

Brent SACRE (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education)

Constitution and Terms of Reference

1. Context & Definitions

In accordance with the Education Act 1944 and subsequent requirements set out in the Education Reform Act 1988 and the Education Act 1996, every Local Authority (LA) is required to establish a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE).

The essential role of the SACRE is to support the LA and the LA's schools in meeting the entitlement of pupils to engage in high quality Religious Education (RE) and Collective Worship.

Children are obliged to attend both Collective Worship and RE instruction. These are two distinct and separate matters for which SACRE has responsibility. RE and Collective Worship must not promote any one religion or belief system over another. It is not the aim of RE to persuade pupils to be religious. RE is part of the core curriculum in schools and is an academic subject. It should contribute, along with all national curriculum subjects, in helping to provide for the Spiritual, Moral Social and Cultural development of children

Parents have the right in law to withdraw their children from Collective Worship or RE. On request parents receive help and advice from their school and the LA. The SACRE can also advise. Collective Worship and RE are intended to be suitable for all children. It is important for all concerned to realise that when parents conclude that they wish to withdraw their children, actually deciding to go ahead and single out their children to be different from others, is a difficult step to take.

Collective worship:

The Education Act 1996 requires the SACRE to advise on matters relating to religious worship in schools where Collective Worship comes into its remit and lays down a requirement that all schools hold a daily act of collective worship and that this should be "wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character."

Brent SACRE, working with schools, drew up its own Recommended Approach to Collective Worship. Brent SACRE provided schools with information about their legal obligations and how to request an exemption known in the Education Act as a "Determination", which includes the legal requirements regarding consultation with governors and parents and how to present the request.

Locally Agreed Syllabus and Agreed Syllabus Conference:

The Locally Agreed Syllabus is the statutory document for RE within the LA. It sets out what should be taught to pupils in all key stages and the standards expected at the end of key stages. It is produced by an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) and must be reviewed every five years. However, if a majority of SACRE members agree, they can write to the LA to ask for it to be reviewed sooner and the LA must convene a conference.

An ASC is a statutory body established in order to produce an agreed syllabus for RE. Although it is a separate legal entity from a SACRE each group can include the same members. The LA will appoint members ensuring that the committee membership is broadly representative of the proportionate strengths of the denominations, religions and associations in the area. .

The LA can ask suitably skilled colleagues, who are not members of SACRE, to attend an ASC and advise on the Locally Agreed Syllabus.

2. Roles, Functions & Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the SACRE are to:

- i. consider questions and provide advice to the LA on all aspects of its provision for RE in its schools (not including Voluntary Aided Schools);
- ii. consider questions and provide advice to the LA on Collective Worship in its schools (this does not include Voluntary Aided or Voluntary Controlled schools);
- iii. initiate reviews and, when deemed necessary, ensure that revisions to the Brent Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education are undertaken through the formation of an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) set up by the Council; publish an annual report of its work which specifies any matters in respect of which the SACRE has given advice to the authority; broadly describes the nature of the advice given; and where, any such matter was not referred by the LA, provides the reasons for offering advice on that matter.
- iv. provide advice on training for teachers in RE and Collective Worship;
- v. consider requests from head teachers to hold Collective Worship that is not of a broadly Christian character (known as “Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Determinations”)

The SACRE may also

- vi. advise on and monitor the provision and delivery of Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural education (SMSC);
- vii. be aware of, and monitor the uptake of external examinations in RE and religious studies and monitor or review the standards achieved;
- viii. consider complaints about the provision and delivery of RE or Collective Worship referred to it by the LA.

The LA has the responsibility of ensuring that the SACRE’s work is effective and related to schools and their curriculum.

3. SACRE Membership

The SACRE is a body appointed by the LA. In accordance with the provisions of the Education Act 1996 (section 390(4)), the SACRE must be comprised of members from four groups, as follows:

Group A – The Christian denominations and other religions and their denominations, reflecting the principal religions of the LA.

Group B – The Church of England.

Group C – Professional teacher and headteacher Associations recognised by the LA and others representing education interests.

Group D – The LA.

4. Composition and Quorum

The specific numbers of members in relation to each of these groups is as follows:

Group	Group category	Number of members
Group A	The Christian denominations and other religions and their denomination, reflecting the principal religions of the area.	16
Group B	The Church of England	4
Group C	Teacher and head teacher associations and often others representing education	6
Group D	The Local Authority.	4

The membership structure of SACRE will be reviewed after every full local government election.

Brent SACRE will meet at least once every term.

A SACRE meeting will be deemed quorate if the following two conditions both apply:

- i 30% of SACRE voting members are present and
- ii Each of the four representative groups are represented.

5. Voting

On any question to be decided by the SACRE, only the representative groups on the SACRE shall be entitled to vote and each group shall have a single vote.

It may be, from time to time, that SACRE wishes to ascertain the general feeling of its members on a particular issue the chair of SACRE, after consulting the servicing officer, could rule that an open vote would be appropriate in such cases.

On formal votes it may be necessary for the four representative groups to meet separately to determine how their collective vote will be cast. To facilitate such a vote each representative group should elect a chair. Decisions made within a group as to how their vote should be cast do not require unanimity.

6. Appointment process

All members of the SACRE are appointed by the LA for a four-year term. At the time of appointment the LA can also appoint the member to the Agreed Syllabus Conference.

The LA must take all reasonable steps to assure itself that the persons appointed to the above Groups are representative of the denominations or associations in question.

The LA may remove a member of the SACRE if in the opinion of the LA that member ceases to be representative of the denomination or association which he/she was appointed to represent.

Any faith community wishing to take part in the SACRE's work must make a written application to the Strategic Director Children & Young People. The application must state:

- (i) their ability to define themselves as a faith community;
- (ii) why they have a legitimate interest in the work of SACRE as outlined in this constitution; and
- (iii) how their interests are not currently being adequately represented.

SACRE members may co-opt non-voting members for a period of two years. However co-opted members may not propose further co-options.

Should a member of SACRE not attend three consecutive meetings, the Strategic Director Children and Young People will write to that member informing them that their membership will lapse if they are unable to attend the next meeting.

7. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

It is open to the Authority to appoint the chair of the SACRE but it is the current view that the SACRE should appoint its own chair subject to the following:

- i that a chair be elected annually at the last meeting of the summer term;
- ii that the new chair takes up office from the end of that meeting; and
- iii that a chair be elected by nomination and secret ballot of all voting groups present at the relevant meeting, each group having one vote.

The SACRE has adopted the same procedure for the election of the vice-chair.

8. Code of Conduct

All representatives should:

- attend the meetings of the SACRE and take part in the deliberations and work of SACRE;
- participate in and review the work of the SACRE for the benefit of the whole community

- actively challenge and resist stereotyping;
- assume at all times that other members of the SACRE are honourable and concerned with the best interests of the SACRE;
- respect the rights of other members to disagree with your point of view.

Groups A and B representatives should:

- ensure that they are adequately qualified to represent their faith community;
- be able to explain how they intend to inform and consult with their faith community;
- feel a sense of responsibility not only to the children coming from their own faith but also to all the children of Brent;
- provide expertise, or assist in providing access to such expertise, in matters of fact, tradition, theology and practice relating to their own faith for the benefit of the whole school population;
- represent to the SACRE the interests and concerns of their own faith community;
- endeavour to represent fairly the views and interests of the widest possible range of faith positions within their community (this is particularly relevant if they are the sole representative on the SACRE for their faith);
- follow the guidelines for visits to schools;
- recognise that stating a belief or religious tenet is not the same as advancing an argument for or against any proposal, although it may well be an overriding consideration;
- inform members of their faith community of the work of the SACRE.

For school visits faith representatives should:

- only visit a school as a SACRE faith group representative when invited;
- inform the Clerk of the SACRE of any invitation received and visits made;
- make absolutely clear that you are speaking from the perspective of the particular religion or belief system that you are representing;
- ensure that you do not say or do anything, which could be viewed as denigrating any other religion or ethical belief system;
- at all times behave honourably in relation to your fellow SACRE members.

Teacher and teacher association representatives should:

- provide information and expertise in relation to teaching and the school environment;
- if appropriate provide information and expertise in relation to the teaching of religious education and the carrying out of collective worship in schools;
- represent the interests and concerns of teachers, pupils and schools;
- consult with teaching colleagues and students;
- keep colleagues informed about the work of the SACRE;
- ensure that the welfare and education of all the children in Brent is the primary focus of the SACRE.

Council representatives should:

- represent the wider public interest;
- provide information and expertise to the SACRE in their capacity as an elected member of Brent Council;

- inform the SACRE of concerns or issues known to Brent Council relating to education and in particular the provision for SMSC (spiritual, moral, social and cultural development), teaching of religious education and the carrying out of collective worship in schools;
- support the work of the SACRE by representing its interests in Brent Council;
- ensure that legal requirements for the conduct of the SACRE are observed in particular in relation to the suitability and qualifications required to be a member of the SACRE.

June 2020