

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

14/01/2026 – MS Teams/Committee Room 4 Civic Suite

Present

Name	Role/Representative	Initials
Claire Potts (Chair)	Senior education improvement adviser Solihull MBC	CP
Donna Grosvenor (Vice-Chair)	Teacher St Mary & St Margaret's CE Primary School	DG
Ian Carnell	Church of England and United Reformed Churches	IC
Councillor Michael Carthew	Solihull MBC	Cllr MC
Councillor Jean Hamilton	Solihull MBC	Cllr JH
David Harris	Catholic Church	DH
Cecil Knight	Methodist Church	CK
Councillor Sardul Marwa	Solihull MBC	Cllr SM
Councillor Wazma Qais	Solihull MBC	Cllr WQ
Tanwistha Sarkar	Hindu representative	TS
Afifa Tufail	Solihull Muslim Association	AT
Paul Wilkinson	Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints	PW
Councillor Alison Wilson	Solihull MBC	Cllr AW

Apologies

Name	Role/Representative	Initials
Keith Farquhar	Birmingham Diocesan	KF
Selina Giles	Teacher Castle Bromwich Junior School	SG
Michael Lancashire	Humanist representative	ML

Welcome and introductions

CP opened the meeting, thanking members for their continued involvement. She also welcomed the new Hindu representative Tanwistha Sarkar and confirmed that today's meeting would be recorded for accuracy.

CP briefly reviewed the previous meeting's key points, including the constitution and collective worship work (led by Bev) now in place.

The NASACRE conference date is confirmed as **18 May 2026** (details pending).

Minutes of previous meeting held on 15/10/2025

Members confirmed they had received and reviewed the previous minutes. No amendments were required, and the minutes were collectively approved. CP thanked KES for preparing the minutes and documentation for circulation.

Local authority RE website

CP introduced the Solihull Council's RE in Schools [webpage](#), originally updated by Bev Petch, prior to her retirement.

The website currently includes an overview of the agreed syllabus, information about SACRE membership, and details about meetings, including how the public can access them. At present, the site fulfils basic compliance requirements. Although the website is currently quite simple, it already contains useful documents covering both the national and local RE context, as well as statutory reports.

CP also said that following a very productive discussion with DH, examples from other SACREs were reviewed and identified significant potential to expand and strengthen Solihull's online presence. More could potentially be offered to better support schools and local community groups.

CP asked members whether they were happy for this website to serve as the central platform for sharing information and whether there were any concerns or questions about using it in this way.

Members emphasised the value of the site as a "one stop shop" for RE materials.

There was agreement that resources should ultimately support teachers directly and link with national RE Hub materials.

DG suggested promotion through the weekly *Headlines* newsletter to ensure school visibility.

Right to withdraw advice

CK led a discussion on the draft guidance addressing parental requests to withdraw children from RE or collective worship. Key points included clarifying legal obligations, supporting schools in handling sensitive conversations with families, and ensuring headteachers have clear, confident messaging. The guidance emphasises listening to parents, clarifying misunderstanding about RE and collective worship and encouraging inclusion where possible. It also includes a model letter to support governors and headteachers.

DH suggested refining certain vocabulary to avoid misinterpretation.

Guidance on fasting - Islam

AT presented a comprehensive guidance document on supporting Muslim pupils during Ramadan and contextualising fasting across faiths.

Members agreed it would be beneficial to expand the guidance into a broader multi-faith resource addressing spiritual practices, school considerations, and inclusive messaging.

Highlights from the guidance included:

- Fasting exists within several faith traditions (Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and others).
- Winter fasting (for the next decade) will have minimal impact on the school day due to short daylight hours.
- Students should continue normal routines where possible, with adjustments only where necessary (e.g., very strenuous PE).
- The importance of prayer space, spiritual discipline and ethical behaviours during fasting.
- Optional school activities suggested (e.g., “fast of the tongue”, charity-linked hunger lunches, reflective posters).
- Booklist and quotations included for further resources.

Members praised the document for its clarity, depth, tone and respectful explanation of lived experience. They suggested including publishers and dates in the booklist. There was discussion around presenting the document as coming “from the Muslim community” rather than from SACRE generically.

DH and others emphasised including fasting practices across multiple faiths to encourage connection and understanding and TS offered to provide Hindu fasting information. Cllr SM clarified that Sikhism does not have organised fasting traditions.

Links with Solihull Faith Forum – places of worship guidance

PW and Cllr AW updated members on recent conversations with the Faith Forum. The Forum previously compiled a list of places of worship but this is now outdated. CP will contact the new chair to discuss collaborative work, particularly around supporting schools with visits and interfaith activities. Potential attendance at a future SACRE meeting was suggested.

RE Hub update

Local teachers Hannah Lowe and Selina Giles have expressed an interest in establishing a Solihull RE Hub aligned to national RE hubs. The hub will aim to strengthen collaboration between RE teachers, share resources, promote best practice, and support curriculum development. Further details will be brought to the next meeting.

Future meeting – July 2026 Face-to-Face

DG confirmed that St Mary & St Margaret's CE Primary School in Castle Bromwich will host the SACRE meeting on **Wednesday 1st July 4pm-6pm**. This will allow members to observe RE practice within a school environment and strengthen links with school communities.

Members thanked DG and her headteacher for offering the venue.

Any other business

Community Cohesion/ Far Right activity concerns

Cllr MC raised concerns about the national rise in far-right narratives and their impact on local minority faith communities.

Members discussed:

- The importance of SACRE promoting unity, understanding and accurate information about faiths.
- Using the website launch to emphasise shared values across faiths.
- SACRE's role in supporting community cohesion alongside the Faith Forum.

CK confirmed he had previously written to local Jewish leaders offering SACRE's support following antisemitic incidents.

FEAST presentation

PW introduced “FEAST,” a charity promoting positive dialogue between young people of different faiths/backgrounds.

CP will invite the National Director (Jill Appleton) to present at the next meeting.

Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday 22 April 2026 4:30pm-6:15pm - Teams

The meeting closed at 5:45pm

Action	Owner	Deadline
Suggestion to promote the RE for Schools website through the weekly <i>Headlines</i> newsletter to ensure school visibility	CP	
Refine withdrawal guidance wording	CK/DH	Before publication
Finalise fasting guidance	AT/CP	Before next meeting
Provide Hindu fasting information for inclusion	TS	Before next meeting
Contact Chair of Faith Forum re: collaboration/attendance	PW/CP	Before next meeting
Contact Sikhs for Solihull and share details	CIlr SM/PW	ASAP
Continue development of Solihull RE Hub and report back	CP/teachers	Next meeting
Invite FEAST's Director to next SACRE meeting	CP	Before next meeting