

**MINUTES OF THE STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
(SACRE)**

Held as online meeting on Thursday 9 October 2025 at 5pm

Attendees (in remote attendance):

GROUP A (A committee of persons representing such Christian denominations and other religions and denominations of such religions as, in the opinion of the authority, will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area)	Saghar Forouhi (Baha'i) Bhupinder Singh (Sikhism) - Chair Sally Strauss (Judaism) Michelle Goldsmith (Humanism) Nitin Palan (Hinduism)
GROUP B (A committee of persons representing the Church of England)	Kyriacos Papasavva
GROUP C (A committee of persons representing such associations representing teachers as, in the opinion of the authority, ought to be represented, having regard to the circumstances of the area)	Amira Ghalib
GROUP D (A committee of persons representing the authority)	Cllr Robert Johnson

In attendance:	Nadia Nadeem (SACRE/RE Advisor) Shirley Parks (Brent Council – Director Education Partnerships and Strategy) Helen Tyler (Brent Council – Lead Professional for School Effectiveness Service) Abby Shinhmar (Brent Council - Governance Team)
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1. Welcome and Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Helen Tulloch, Councillors Mahmood and Nerva, Amanda Whelan (Roman Catholic faith representative), Michelle Dawson Teaching Association representative and Shaun Cremin.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Matter Arising

It was **AGREED** to approve the minutes of the previous SACRE meeting held on Tuesday 22 July 2025.

Members were advised that following endorsement by representatives of the Teaching Association membership Group the determinations presented to the previous meeting had been confirmed as approved

3. Election of Vice Chair

As a result of the previous meeting not having been quorate, it was **AGREED** to confirm the appointment of Bhupinder Bhasin as new Chair of Brent SACRE.

The Chair informed SACRE that Ian Slade (Vice Chair) had unfortunately advised that due to competing commitments he would need to resign as a member of SACRE which had also created a vacancy as Vice-Chair. In thanking Ian Slade for his contribution towards SACRE during his time as a member, nominations were then sought to fill the vacancy as Vice-Chair. Following the submission of a nomination, it was **AGREED** that Kyriacos Papasavva be appointed to fill the vacancy as the new Vice Chair of Brent SACRE.

4. Determinations

No determinations were submitted for consideration at the meeting.

5. SACRE's Core Responsibilities

Helen Tyler, Lead Professional for School Effectiveness Service, Brent Council, drew member's attention to the "Role, Function and Good Practice for SACRE Members" document, which had been circulated with the agenda and had been supplemented by an additional document provided by Nadia Nadeem, SACRE Advisor, "Activist SACREs in 2024 35+ things a good SACRE could do". Having introduced the documents, members were advised they had been provided to support a wider discussion and consideration of the role of SACRE and its members and how this could be developed in Brent.

Following this the Chair welcomed questions and comments from members of SACRE with the following noted:

- Sally Strauss highlighted that following the well-publicised attack on the Manchester synagogue and also mosques, RE was crucial in the current climate. The recently distributed RE Newsletter had been very beneficial and it was positive that the Chair was offering visits to the Sikh Temple (gurudwara). As a result, the suggestion was made that a Sub-Group be set up to review the scope and current range of activities being offered through Brent SACRE and the role which members could play in support of developing levels of engagement with local schools, including visits by different religious groups.

This proposal was supported by other members of SACRE who felt it would provide a focus to make suggestions for improvements, raise awareness of Brent SACRE and its role in seeking to support and work with schools to

enhance the provision of RE and agreed syllabus. Shirley Parks highlighted the need to be clear about the purpose of school visits and role of SACRE, recognising that whilst it would be possible for SACRE to observe and contribute towards assemblies etc their members would not have a role in assessing the quality of teaching. As the Multi-Faith Forum already worked with schools, Shirley Parks suggested any sub-group should also seek to link with the Multi-Faith Forum to find a way forward as well as seeking to utilise existing links members had individually with schools and faith organisations with examples highlighted by Councillor Johnson and Nitin Patel of visits and education tours already offered by their faith organisations.

- Nitin Palan advised that he was a Trustee at the Neasden Temple and had been hosting school visits for over 20 years with an offer also extended to host members of SACRE for a visit. As it was Diwali in two weeks times, members of SACRE were invited to the temple for a visit. Nitin Palan had also worked with the Multi-Faith Forum previously as well as working with Christian organisations in order to support young people.

As other examples, reference was made to the Jewish Living Exhibition as well as the list of accredited speakers provided through the RE Hub who were available to visit schools, which included the Chair, Sally Strauss and Saghar Forouhi as SACRE members. Nadia Nadeem advised that any other members of SACRE interested in becoming accredited would be able to complete the necessary course.

Shirley Parks supported the idea of establishing a Working Group to consider the wider development of SACREs role and links that could be developed with the Multi-Faith Forum given the work they were already involved in delivering within schools and structure it was felt this could provide in seeking to add positive value.

Using the content of the good practice document provided on the Role & Function of SACRE Members as a basis for development, it was therefore **AGREED**

- (1) to establish a SACRE Working Group to review and take the work forward with the Chair, Saghar Forouhi, Nitin Palan and Sally Strauss appointed as members on behalf of SACRE.
- (2) to receive an update on progress made by the Working Group at the next SACRE meeting in February 2026.

6. General RE Update

SACRE received an update from Nadia Nadeem, SACRE Advisor which covered the following issues:

- A review of the National Curriculum was underway with the Curriculum and Assessment Review interim report (March 2025) highlighting the need for a refreshed, inclusive, and balanced curriculum, including RE. This had been supported by the Religious Education Council (REC) who had called for a National Content Standard for RE as well as elevating RE to National Curriculum status.

- The proposal within the Education (Assemblies) Bill to remove the requirement for collective worship in schools without a religious character, replacing it with inclusive assemblies.
- The ongoing push for RE to gain stronger status and accountability given the trend towards a 'religion & world views' approach. Some people did not practice a religion or practices varied and due to a range of lived experience with a world view therefore deemed appropriate and the equity and quality of RE provision remaining a major concern combined with the decline in A-level RS uptake in 2025.
- SACRE members could access free webinars on the RE Hub as well as see the roles of SACRE and ways to be an effective network with the development of positive links to the Multi-Faith Forum also welcomed.

With no further issues raised, SACRE **AGREED** to note the update provided.

7. **NASACRE Update**

SACRE received an update from Nadia Nadeem, SACRE Advisor which covered the following issues:

- On 11 March 2025, NASACRE had been registered as a charity with a new constitution in the process of being adopted. In addition, NASACRE had released an updated Handbook which aimed to clarify the distinction between statutory obligations and advisory guidance whilst also incorporating guidance on the inclusion of non-religious worldview representation and NASACRE engaged in debates on representation of non-religious worldviews in SACREs.
- Details were also provided on the NASACRE 2025 Conference & Workshops Theme as well as Workshops on RE Quality Mark (REQM), controversial issues, interfaith dialogue with an analysis of annual SACRE reports by Dr David Hampshire). This was supported by a focus on evaluation of SACRE functions via REQM and in encouraging SACREs to engage with contentious issues and equitable membership.
- The ongoing support & training offer available to SACREs and Members. Members were also reminded they could access free webinars on the RE Hub as well as see the roles of SACRE and ways to create an effective network with the development of positive links to the Multi-Faith Forum also welcomed.
- In terms of upcoming issues, NASACREs role in advocating for statutory changes or elevation of RE's status was highlighted alongside the provision of guidance on non-religious worldview inclusion and equity and offer of toolkits for monitoring/evaluating RE quality and expanded professional development for SACREs, which it was felt also linked with the work being taken forward through the Working Group which had been established.

The Chair thanked the SACRE Advisor for her reports and the RE Newsletter. In noting that the Interfaith Network had now closed details were sought on the provision

of a calendar for all upcoming key religious festivals, which Nadia Nadeem advised continued to be available in the SHAP calendar.

With no further issues raised, SACRE **AGREED** to note the update provided.

8. **Any Other Business**

It was agreed for the next SACRE meeting to be held in Neasden Temple as a way of learning about different faiths. Nitin Palan also extended a welcome to all SACRE members to the Diwali event at Neasden Temple.

9. **Dates of Future Meetings**

SACRE NOTED the remaining date identified for meetings during the 2025-26 academic year, as follows:

- Thursday 5 February 2025 at 5pm

As a result of the offer extended during the meeting and members preference to reintroduce at least one in person meeting per year it was **AGREED** that the February 2026 meeting be held at Neasden Temple.

The meeting closed at 7:52pm

Bhupinder Bhasin
Chair