

Minutes

of the Virtual Meeting of the

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Monday 10 March 2025

held via Microsoft Teams

Meeting Commenced: 4:02pm Meeting Concluded: 4:47pm

Attendees:

Councillors: Caritas Charles (Chairperson)

Apologies: None

Absent: Martin Williams

Group A – Christian and other religious denominations:

Present: Don Cameron (Humanists UK), Tom Leimdorfer (Society of Friends - Quakers)

Apologies: None

Absent: Martin Taylor (Free Churches, URC, Baptist, Methodist)

Vacancies: Buddhist Community, Catholic Community, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Greek Orthodox Community, Hindu Community, Jewish Community, Muslim Community, Sikh Community

Group B – Church of England

Present: Louise Jenkins (Diocese of Bath and Wells)

Apologies: Tonya Nixon (Diocese of Bath and Wells)

Absent: None

Group C – Teachers Associations

Present: Collette Miyagawa (SEND Representative), Stephen Webber (PHANS)

Apologies: Rebecca Poole (Primary School Representative)

Absent: Jane Arney (Primary School Representative), Lorraine Brawn (Primary School Representative), Matthew Gray (PCSA - Secondary School Representative)

Vacancies: Association of Teachers and Lecturers, NUT Primary, NUT Secondary, Secondary Heads Association, SHINS, VOICE

Officers from North Somerset Council: Helen Caldwell (Interim Head of Learning and Achievement), Sarah McGahern (Early Years Consultant – Children's Services), Pip Hesketh (Assistant Director – Education Partnerships, Children's Services), Jesse Bellamy (Committee Services Support Officer)

Other: Ian Nicholson (RE Today)

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received and noted from Tonya Nixon (Church of England) and Rebecca Poole (Teachers Associations).

2. Notes of Previous Meeting of 21 January 2025 for Approval

The notes were agreed to be an accurate record of the meeting of 21 January 2025.

3. Attendance at Meeting of 2 July 2024

It was agreed that the details of attendance for the meeting of 2 July 2024 were accurate.

4. North Somerset SACRE Report (Draft)

The draft report was presented by Ian Nicholson, who confirmed that all the data from 2023/24 had been received, and the changes requested at the last SACRE meeting had been carried out. The SACRE report met all the criteria required by the DfE. The deadline for submission of the report had been extended to 31 March.

Ian advised that he was waiting for an update on outcomes from the DfE, and was also waiting for a response back from NASACRE. A foreword from the SACRE Chairperson was required for the report. When these had been received, the North Somerset SACRE report would be uploaded to the website.

5. Workforce Data (attached)

The report was presented by Ian Nicholson. Every year in November the DfE sent a census to schools to record data regarding staffing levels, and the amount of time spent teaching each subject. However, it was not a statutory requirement for schools to provide data on the amount of time spent teaching each subject.

Of the schools which had been sent the census, three did not provide this information, but it was noted that two of their websites indicated RE was being taught at some level. Five of the schools showed the amount of time devoted to RE as part of the curriculum, which also covered religion and ethics, religion and philosophy etc. Although the Deering Report (1994) recommended 5% curriculum time for RE, the decision on how much time to spend teaching RE remained with individual schools.

Research from NATRE had shown that disadvantaged pupils who studied RE at GCSE level performed better in other subjects.

A question was asked as to whether there was any further action the SACRE could take to monitor the amount of time spent teaching RE. It was advised that SACRE could write to schools as a statutory committee of a local authority to comment on how RE was being delivered, and to ask which agreed syllabus was being used. Schools could also be invited to SACRE meetings to discuss this.

SACREs had been invited to speak with teachers regarding RE on the curriculum, and this was particularly useful for Academies as they had a legal agreement as part of their funding to teach RE.

The Committee agreed that the following actions were to be taken going forwards:

- that information be gathered from schools, as well as from data provided by the DfE, to gain an accurate idea of how much time was being spent on teaching RE in schools
- that representatives from schools be invited to attend a SACRE meeting to discuss the teaching of RE.

6. GCSE and A Level Data for 2023 and 2024 (attached)

Ian Nicholson presented the report. It was noted that QAN numbers were different exam boards and syllabuses. Schools generally chose either AQA or EDUCAS.

North Somerset showed very positive figures in terms of GCSE results. Six schools within North Somerset were providing RE at A Level which was a very good percentage, with two schools in particular doing well for A* grades. This was important as RE tended to result in less A* grades than other subjects. NATRE were currently doing an investigation on this.

7. Recruitment of Members for Group A (Christian and other religious denominations)

It was asked whether the SACRE wanted to suggest changes to the composition of Group A, so as to more accurately reflect the actual religious demographics of North Somerset. Of the 45.3% of residents who responded to the 2021 ONS Census, the data was as follows: 40.4% Christian, 0.3% Buddhist, 0.2% Hindu, 0.1% Jewish, 0.6% Muslim, 0.1% Sikh, 0.5% no religion.

The local authority could recommend other faiths to join, but this should be discussed with existing SACRE members beforehand. The SACRE should represent the needs of children from Early Years all the way through to post-16 education.

Due to the representative for the Free Churches (Free Churches, URC, Baptist, Methodist) having not been present at SACRE meetings for the 2024-25 year it was suggested that other members of the Methodist Church be asked to join. There were also a number of ecumenical churches within North Somerset which could be approached to ask if they would like to join.

8. Meeting Dates for 2025-26

The proposed dates were as follows:

Tuesday 15 July 2025 – 4pm

Tuesday 18 November 2025 – 4pm

Tuesday 10 March 2026 – 4pm

There were no objections to the proposed dates.

9. Any Other Business

Stephen Webber stated that he preferred to have his first name written in full as 'Stephen' and not 'Steve' when recorded in Minutes and Notes. This would be reflected in the meeting Minutes and Notes going forwards.

Ian Nicholson informed the meeting that the NASACRE national conference would be taking place on 19 May 2025 and would be open to all SACRES which were a part of NASACRE.

Louise Jenkins gave information about the Bath and Wells RE Conference which was to take place on 2 May 2025.

Cllr Charles noted that he would be stepping down as Chairperson of SACRE after 2025-26. However, he would still be Chairperson until May 2025, and so would still provide the foreword for the North Somerset SACRE Report.