallery, V&A, Museum of the Home and the Science Museum. Events are happening up and down the country, from Manchester (home to Britain's second largest Jewish community), to Norfolk, Newcastle, Stockport, Oxford, Leeds, Liverpool, Bath, Cambridge, Margate and many more.

To find out more, please go to: <https://jewishculturemonth.org.uk/>

SACRE may wish to advise schools that there are specific Jewish Culture Month in Schools resources to help in planning for this month: [Jewish Culture Month in schools | Jewish Culture Month](#) .

## Religious Media Centre updates

The Religion Media Centre is an impartial and independent organization aiming to increase further cohesion and understanding in society by helping the media report and understand religion and belief. It does not promote any one religion or belief and has no editorial line other than religion matters. Instead, it exists to provide accurate, timely and relevant information to the media, enabling the public to be better informed. You can sign up for a weekly bulletin that will keep you up to date with the latest news relating to religions and faith. It also has 130 factsheets ideal for subject knowledge for SACRE members or teachers.

<https://religionmediacentre.org.uk/>

## Training and support for teachers

### RE Hubs

Don't forget that the RE Hubs website offers extensive and growing links to people and places, locally and nationally. [www.re-hubs.uk](http://www.re-hubs.uk)

## Jerusalem Trust Summer Funding Round 2026 open for secondary schools

The Jerusalem Trust's Small Grants to Schools Scheme supports the teaching of Christianity within Religious Education. The scheme operates by providing schools with grants of up to £600 to purchase Christianity resources for use in RE lessons.

The scheme is open to state-funded schools in England and Wales.

Secondary school grants are currently still available this summer term. Schools should read the FAQs and the application criteria prior to submitting their funding request which can be accessed at [www.regrants.org.uk](http://www.regrants.org.uk) . Primary school grants are no longer open for summer term due to high demand.

## Upcoming RE Today courses for the Summer Term and beyond!

RE Today supports a number of SACREs, and offers a variety of training courses to teachers as well. See more details on any of these courses at [www.retoday.org.uk/school-support/professional-development-courses/](http://www.retoday.org.uk/school-support/professional-development-courses/)

### Cross-phase

- [NATRE introduction webinar](#)  
10 June 2026 (4.00-5.00pm)
- [Prepared for a complex world – briefing session on RE](#)  
17 June 2026 (4.30-6.15pm)

### Primary

- [Impactful teaching of Hindu Dharma - primary](#)  
2 July 2026 (3.30 am-5.00 pm) – Julia Diamond-Conway

### Secondary

- [Impactful teaching about non-religious worldviews – deepening subject knowledge](#)  
16 June (4.00-5.30 pm) – Stephen Pett
- [Understanding Christianity – Secondary](#)  
7<sup>th</sup> July 2026 (9.30 am – 3.30 pm) – Stephen Pett
- [Impactful teaching about Buddhism – deepening subject knowledge](#)  
8 July (4.00-5.30 pm) – Stephen Pett

A new series of **subject knowledge briefings** for primary and for secondary teachers is available – 90 minutes of high-quality support for deepening knowledge and understanding about matters of central importance in six major traditions. Details available [here](#).

RE Today also offers bespoke training and support for schools. See [here](#) for more information.

SACRE National News Updates from RE Today  
June 2026



# Local Councillor Support for Religious Education: Statutory Responsibilities, Community Confidence and National Developments



Religious Education (RE) remains one of the few curriculum areas where local authorities retain important statutory responsibilities. In an increasingly academised and centralised education system, Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs) continue to provide a valuable bridge between councils, schools, religion and belief communities, and wider civic life.



High-quality RE contributes directly to civic life. It helps young people understand religion and belief in contemporary society, supports respectful dialogue across difference, and develops critical thinking, ethical reflection and cultural literacy.

## 1. THE STATUTORY POSITION

Under the Education Act 1996, local authorities have a duty to:



establish and support a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)



convene an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) when required



review the local Agreed Syllabus at least every five years



publish and support arrangements for Religious Education and collective worship in maintained schools



take note of, and respond to, SACRE advice



RE is a statutory subject in all state-funded schools, although the legal arrangements differ between maintained schools, academies and schools with a religious character.

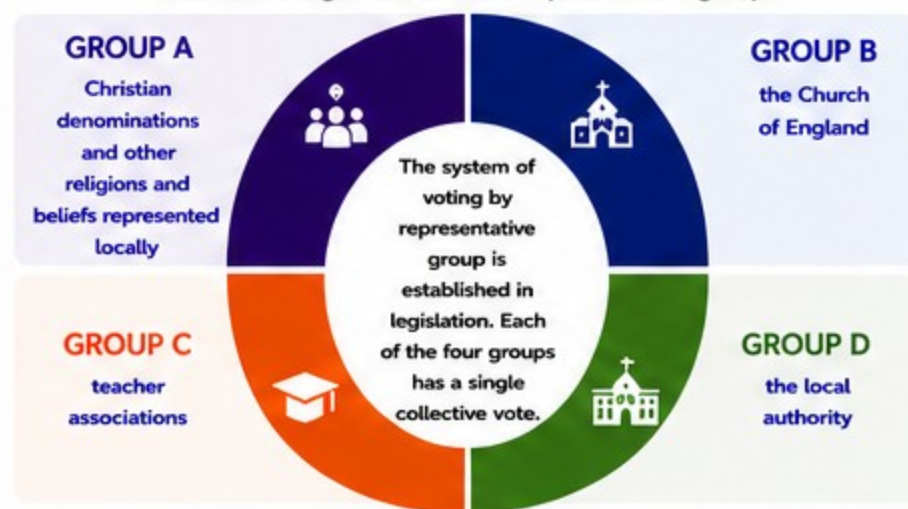
Councils therefore retain important statutory responsibilities for RE and collective worship within a wider educational landscape in which schools and academy trusts also exercise substantial curriculum responsibility.

## 2. SACRES AND THE ROLE OF ELECTED MEMBERS

SACREs are statutory advisory bodies established to support local authorities in fulfilling their responsibilities for Religious Education and collective worship. Local authorities are required by law to convene and support a SACRE, but SACREs are distinct statutory bodies rather than ordinary local authority committees.

Their work depends upon collaboration between schools, local authorities, religion and belief communities, teachers and elected representatives.

SACREs are organised into four representative groups:



This structure is intended to support balanced representation, dialogue and consensus-building across the SACRE.

Elected members serving within Group D bring an important democratic and civic perspective to SACRE discussions. Their role includes:

- ✓ helping ensure that SACRE advice reflects the needs and character of the local community
- ✓ supporting effective communication between the local authority and SACRE
- ✓ considering how SACRE work contributes to wider civic priorities, including educational opportunity and community confidence
- ✓ helping ensure that statutory responsibilities are fulfilled effectively and proportionately



Members contribute most effectively when discussions are grounded in:

- the statutory responsibilities of the authority
- professional educational expertise
- the representative nature of SACRE membership
- respectful dialogue across different viewpoints and traditions
- the educational interests of children and young people

## 3. THE CURRENT EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE

England's school system is now predominantly academised. Most secondary schools and many primary schools are academies and are therefore not required to follow the local Agreed Syllabus in the same way as maintained schools.



Academies are still required to provide Religious Education through their funding agreements, but many use trust-wide curricula or adapted versions of local syllabuses.

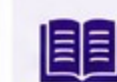


Schools with a religious character also operate within separate statutory and denominational arrangements.



In this context, SACRE influence increasingly depends upon professional expertise, the quality of support and advice offered to schools, and strong local relationships.

Successful SACREs therefore tend to focus on:



supporting rigorous and balanced RE



offering informed advice to the authority



supporting teachers and schools



helping different religion and belief communities work together



helping schools navigate complex issues relating to religion and belief

## 4. DRAFT NATIONAL CURRICULUM PROGRAMME OF STUDY

National discussion about the future of Religious Education is continuing following the government's Curriculum and Assessment Review (CAR).



Sector bodies like the RE Council of England and Wales, the National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE) and the National Association of SACREs, and religion and belief representatives, are working towards greater national coherence through the development of the Draft National Curriculum Programme of Study for RE.

These discussions aim to:



improve consistency and curriculum



strengthen academic rigour



ensure pupils encounter a broad range of religious and non-religious traditions



support teacher workload and curriculum planning



improve equality of access to strong RE provision

SACREs remain important within this evolving landscape because they:

- ✓ support local implementation
- advise councils on statutory responsibilities
- ✓ maintain local relationships and dialogue
- provide local expertise and insight

## 5. RE AND THE LAW

Courts have repeatedly affirmed that Religious Education in publicly funded schools should be objective, critical and pluralistic while reflecting both the religious traditions and contemporary diversity of Great Britain.



The existing legal settlement balances:

- the historic place of Christianity in British public life
- the diversity of modern Britain
- the rights of parents and communities
- the professional autonomy of schools and teachers
- protections for schools with a religious character

SACREs play an important role in supporting this balanced and lawful approach.

## 6. WHY THIS STILL MATTERS

Well-supported SACREs can help councils:



strengthen civic cohesion and community confidence



support schools and teachers



maintain informed dialogue across diverse communities



respond constructively during periods of tension or misunderstanding



promote respectful and informed civic engagement

