

Lancashire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday, 8th July, 2024 at 10.00 am in Committee Room 'C' - The Duke of Lancaster Room, County Hall, Preston

SACRE Members

Peter Martin, Chair, (Representing the Teacher Associations)
County Councillor Anne Cheetham, (Representing Lancashire County Council)
County Councillor Stewart Jones, (Representing Lancashire County Council)
County Councillor Yousuf Motala, (Representing Lancashire County Council)
Lisa Fenton, (Representing the Church of England)
John Wilson, (Representing the Church of England)
Ben McMullen, (Representing the Roman Catholic Church)
Jaspal Kooner, (Representing Sikhism)
Aruna Patel, (Representing the Teacher Associations)
Harsha Shukla, (Representing Hinduism)
Ian Watkinson, (Representing the Teacher Associations)

Co-opted Members

Kathleen Cooper, (Representing the Lancashire Association of School Governing Bodies)
Peter Lumsden, (Representing Building Bridges Burnley)

Observers

Malcolm Craig, (Representing the Bahá'í Faith)
Keith Pennington, (Representing Lancashire Humanists Association)

Officers

Alison Lloyd, School Adviser, School Improvement Service
Dave Gorman, Senior Democratic Services Officer

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Joan O'Rourke, Kelsang Pagpa and Francis Williams.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 April 2024

Resolved: - That, subject to a spelling correction in the list of attendees, the minutes of the meeting held on 22 April 2024 be approved as a correct and accurate record.

3. Agreed Syllabus Conference

Alison Lloyd, School Adviser, School Improvement Service, presented a report on the Agreed Syllabus Conference.

The new Religious Education syllabus must be in place for September 2026 and is finalised by the Agreed Syllabus Conference, rather than the SACRE, for formal approval by the county council's Cabinet.

The Lancashire syllabus was written by Lancashire and needed to be finalised in terms of printing and readiness for training by March 2026. Many local authorities employed consultants, such as RE Today, to write their syllabuses. Alison Loyd had already started work on writing the primary exemplifications, of which there were 24, and Joanne Harris was looking at those for secondary. The new syllabus would be based on the 'world view' of religion so would be quite different to the existing syllabus and, whilst being an exciting opportunity, was not a straightforward process.

Peter Martin reminded the SACRE that membership of the Agreed Syllabus Conference was drawn from the four statutory representative groups on the SACRE with at least one member drawn from each of those four groups. The Agreed Syllabus Conference would be a 'critical friend' along the way rather than merely reviewing the final draft at the end of the process. It was proposed that work units would be trialled by teachers before being finalised.

It was agreed that the first meeting of the Agreed Syllabus Conference would take place in late October/early November with a date to be circulated by the clerk in due course. The second meeting would take place in March/April 2025.

Membership of the Agreed Syllabus Conference was agreed as follows:

Group 1 – Christian and other Religious Denominations

- Jaspal Kooner
- Ben McMullen

Group 2 – The Church of England

- Lisa Fenton
- John Wilson

Group 3 – The Teacher Associations

- Aruna Patel

Group 4 – Lancashire County Council

- County Councillor Anne Cheetham
- County Councillor Stewart Jones

- County Councillor Yousuf Motala

Alison Lloyd would draw up terms of reference and would also meet with co-opted members and observers for their input as appropriate.

Lisa Fenton commented that 'less is more' and that depth, rather than trying to cover everything, was key.

It was important that SACRE members appointed to the Agreed Syllabus Conference read and understood the information which was available via the links within item 3 of the agenda pack.

Resolved: - That the arrangements for the Agreed Syllabus Conference 2026 be noted and agreed.

4. SACRE Newsletter, Summer 2024

The latest edition of the SACRE Newsletter (Issue 17, Summer 2024) was noted and Alison Lloyd reported that the consultants were running the half day assessment and moderation training sessions referred to in the newsletter, both that morning and afternoon.

Peter Martin thanked John Wilson and Aruna Patel for their contributions to the newsletter.

Resolved: - That the SACRE Newsletter Summer 2024 be noted.

5. Feedback from NASACRE Annual Conference/NASACRE Charitable Incorporated Organisation Proposal

Aruna Patel and Alison Lloyd updated the SACRE on their recent attendance at the NASACRE Annual Conference on 20 May and highlighted the main points of interest which had also been circulated as part of the agenda pack.

These included:

- The Religious and World Views Toolkit.
- The National Content Standard.
- The requirement from September 2024 for Initial Teacher Education providers to work to OFSTED's new guidelines.
- Funding for SACREs.
- Withdrawal of funding for the Interfaith Network charity.
- The challenges of Freedom of Religious Belief.
- The shift from a curriculum emphasis to highlighting personal development as a priority focus for all schools.
- RE Council's online resources.
- Practical support for SACREs.
- A SACRE 'to do' list including suggestions from Lat Blaylock.

The conference was addressed by a number of keynote speakers including Rachel De Souza, Children's Commissioner for England; Lord Bilimoria, Chancellor of the University of Birmingham; and Jane Yates, NW RE Hubs Lead.

SACRE Members were recommended to watch the video promoting children to be young ambassadors of religious education shown as part of Lord Bilimoria's presentation and launch of the 'REady for Work Campaign', which could be accessed via the link on page 28 of the agenda pack.

Peter Lumsden highlighted that the Broadgate area of Preston, represented by SACRE member, County Councillor Yousuf Motala, was one of the most diverse in the country. County Councillor Motala referred to visits between mosques and temples being arranged and Harsha Shukla referred to the challenges of speaking to the right individuals and ensuring SACRE had appropriate representation, e.g. a Priest, Minister, Imam, etc., as everybody had a different interpretation of their faith or belief.

Alison Lloyd reported that North West authorities were developing an online Pupil Voice debate and would keep SACRE updated on progress.

Resolved: - That the update be noted and Aruna Patel and Alison Lloyd be thanked for their attendance and feedback.

6. Feedback from 'Faith and Wellbeing' Meeting

Peter Martin and John Wilson updated the SACRE on their recent attendance at a Lancashire and South Cumbria faith and wellbeing event on 10 June hosted by Professor Mike Thomas, Chair, University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust. Peter Lumsden had been involved in the organisation of the event.

The event was attended by representatives of a wide range of organisations including councillors, Lancashire County Council's Director of Public Health, Wellbeing and Communities, together with representatives of the Christian faith.

Professor Thomas gave a presentation on how Christian faith communities supported mental health and wellbeing through, for example, food banks, family hubs and community cafes, to name but a few. In Pendle, a document had been produced which mapped across the borough how churches supported food banks, mental health, physical health, crisis and night support and family support such as toddlers, dads and youth groups.

This was a first attempt to bring together and identify the different initiatives and support being provided across the faith sector and, in the future, it was hoped to expand to include other faiths particularly as there was an acknowledgement that there would be a growing need but no additional public funding.

Peter Lumsden noted how the 'F' in VCFS was becoming more important and being seen as an equal partner. There were 600 churches and 100 mosques in

areas of deprivation in Lancashire, many with good facilities, all of which needed to be mapped and co-ordinated.

The Gather movement, a Christian movement, had undertaken its own national mapping exercise and estimated that 50% of toddler groups were church based. County Councillor Yousuf Motala referred to the work undertaken in Preston by the mosques supporting the homeless during the Winter months with food, clothing, etc, which many were unaware of.

Subsequently, Professor Thomas had been invited to attend a future meeting of SACRE and had confirmed attendance at the next meeting on 18 November.

Resolved: - That the update be noted and Peter Martin and John Wilson be thanked for their attendance and feedback.

7. Deep and Meaningful? The RE Subject Report

The SACRE considered the recently published (17 April 2024) OFSTED report 'Deep and meaningful? The religious education subject report'.

Members noted that the report was quite critical of what was not happening in terms of religious education and drew reference to what was not being done well. It emphasised the point made earlier that religious education needed to be taught well and in detail, across a selected range of topics, rather than a broad brush applied to a wide range of topics.

It was noted that the sample on which the report was based was relatively small, 50 schools across England, and that both Lancashire and the Diocese of Blackburn were already addressing many of the issues raised.

The report highlighted how key religious education was in equipping children and young people for an increasingly diverse and complex world and highlighted the importance of training and development for teachers.

It was felt that the report might put some pressure on the Government to increase funding for religious education and was a public statement from OFSTED to the Government that religious education required a wider review to ensure it was fit for purpose and being taught as intended.

Resolved: - That the report be noted.

8. Building Bridges Burnley Update

Peter Lumsden reported that a new project manager, Jessica Hind, had taken up post and was currently working with Peter as part of a handover. Peter would continue to attend SACRE for the time-being and would bring Jessica along to a future meeting. There was likely to be some changes to how the project was managed and administered in the future.

This academic year, work had been undertaken with approximately 40 schools, which was a reduction on previous years. It was noted that the increased cost of transport was affecting many schools.

Resolved: - That the update be noted.

9. Members' News (Including Feedback from Training and Development Undertaken)

There were no updates reported.

10. Observers' Contributions

Keith Pennington reported that he was actively working towards November's Interfaith Week and was hoping to repeat last year's table top event at UCLAN, which was open to the public. This year, he hoped to replicate the event at the Burnley campus as well.

Malcom Craig emphasised the importance of prioritising training and continuous personal development particularly as the new syllabus was to be introduced in September 2026. Alison Lloyd confirmed that there would be training and support with the paperwork in readiness for the launch of the new syllabus.

It was agreed to discuss a contribution from the SACRE to the Governor's Handbook at the next meeting of the Quality and Standards Sub-group.

Resolved: - That the updates be noted and that a SACRE contribution to the Governor's Handbook be discussed at the next meeting of the Quality and Standards Sub-group on 10 September 2024.

11. Correspondence

The correspondence which had been circulated since the last meeting was noted.

County Councillor Anne Cheetham wished to place on record the thanks of the SACRE to Alison Lloyd and her colleagues for all the work undertaken in supporting teachers and providing the relevant training and development opportunities.

Resolved: - That the correspondence circulated since the last meeting be noted and that the SACRE place on record its thanks to Alison Lloyd and her colleagues for all the work undertaken in supporting teachers and providing the relevant training and development opportunities.

12. Date of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the SACRE will be held at 10.00am on Monday 18 November 2024, in Committee Room 'C' - The Duke of Lancaster Room, County Hall, Preston.

Josh Mynott
Clerk to the SACRE

County Hall
Preston