

Minutes of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)

05/02/2025 – MS Teams

Present

Name	Role/Representative	Initials
Bev Petch (Chair)	Chair	BP
Ian Carnell	Birmingham Diocese and United Reformed Church	IC
Cllr Heather Delaney	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	Cllr HD
Donna Grosvenor (Vice-Chair)	Teacher, St Mary & St Margaret's CE Primary	DG
Cecil Knight	Methodist Church representative	CK
Michael Lancashire	Humanist representative	ML
Cllr Sardul Marwa	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	Cllr SM
Cllr Annette Mackenzie	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	Cllr AM
Claire Potts	School Adviser Solihull MBC (Observer)	CP
Afifa Tufail	Solihull Muslim Association	AT
Cllr Wazma Qais	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	Cllr WQ
Paul Wilkinson	Church of Jesus Christ and Latter-Day Saints	PW
Cllr Alison Wilson	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	Cllr AW

Apologies

David Harris	Education Adviser – Catholic Schools	DH
Anne Hollis	Teacher, Dorridge Primary	AH
Hannah Lowe	Teacher, TGA Solihull	HL
Michael Lancashire	Humanist representative	ML
Cllr Prish Sharma	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	4
Kim Sherlock	Note taker	KES

Consent was sought and given by attendees for today's meeting to be recorded.

Welcome and introductions

BP welcomed everyone and introduced Claire Potts who has recently joined the school improvement team. This was an important meeting as it was the last opportunity to look at how the group moved forwards with the agreed syllabus. BP has had lots of conversations with RE Today and had spoken to the procurement team at Solihull MBC to discuss what needs to be done to commission RE Today. From a formal finance point of view, because the cost is less than £10,000, she was informed that the work won't have to go out to tender to lots of different suppliers.

IC would like it to be noted that he also represents the United Reformed Church as well as Birmingham Diocesan.

Minutes of the last meeting and actions

The minutes of the last meeting held on 15/01/2025 were agreed as accurate and approved by members.

Action:

The launch date is now confirmed as 9th April and will be online to help reduce costs. The primary launch will be in the morning and the secondary launch in the afternoon. BP has a planning meeting scheduled with Ian Nicholson from RE Today who will be organising the launch along with another adviser for primary.

Action:

BP had carried out some online research and 59 local authorities are currently using RE Today for their locally agreed syllabus.

Update on progress as we work towards a new agreed syllabus

BP said that moving forward in terms of numbers of schools that will require a licence for the agreed syllabus, she is currently categorising all schools i.e. academies/voluntary aided/voluntary controlled to determine which type are required to teach the agreed syllabus. She wanted members to bear in mind that there are several schools who do not teach religious education, so buying licences for them would be pointless. CK asked if the figures could be sent out to members.

Action: KES to send out figures to members.

She said that RE Today are very keen to proceed with this work and have suggested using a syllabus B plus model for Solihull. She has a planning meeting on Friday 8th February, so she will establish what the difference is between a syllabus A and syllabus B plus model. She had also received a new financial quote from RE Today of just over £7,000 (originally £9,000).

BP screen shared a spreadsheet from the National Association for Teachers of RE which demonstrates the percentage of curriculum time that young people in our secondary schools are learning religious education along with the number of full course GCSEs taken and A levels. She said that the number of schools in Solihull who offer a level of religious education or religious studies is quite low, but members might perhaps be able to encourage schools to promote RE knowing what a demanding and rewarding subject it is and the huge impact it has on young people's careers and their futures.

DG asked who is responsible for reminding schools that they should be teaching RE. BP replied that because our secondary schools are all academies, perhaps this is the regional schools' commissioner. She had looked at the National Association of SACRES website where there is a model letter which could be used to challenge schools who are not meeting their statutory requirements. However, she felt it best to have a conversation with them first because some school websites may not give accurate information. According to the spreadsheet, there are three schools in the north of the borough who don't teach religious education. BP will arrange a face-to-face conversation with the headteachers of these schools to offer support on getting RE back onto their curriculum. However, she pointed out that two of these schools are currently categorised as "inadequate" so this will be a very challenging time for them.

Cllr WQ asked the chair whether the spreadsheet should include the 'type' of school because of legal requirements. BP said where it becomes complicated is when a school that was previously a maintained school became an academy, it is difficult to ascertain whether they've ever been a voluntary controlled or voluntary aided school. She said she really needed two or three people to help her decide what category each school falls into. DG and ML said they would be happy to volunteer their time in assisting BP with this task. DG could do a Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday if she knows the date in advance.

Action: BP to arrange a face-to-face meeting with DG/ML.

DG thought it was interesting to note that TGA Kingshurst do not teach religious education, but TGA Solihull do. BP said there is also disparity between schools in the Arden Trust. Even within a MAT, schools aren't necessarily replicating what the other schools within the MAT are teaching.

ML and BP felt it would be useful to have a benchmark to understand if schools are in line with what is happening nationally. BP will go back to Deborah Weston from NASACRE to ask that question. ML offered his support in helping BP with number crunching.

Action: BP to contact Deborah Weston at NASACRE.
ML to offer his support.

Consulting with schools; agree the questions we will be asking

At the agreed syllabus conference held in January, BP shared some potential questions with the group asking for their suggestions/comments. DG screen shared her changes with members and Cllr AW said she had suggested asking how councillors, local faith groups, governors etc might enhance the student experience of RE education in Solihull. BP said she is talking with the community team at the Council, who have made strong links with the interfaith network and that the person who leads this team said they are doing some work around community cohesion and faith groups working together. He asked BP if there should be reference made around our schools and SACRE.

BP has sent him a draft with some words about schools, children and young people and their entitlement to high quality RE supported through the work of SACRE.

She thought that perhaps SACRE should communicate with schools explaining what their role is and asking them what sort of help and advice they would value from SACRE including guidance to a page on the general Council website which will be dedicated to the role of SACRE.

ML volunteered to pull a draft together for BP who said that the National Association of SACRE produces lots of guidance around SACRE, so some of this could be included in his text.

Action: ML to draft a document and BP to share login details so he has access to the NASACRE website.

NATRE document – legal requirements for RE in schools

BP referred to an article on the NATRE website from Paul Smalley, chair of the National Association and Neil Lawson from the Department for Education.

[NATRE Report on the provision for RE 2018.pdf](#)

AOB:

Electing a vice-chair to the SACRE

BP said that at the January meeting, the agreed syllabus conference discussed the need for a vice-chair. There had been two nominations, but one of the nominees does not currently have capacity to fulfil the role. To vote, BP referred to the constitution and the four different groups. Each group has one vote. BP asked CK how he proposed the group could move forward in electing a vice-chair at this meeting and he said it was perfectly in line and legal for members to vote, particularly as there was only one nomination. BP then suggested to members if they were they happy to vote for DG as the vice-chair, to raise their hands.

The decision was unanimous in favour of DG, and BP asked if she accepted the role. This role would be primarily supporting the chair, including taking part in some outside meetings, and chairing any meetings that the chair could not attend. BP offered her warmest congratulations to DG and added that having her as vice-chair will make such a difference.

Review process for the agreed syllabus

ML asked prior to the launch of the agreed syllabus, if will there be a review process. BP said whilst SACRE have commissioned RE Today to do this work, the syllabus will be for our Solihull schools, so the group have a vested interest and need to follow this up professionally.

Consultation process

DG asked for the date when a consultation will be going out to schools. BP said it was her intention to send this out on the first Monday after February half term asking schools for their responses and for any artwork they wish to submit.

Hindu representative

Cllr AW said that some residents have asked if there is a Hindu representative for SACRE. CK said there had been a Hindu representative in the past, but a replacement had been difficult to find. BP said there should be a review of membership on an annual basis. The SACRE membership should be as representative of the demography of Solihull as it possibly can be. CK suggested contacting the faiths panel at Solihull Council who may be able to help with appointing a Hindu representative.

Conflict of interest form

Cllr WQ mentioned again her conflict of interest as an employee of DfE, and also her role as chair of governor for a school. BP replied that KES and herself are continuing to find an appropriate form for her to sign given her unique circumstance.

Action: KES to forward a conflict-of-interest form to Cllr WQ once an appropriate form has been obtained.

Date of next SACRE meeting

Wednesday 26th March 2025, 4:30pm-6:15pm via Microsoft Teams.

The meeting closed at 5:30pm

I confirm that these minutes are a true and accurate representation of the SACRE meeting.



Bev Petch, Chair of Solihull SACRE, 05/02/2025