

**Northumberland Standing Advisory Council
on Religious Education (SACRE)**

Annual Report: Academic Year 2021 – 2022

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An Introduction from the Chair



2021-22 has been a very productive year for Northumberland SACRE. After the difficulties of the previous two years the vital work SACRE undertake has begun to accelerate, culminating in the publication of the new Agreed Syllabus in June 2022. I would like to thank all those members of SACRE who give so generously of their time and expertise to enable this. I am also very grateful to Caroline Weir, our RE Consultant, who has challenged and supported us professionally. Her good humour and deep understanding are highly appreciated. Rebecca Little, our clerk, provides timely advice and guidance to support us and we are very grateful to her. Most importantly, I need to thank teachers and senior leaders in schools for their ongoing commitment to religious education and their excellent engagement with SACRE.

Mariam Khan stepped down from committee A due to a change in her work circumstances. Elisabeth Bainbridge stepped down from committee B due to illness. Membership of committees C and D has remained consistent throughout the year. Stuart Dearlove has moved from being a co-opted representative to committee A. Maddy Wardingham has had to relinquish her role as a co-opted representative due to increased responsibilities within school. Caitlyn Naylor stepped down from committee C due to work commitments.

We welcomed Claire Curtis to committee C, and two other school staff attended our final meeting of the year as observers. They will join SACRE next academic year.

We continue to be concerned over the future of RE in our secondary and high schools as the subject struggles to remain relevant outside of the EBacc. Whether the pandemic has had any impact on the numbers of pupils who opt for to study RE at GCSE and A level remains to be seen.

Resources to support the work of the SACRE continue to be ring-fenced with a specific financial contribution from Northumberland County Council, and the commitment of all SACRE's members continues to be priceless. We depend on the goodwill of the very small central team who have an impact way beyond their number.

It is a privilege to serve as the Chair of the SACRE and to work with a group of dedicated, enthusiastic, and knowledgeable members. Our meetings are enjoyable and constructive, and based on shared commitment to the promotion of the best possible provision of teaching and learning. We work in an atmosphere of mutual respect and celebrate what we can learn from each other by reflecting our increasingly diverse communities.

These are still challenging times, but with challenges come opportunities to bring about change for the better.

Councillor Guy Renner-Thompson

Chair of the Northumberland SACRE

SACRE Meetings

SACRE met 3 times during the academic year 2021 –2022:

- 8 December 2021 - [minutes](#)
- 2 February 2021 - [minutes](#)
- 13 July 2021 - [minutes](#)

The development plan covering the academic year is available [here](#). A new development plan is being drawn up to commence from September 2022.

ASC and Working Group Meetings

The ASC working group began operation in February 2021, meeting (virtually) on five occasions. Caroline Weir chaired the group and contributors were:

- Ted Marley
- Deanna Vandervelde
- Mariam Khan
- Bhakti Rasa Dasa
- Stuart Dearlove
- Joyce Miller
- Elisabeth Bainbridge
- Deanna Van de Velde
- Cllr Nick Morphet
- Chris Hudson

Full implementation is due by September 2023. SACRE will seek to support implementation by providing training sessions throughout the 2022/2023 academic year.

Although not part of its statutory role, Northumberland SACRE seeks to serve and support all schools and academies within the county and makes its agreed RE syllabus available to all.

The first full ASC meeting took place toward the end of the previous academic year and was followed up by a second meeting in April 2022 ([minutes](#)).

The new Northumberland Agreed Syllabus 2022-2027 was launched in June 2022, with nearly 100 schools in attendance. Stephen Pett and Caroline Weir launched the syllabus with sessions for all phases and school types, as well as phase specific sessions tailored for first/primary and middle/secondary/high schools. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

There are a number of areas of continuity for teachers in the new syllabus; for example, recognising the contribution that RE makes to the personal development of pupils. However, the new syllabus marks a significant change for schools with new emphases such as clarity around

core concepts and the combination of systematic study and thematic study of several traditions, as well as a new teaching and learning approach flowing throughout the whole syllabus.

Schools have the next academic year (2022-23) to transition to the new syllabus with full implementation due by September 2023. SACRE will seek to support implementation by providing training sessions throughout the 2022-2023 academic year.

Although not part of its statutory role, Northumberland SACRE seeks to serve and support all schools and academies within the county and makes its agreed RE syllabus available to all.

Standards and Monitoring of RE

Examination results were not published again due to COVID 19 so no analysis could take place this year.

Pupils were allocated their results based on the school's teacher assessments, known as Teacher Assessed Grades. We are confident that schools in Northumberland followed a robust and appropriate process in order to get to a grade for each student. They used information such as previous classwork, homework, results in assignments and any mock exams in order to arrive at that grade.

Figures from the Joint Council for Qualifications indicate that, nationally, 4.2% of pupils in year 11 sat a Religious Studies examination (a decline of 0.2% on the previous year); the concern remains that religious education is being side-lined as it is not an EBacc subject.

Monitoring of classroom activity was scaled back during 2021 – 2022 due to the staffing pressures that schools continued to suffer. This was in line with other school improvement activities across the county.

In 2022-2023 Northumberland SACRE will consider how best to monitor RE, and will resume scrutinising exam data, conversations with schools, teacher groups, website trawls and will encourage presentations from teachers at any training events. SACRE intends to celebrate the success of schools at these events, as well as raising the profile and benefits of teaching RE within the wider community.

SACRE is not aware of any schools applying for REQM status.

SACRE monitors the Ofsted reports to note progress and excellence in SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural) and RE delivery, as well as issues requiring support. 2 schools had a deep dive into RE (a primary and a secondary), and Ofsted discussed the provision of RE in another secondary school in depth. No other reports have mentioned RE explicitly. This work will continue.

SACRE discussed the workforce monitoring data provided by NATRE (National Association of Teachers of Religious Education) to SACRE. Whilst a portion of the data was missing, and was now two years old, SACRE were keen to scrutinise what was available and use it as a basis for discussions with middle, secondary and high schools across the county.

Support for Schools

Caroline Weir (part time RE Consultant) has completed her second full year in post. She has provided individual support to schools in response to requests. In addition, Caroline has run several network meetings for first/primary and middle/secondary/high schools. Special schools have been invited to join whichever phase has been most appropriate to their needs. These meetings provided updates for teachers on ASC progress, as well as keeping RE leads abreast of national developments in the subject. Resources were shared, and teaching and learning ideas discussed. As a result of network meetings, greater understanding of, and interest in, the work of SACRE has been shared and some of these teachers have expressed an interest in becoming SACRE members.

The support Caroline has provided has been invaluable to schools – feedback has been very positive indeed. Also, the intelligence Caroline has gathered around the implementation of the existing syllabus has helped shape the structure and content of the planned new syllabus. Through network meetings, teachers had the opportunity to share their views on current RE provision and express their hopes for moving forward.

The annual SACRE conference did not take place in 2020 – 2021 again due to the pandemic. We expect that face to face training sessions will resume in 2022, restrictions permitting.

The format of the [SACRE newsletter](#) has changed from being termly to an “on demand” service, meaning relevant information is available to schools as soon as it becomes available. We are grateful to those SACRE members who have contributed.

Withdrawals and Complaints

There were no withdrawals brought to the attention of Northumberland SACRE in 2021 – 2022. Relevant information has been circulated via the [ecourier](#) on the Northumberland Education website.

Northumberland SACRE has a role in investigating complaints against schools in relation to RE and Collective Worship. In 2021-22 there were no such formal complaints to deal with.

Collective Worship

In September 2021 Northumberland SACRE launched an updated [collective worship policy](#). The legislation determining the nature of collective worship in community schools has not altered since the Education Reform Act 1988, with the corresponding guidance offered in Circular 1/94. However, understanding of how to make the legislation meaningful in increasingly multifaith but predominantly secular school communities has changed considerably. There is now far greater

agreement among teachers, educationalists, and others about what constitutes good practice in relation to collective worship.

Whilst the changes were minimal (even though the previous policy was written in 2006) it felt like an appropriate time to remind schools of their responsibilities and use the new policy to focus their minds.

Determinations

The Education Reform Act of 1988 (sections 6, 7, 9, and 12) entitles schools to apply to the SACRE for a 'Determination'. This allows the school to adjust the legal requirements to enable collective worship of a different character to take place for some or all pupils in the school. Determinations are made where a school, on behalf of a group of parents, requests Collective Worship other than that set down by statute. There were no determinations in 2020-21 for Northumberland SACRE to consider.

Northumberland SACRE has not commissioned any formal training on Collective Worship or the Determination process for Headteachers, Governors and teachers in schools during this recent period. This should be considered a development area going forward. However, SACRE members continue to generously offer schools their time and expertise. Religion and Worldview representatives offer to deliver assemblies, support curriculum planning, and provide guidance to individual teachers.

Links with Local and National Bodies

Attendance at the NASACRE Conference is offered each year – Caroline Weir and Joyce Miller attended.

Members of SACRE were also signposted to the NASACRE training events as access to all events was purchased.

AREIAC (Association of RE Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants): The RE Adviser is an AREIAC member. The meetings provide an excellent network of RE leads and the sharing of best practice and ideas.

NATRE (National Association of Teachers of Religious Education): Northumberland SACRE promotes the resources and CPD provided to NATRE through the SACRE newsletter. Caroline Weir is a member of NATRE.

The Northumberland SACRE maintains excellent relationships with the dioceses. The Directors of Education meet regularly to see how all parties can support each other. The Northumberland School Improvement Team attended the Church of England diocesan conference in June 2022.

Northumberland SACRE's own arrangements

Northumberland SACRE is supported by Dave Cookson, Head of School Improvement and Caroline Weir, part-time RE Consultant. SACRE feels well supported by the team.

The Head of School Improvement acts as the conduit between the LA and SACRE on issues such as finance, data, and councillor representation.

Democratic Services appoint a clerk to attend each SACRE meeting. Rebecca Little continues in this role.

The LA supports the funding of the RE Consultant time for around 25 days a year.

The RE Consultant provides specialist RE advice and governance support, facilitates the collaborative working groups required for the Agreed Syllabus Conference, attends AREIAC/NASACRE/NATRE meetings or conferences and deals with day-to-day matters.

To raise the profile of SACRE, and raise school awareness of the role and support that SACRE can provide, a new page on the [Northumberland Education](#) website has been created to act as a central point for resources.

A sub-committee has been set up to focus on how the effectiveness of SACRE can be improved. A report was produced in July 2022 providing a list of points for implementation over the next two academic years. As a result of this work the SACRE action plan has been amended to cover those points raised by the sub-committee.

Membership, representation & recruitment

The RE Consultant and Head of School Improvement work in partnership with the chair and members of the SACRE to identify gaps with representation of the local faith communities and wider group membership. This is an ongoing process.

A full membership list as of September 2022 is available as appendix A. Vacancies are being addressed as they arise.

Training for SACRE Members

All SACRE members have been offered access to NASACRE training. Caroline Weir and various SACRE members attended a number of sessions throughout the year. In total, 7 sessions were attended, including those on Worldviews, applying for a Westhill Award, the new Annual Report template, Self-Evaluation of SACRE and 'So you've joined your local SACRE'.

Finance Given to SACRE

The LA currently supports the funding of the part-time RE Consultant's post time, of around 25 days a year.

Additional funding for the Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) was provided. That funding included the purchase of 145 copies of the syllabus, and paying in full for the launch event.

Circulation Details

The report will be shared, discussed, and agreed by Northumberland SACRE in November 2022. The report will be made available to Headteachers and teachers through the ecourier. The report will also be added to the [SACRE page](#) of the Northumberland County Council website. The report will be shared with Northumberland County Council.

The SACRE clerk will send a copy of the SACRE report to the Department for Education: via ministers@education.gov.uk

The report will also be emailed to NASACRE for publication on its website: SACRE reports via admin@nasacre.org.uk

Appendix A: SACRE Membership as of September 2022

Committee A: Other Faiths

- Mrs. J. Cousin: Roman Catholic Church
- Reverend E. H. Marley, OBE: United Reformed Church (URC). (*The Methodist Church (SE Northumberland Ecumenical Area) and the Baptist Church are currently represented by the URC*)
- Bhakti Rasa Adhikhara: Hinduism
- Vacancy: Islam
- Vacancy: Sikhism
- Joyce Miller: Buddhism
- Mrs. D. Van der Velde: Judaism
- Mr S Dearlove: Humanism

Committee B: Church of England

- Mr. C. Hudson
- Mr. P. Rusby
- Reverend J. Scott

Committee C: Teaching Associations/Unions

- Mr. A. Duffield (middle school teacher)
- Mr. T. Nicholls (secondary/high school teacher)
- Miss C Curtis (first/primary school teacher)
- Mrs R Cant (first/primary school teacher)
- Mrs C Dixon (first/primary school teacher)

Committee D: Local Authority

- Councillor N. Morphet
- Councillor L. Bowman
- Councillor G Renner-Thompson (Chair)
- Councillor T. Thorne

Co-opted Representatives

- Vacant

Observer (representing the academies and free schools)

- Vacant

Local Authority Officers in Attendance

- Caroline Weir, Northumberland RE Consultant
- David Cookson, Head of School Improvement
- Rebecca Little, Clerk to the SACRE, Democratic Services