

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

Thursday 5 February 2026 at 5pm

Held as a hybrid meeting at the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir (Neasden Temple)

Attendees:

GROUP A <i>(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)</i>	Manhar Mehta (Jainism) Saghar Forouhi (Baha'i) Bhupinder Singh (Sikhism) - Chair Michelle Goldsmith (Humanism) Upasana Chag (Hinduism) Yazad Bhadha (Zoroastrianism) Dr Karishma Koka Kavita – Zoroastrianism (online)
GROUP B <i>(A committee of persons representing the Church of England)</i>	
GROUP C <i>(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)</i>	Amira Ghalib
GROUP D <i>(A committee of persons representing the authority)</i>	Cllr Robert Johnson Cllr Arshad Mahmood Cllr Neil Nerva

In attendance:	Nadia Nadeem (SACRE Advisor) Shirley Parks (Brent Council – Director Education Partnerships and Strategy) Gareth Drawmer (Brent Council – Head of Education and Learning) Helen Tulloch (Brent Council – School Effectiveness Service) Abby Shinhmar & James Kinsella (Brent Council - Governance Team) Shaun Cremin (Co-Opted Member)
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Given that not all Membership Groups were in attendance, it was confirmed that the meeting was not quorate. It was, however, agreed by those members present that

the meeting should continue on the basis that any formal decisions made would be subject to formal ratification at the next quorate meeting.

1. **Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Sally Strauss (Judaism faith representative), Nitin Palan (Hinduism faith representative with Upasana Chag attending as his representative) and due to an error, it was not possible for Amanda Whelan (Roman Catholic faith representative) to attend the meeting online.

2. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Actions**

It was **AGREED** to approve the minutes of the previous SACRE meeting held on Thursday 9 October 2025.

3. **Election of Vice Chair**

The Chair informed SACRE that Kyriacos Papasavva (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 Kyriacos Papasavva 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 (subject to formal ratification at the next meeting) Dr Karishma Koka Kavita 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 Annual Report 2024-25**

Nadia Nadeem, SACRE Advisor introduced the draft SACRE Annual Report, which members were advised covered the work undertaken by SACRE during the 2024-25 academic year.

In presenting the report it was noted that the Chair's foreword was currently being prepared for inclusion in the final version covering the period since Bhupinder Bhasin appointment in as Chair in July 2025. The Annual Report included updates on delivery of the locally agreed syllabus, approved in July 2023 with members also aware of the ongoing national curriculum review currently being conducted by the Government on which further details were awaited prior to any consideration or further review of the agreed syllabus and schemes of work that may be required. Also included as part of the report was an outline of the activity undertaken to consider the various national and local developments concerning the provision of RE, including teacher training and resources, and in seeking to monitor standards in RE provision alongside collective worship provision and consider any determinations received.

In welcoming the report and review of activity undertaken the Chair thanked the SACRE Advisor for her report and opened the floor for questions from the SACRE members with the following issues being noted:

- Support was expressed for the quality of teacher training and resources being provided in support of the local agreed syllabus with it noted that the SACRE Advisor was leading on a 'Good Practice Network' to provide additional support and guidance and with the resources provided focussed on the use of both religious and non-religious language to allow for a socially cohesive and world view approach, including a more targeted approach towards primary aged pupils.

Members noted that this approach was supported through the resources provided through the agreed syllabus which continued to be successfully delivered by schools across Brent and feedback from the good practice network highlighting that teachers had continued to work in line with the current syllabus, and that pupils had been engaging with the curriculum; producing high quality learning, which was in line with the latest developments and OFSTED's expectations for RE.

In highlighting the value of the work being undertaken by SACRE as detailed within the Annual Report, the Chair thanked Nadia Nadeem for her work in preparing the report and SACRE **AGREED** to approve the final draft of the 2024-25 Annual Report, subject to any final comments to be incorporated following the meeting.

6. General RE Update

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

- The outcome of the *independent Curriculum and Assessment Review* — commissioned by the Department for Education (November 2025), which had recommended that Religious Education (RE) be formally added to the National Curriculum for the first time with a stage approach recommended to reform including establishing a national task-and-finish group to draft a national curriculum for RE, drawing on expertise from faith communities, secular organisations, Teachers and academics. At this stage the government response had been focused on the need for further consultation and sector consensus to inform potential legislative changes and task group outputs.

In terms of implications for SACREs it was noted that whilst they would continue to advise on agreed syllabus development during the transition, the potential development of national standards may reduce local variance over time. Recognising the value of SACREs in being able to reflect local need, members were advised that developments would continue to be monitored along with the potential inclusion of SACREs in the consultation exercises on draft national RE curriculum content.

- A legal ruling by UK Supreme Court in November 2025, with regard to RE and collective worship. In noting the basis of the ruling, the impact in relation to the judgement was highlighted (whilst not changing legislation in England) to have strengthened expectations around how RE and worship must be delivered in

non-faith schools including a need to ensure RE was educational, not confessional; assemblies were inclusive and non-coercive, withdrawal was not treated as the only safeguard.

Whilst recognising that the judgement did not remove RE or collective worship from schools or prevent schools from teaching Christianity as part of a balanced curriculum it had, however, required schools to ensure that all teaching relating to religion or belief was inclusive, educational and non-indoctrinatory and that reliance on withdrawal was not used to compensate for unlawful provision.

In considering the outcome members were keen to review the impact of the judgement on Brent's and individual school Collective Worship Policies to ensure they were aligned and reflected DfE guidance, with members keen to include a review of Brent's Collective Worship Policy in the new academic year and wider impact on the determination process.

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:

- The response to the Curriculum and Assessment Review, which had been welcomed by NASACRE as a means of acknowledging the importance of RE in pupils' intellectual, personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In noting the recognition of inconsistency in the quality and provision of RE across schools, particularly where Agreed Syllabi were not followed in many academy settings, NASACRE had supported the staged approach proposed in the review towards potentially placing RE on the National Curriculum, while safeguarding the involvement of SACREs and representatives from religion/belief communities in the process and outlining their intention to actively engage in national discussions on future curriculum content and implementation.
- Forthcoming training included *Being an Effective SACRE Clerk* being held on 23 February 2026 and *What might a SACRE want to use from the new Oak National Academy resources?* being held on 10 March 2026.

Nadia Nadeem reminded everyone that training was available for all SACRE members. **ACTION:** It was agreed for the Abby Shinhmar (as SACRE Clerk) to send the log in details for training to all SACRE members.

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

8. **Any Other Business**

8.1 **School Religion and Belief Practices**

Upasana Chag highlighted a recent case (unrelated to Brent) which had highlighted a number of issues relating to the way in which religious practices were recognised and accommodated within individual school settings in relation to their uniform and

behaviour policies and how this reflected DfE and Ofsted guidance and wider concerns regarding the way schools and governors were interpreting the relevant guidelines and the need to enhance communication between schools, families and communities. Members noted that a comparable situation had previously arisen at Michaela Community School, which had progressed to the High Court. Shirley Parks explained that the Michaela case had tested the DfE's guidance and was highly complex; ultimately, the court ruled in favour of the school.

Recognising the sensitivity in relation to the cases highlighted, it was highlighted that Brent schools were already operating in accordance with DfE guidance with, SACRE therefore keen to recognise this in seeking to maintain a balanced approach in terms of further engagement with schools, where and if identified as necessary.

8.2 SACRE Sub-Group

Shirley Parks informed the meeting that a SACRE Sub-Group had been established to review how the existing remit, role and activity undertaken by SACRE could be developed in order to add further value and better coordinate with the role of the Multi-Faith Forum given their engagement with schools in the borough. A member asked whether there was any representation from non-religious groups. **ACTION:** Shirley Parks agreed to gain this information.

Shirley Parks also updated members on an upcoming Inter Faith Road Show proposal, which was currently in the progress of being developed. Amongst the initiatives being considered was the establishment of an Inclusion Choir, working in conjunction with Brent Music Service. Shirley Parks advised she would be meeting with Head Teachers at an upcoming conference event where she intended to explore the proposal further working with the Parent and Carer Forum prior to further consultation with SACRE.

In commending establishment of the Sub Group and work undertaken to date, it was **AGREED** to support the ongoing work being undertaken with further updates to be provided on a regular basis.

9. Dates of Future Meetings

NOTED

- (1) The date for the final SACRE meeting during the 25-26 academic year which had been arranged for Thursday 9 July 26 (online)
- (2) The draft programme of dates identified for meetings during the 2026-27 academic year, as follows:
 - Thursday 8 October 2026 at 5pm
 - Thursday 4 February 2027 at 5pm
 - Thursday 8 July 2027 at 5pm

Members **AGREED** to continue the practice of seeking to hold at least one of these meetings in person each year at either a place of worship or in a school.

In closing the meeting, the Chair also took the opportunity to thank colleagues at the Neasden Hindu Temple for hosting the meeting.

The meeting closed at 6:59pm

Bhupinder Bhasin
Chair