

- i. Pam Howell confirmed that an email had been sent to schools with a link to the revised syllabus; and

- ii. Stephen Pett agreed to provide a list of publications referenced at the Agreed Syllabus Launch: Secondary Schools; this was circulated to SACRE members following the meeting.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairperson.

16. WRITTEN PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No written questions had been received.

17. DRAFT SACRE ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25 DISCUSSION

Attention was drawn to a further iteration of the draft SACRE Annual Report 2024/25, including the addition of the Chair's foreword and updates from the Diocese of Hereford (paragraph 2.3.2); this had been circulated to SACRE members on 7 November 2025.

SACRE members suggested amendments, including:

- Paragraph 4.2, the inaugural biennial Interfaith Peace Service for International Day of Peace had been held at Hereford Cathedral, but it had also been held in other venues subsequently.
- Reference could be made to the joint lunch and chat sessions held by Herefordshire Interfaith Group and SACRE members.

The Chairperson requested that SACRE members identify any further amendments within the next week. It was noted that final examination results data would be needed prior to the publication of the Annual Report 2024/25.

18. PLANNING FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY CONFERENCES 2026

Secondary conference 2026

Stephen Pett reported that consideration was being given to a 'three counties' secondary conference, involving Herefordshire, Worcestershire, and Gloucestershire schools. It was recommended that the conference could focus on GCSE, potentially with the participation of experienced examiners.

SACRE members welcomed the proposal, noting that schools would appreciate the focus on raising attainment and the opportunity to work collaboratively. The Chairperson commented on the value of sharing knowledge and experiences across schools and counties.

Stephen Pett said that consideration would be given to a date at the end of June 2026 and to the venue; SACRE members noted the need for good access to the road network.

Primary conference 2026

SACRE members discussed options for the primary conference, the main points included:

- i. With attention drawn to the comment in the draft annual report 2024/25 that 'SACRE has found it hard to monitor collective worship', the potential to include collective worship was questioned. Given that requirements could vary by type of school, it was considered preferable to signpost schools to practical guidance and support through the local authority bulletin.

- ii. It was suggested that there could be focus on good examples of schools embedding the agreed syllabus and sharing best practice, including approaches to assessment.
- iii. It was also suggested that the breadth and depth of teaching could be explored.

Stephen Pett agreed to develop an outline, invited participants to identify examples to showcase, and said that a date would be identified in July 2026. It was noted that The Bishop of Hereford's Bluecoat School would be prepared to host the conference again.

19. TEACHER SUPPORT - NETWORK MEETINGS

Matters discussed by SACRE members during this item included:

- 1. Examples of pupil voice around RE were circulated in the meeting room by Tracy Westlake. These had been captured during primary school visits and demonstrated the high quality and creativity of the work being undertaken.
- 2. Access to genuine artefacts used by faith communities was problematic for some schools and this could limit engagement with pupils. SACRE members discussed the benefits and limitations of local loan collections. The Chairperson suggested that the list of speakers/visitors could identify people that were able to bring artefacts with them, particularly as this could enhance personal testimony and lived experience examples.
- 3. It was noted that many teachers were comfortable with Christianity units but were sometimes less confident with other units.
- 4. The limited time available to teachers to prepare for sessions and the challenges around active participation in online meetings. It was suggested that details of forthcoming network meetings could be circulated to schools via the local authority.

20. CELEBRATING RE - IDEAS FOR A LOCAL RE AWARD

Attention was drawn to a draft flyer promoting an RE award in a neighbouring local authority area which was free for schools to take part in; this had been circulated to SACRE members on 31 October 2025. Stephen Pett commented on discussions around launching a scheme in Herefordshire. Similar to a model used elsewhere, this could take the form of bronze and silver awards initially, with a gold award to be developed subsequently; each level would require evidence of the completion of a range of activities and initiatives.

SACRE members welcomed this suggestion, with comments made about the potential to raise the profile of the subject and to celebrate excellence in local schools.

It was agreed that a sub-group of SACRE should be convened to consider the matter further, including branding, award criteria, and moderation arrangements.

21. NATIONAL RE UPDATES (AUTUMN 2025)

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

Curriculum and Assessment Review

It was reported that, on 5 November 2025, the conclusions and recommendations of the independent panel had been published: [Curriculum and Assessment Review Final Report: 'Building a world-class curriculum for all' \(link\)](#).

Attention was drawn to headlines in relation to RE (page 109):

- 'The Review believes that RE should be moved to the national curriculum to improve access to high-quality provision and to prevent further diminishment'
- 'The Review ultimately wishes to see RE in the national curriculum, but it recognises that it is unrealistic for this to be achieved immediately. We therefore believe that a staged approach to reform is the most appropriate way forward. To this end, we recommend that the Government invites the sector to establish an independent task and finish group made up of representatives from faith bodies, secular groups and experts from the teaching and wider education sector, to develop a draft RE curriculum.'
- 'The group should also consider whether there would be benefit in changing the name of Religious Education.'

SACRE was advised that timelines had not been established to date, the National Content Standard for RE in England had been recognised as receiving 'consensus from across the sector and laid strong foundations for change' but was likely to be tested rigorously, and legislative changes would be required.

The inclusion of RE in the national curriculum was discussed and it was noted that agreed syllabuses were likely to remain in place for the next few years.

Initial Teacher Training (ITT) bursary for RE

It was reported that the ITT bursary for RE, re-introduced for the academic year 2024/25, would be withdrawn by the Department for Education from September 2026. It was noted that the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE) was campaigning to reverse the decision given the national shortage of RE teachers and the risks to university training courses.

Examination Results 2025

SACRE was advised about unvalidated data which showed Herefordshire GCSE results against nearby counties, the West Midlands and England. It was noted that the data indicated a decrease in upper grades, reinforcing the need to focus on GCSE at the secondary conference.

Overviews were provided on the other matters referenced in the update paper, including Ofsted's 'Renewed education inspection framework' and associated toolkits which clarified the place of RE as part of the basic curriculum.

22. ROUNDTABLE UPDATES

SACRE members provided verbal updates, the principal points included:

- i. The Bishop of Hereford had recently hosted an interfaith event to mark the beginning of Interfaith Week 2025.
- ii. A number of Herefordshire schools were included in the list of Statutory Inspection of Anglican & Methodist Schools for the year 2025/26.
- iii. There had been an increase in the numbers of parents withdrawing pupils from school trips to mosques, prompted by misinformation about potential protests.

23. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as [Wednesday 25 March 2026, 10.00 am](#).

The Chairperson invited members to identify candidates for vacant positions on SACRE. It was noted that some faith group representatives had not been present for a number of meetings and it was suggested that remote attendance could be facilitated if necessary; however, such participants would not be able to vote on any decisions taken.

The meeting ended at 11.40 am

Chairperson