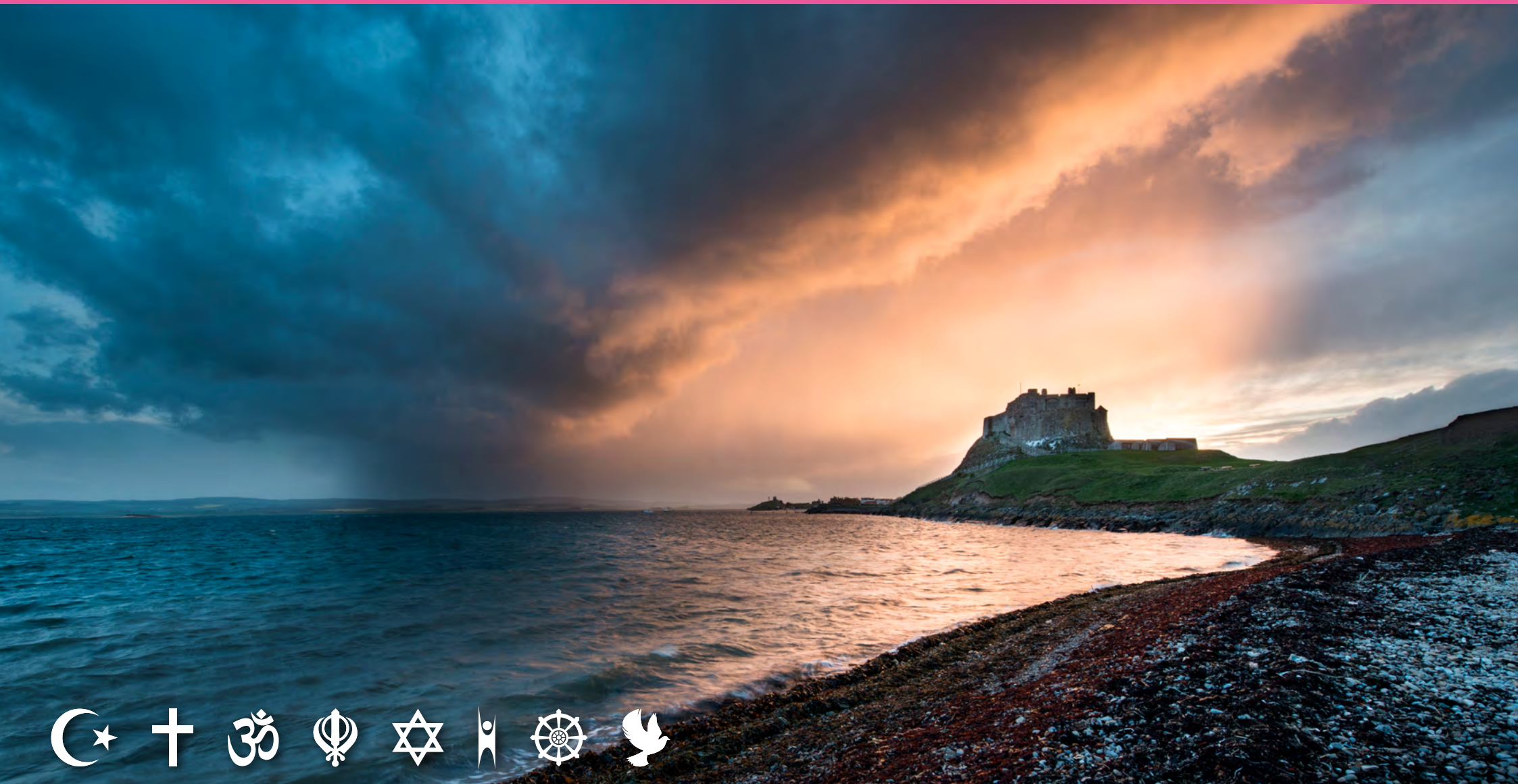


SACRE



Northumberland
County Council

Newsletter for the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education for Northumberland



Issue 39 | January 2019

CONTENTS

■ As the days lengthen and the weather improves, trips to houses of worship, etc. will increase in number

■ Holocaust Memorial Day

■ The RE Conference

■ The Commission on Religious Education's "Religion and Worldviews: the way forward"

■ Applying for (and achieving) the RE Quality Mark

■ Welcoming refugee and asylum-seeking children and young people to Northumberland

■ Forthcoming Important Festivals, etc

■ The SACRE members



As the days lengthen and the weather improves, trips to houses of worship, etc. will increase in number

One of the things that impresses the SACRE is how often schools in Northumberland arrange visits to houses of worship, both in the County and further afield, even though such visits take a lot of planning and often incur considerable expense, especially when coach hire is factored in. But we all know such visits are worth at least a dozen lessons in the classroom, so we hope they remain popular for many years to come.

As many of you know, the Guidance section of the RE Agreed Syllabus (the syllabus is accessible via the NCC website. In the search engine on the NCC homepage, type "SACRE" to access all documentation about the syllabus) lists many houses of worship (and other places) that can be visited to enhance RE provision, and the list of places to visit is prefaced with the following helpful advice:

Well before a planned visit (four to six weeks at least), make contact with the place concerned. Allow plenty of time to agree a date, time, etc. convenient to everyone involved. Remember that some places have many groups already making visits, so, if possible, have more than one date for when you wish to attend. Also remember that some of the places have only one or two people who host the visits, and that such hosting is often done voluntarily when other duties and responsibilities allow. While many of the places welcome groups free of charge, check that a fee or donation is NOT required. Where a fee or donation is NOT required, bear in mind that your hosts are giving of their time freely and/or providing groups with light refreshments, so, at the very least, a charitable donation is appropriate. Also check about dress conventions. Some places require visitors to remove their shoes, and some require visitors to cover their heads (sometimes covering of the head applies to everyone, sometimes only to males, sometimes only to females). If heads must be covered, confirm what



constitutes an acceptable headcovering when arranging the date and time of the visit.

As you can see, flexibility and forward planning will work to your advantage. We are confident that at all the places you will receive a warm welcome and have an enlightening visit.

To the above we would add that many places prefer the group to not exceed a certain size (30 to 40 people is a popular cut-off point, but some houses of worship are happy to host up to 70 people at a time), and a few may suggest that very young children will not benefit from a visit (the latter does NOT apply to most of the Dharmic houses of worship that schools visit). Also, try not to arrange two or more visits too closely together: as a rule, potential hosts find it easier to arrange their diaries if a school requesting more than one visit can spread the visits over an extended period of time.

By planning well ahead, being flexible and clarifying everything on the phone/by email well BEFORE a visit, everything will work smoothly. And who knows? The next visit you make to a house of worship or a supermarket, etc. meeting the needs of a particular faith group might feature in a future edition of the SACRE Newsletter.

STOP PRESS

The Newcastle Buddhist Centre has moved from Carliol Square to new premises. It is now at 187, Westgate Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE4 6AA.

Telephone number: 07444-281890.

Email: newcastlebuddhistcentre@gmail.com

Website: <http://www.newcastlebuddhistcentre.org>



Holocaust Memorial Day 27th January 2019

Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) is, as always, on 27th January, and we are confident that many Northumberland schools have already planned events around this date. The theme for 2019 is “Torn from home”, so it is likely that many events will reflect on what happens before genocide and how leaving or losing one’s home is such a painful experience. Needless to say, many examples of being torn from home blight the contemporary era. All of these are worth reflecting on. This year’s theme is intentionally broad and open-ended.

If your school has yet to confirm how HMD will be commemorated, we suggest that an outstanding starting point for ideas is the HMD Trust website (www.hmd.org.uk), where, among other things, you can find out what is happening in other parts of the country and access lots of excellent teaching and learning materials.

There you will find this remarkable quote from Elie Wiesel, the author and Holocaust survivor whose childhood home was Sighetu Marmatiei in northern Romania:

“For the survivor, death is not the problem. Death was an everyday occurrence. We learned to live with death. The

problem is to adjust to life, to living. You must teach us about living.”

Reflection on how people can learn how to live again after losing their home will provide pupils and students of all ages with much to think about.

While the Holocaust/Shoah will always be the focal point for HMD events, this year we imagine that, for added topicality, attention will be directed to the plight of the Rohingya Muslims, the vulnerability of Christians living in many parts of the Middle East and the migration of large numbers of people from Central America who have been forced from their homes due to poverty and violence.

Above all, HMD is designed “to challenge prejudice, racism and discrimination, and to promote diversity, equality and harmony between communities”. Consequently, schools which address HMD confirm their commitments to community cohesion, equality, diversity, inclusion and challenging extremism and radicalisation.

If schools wish to share with a larger audience what they did to commemorate HMD, send a summary to Phil André at phil.andre@ntlworld.com and it will be published in a forthcoming SACRE Newsletter.

The RE Conference

16th November 2018, Choppington Social and Welfare Centre

The second RE Conference took place as planned on 16th November 2018 with teachers drawn from all the County's phases. HMI Mark Evans, one of the two Ofsted National Leads for RE, was the keynote speaker. As well as providing us with a few questions to sharpen how we plan and deliver RE (see below), Mark indicated that Ofsted regards the following as good RE practice: extended writing for older pupils and students, encounters with people and places reflecting diversity in religion and belief and, where the knowledge and understanding does not exist in-house, utilising outside expertise to enlighten pupils and students.

Delegates had the opportunity to attend various workshops during the day-long event. The workshops included a focus on activities to make RE challenging and engaging and understanding Christianity's core values. Delegates were also reminded about the RE Quality Mark and introduced to a new accreditation scheme from Christian Aid called "Global Neighbours". On more than one occasion delegates were reminded of the existence of the North-East Religious Resources Centre with its amazing resource banks in Durham City and North Shields/Percy Main.

As is so often the case during events of this nature, the networking opportunities were excellent. Already delegates have spoken about taking advantage of the contacts they made on the day. In fact, in-school consultations and CPD events have already been arranged as a direct result of the conference and the contacts made.

Here are a few comments giving a flavour of the day itself:

"Really good ideas for engaging students."

"Fantastic workshop. Lots of good practical ideas to take back to school."

"Superb ideas well explained and showcased."

"We're definitely planning to download the audit tool for the RE Quality Mark."

"Clear and concise evaluation of the RE Quality Mark."

"Great practical ideas to support RE teaching."

"An excellent day."

"Really good opportunity to catch up with the RE agenda."

"Well done Northumberland for continuing to engage with teachers in this area of learning."

"Fantastic day which was much needed and appreciated."

The evaluation sheet asked delegates if they would like the local authority/SACRE to organise a day trip that will allow them to visit a variety of houses of worship in the region. Every delegate but two who filled in the form gave the idea a resounding "Yes."

It was lovely to see so many SACRE members attend for the whole or part of the day, which in itself allowed for some excellent networking.

Here are Mark's questions, which we hope will inspire some reflection and action:

- *Why is RE in the curriculum?*
- *What is the intent or purpose of your RE syllabus?*
- *Is there a lack of clarity about the nature and purpose of RE?*
- *What are the distinctive skills RE cultivates?*
- *What is the relationship between RE, British Values, SMSC and Prevent?*
- *What are we marking pupils' and students' work for?*
- *What is the significant contribution RE can make?*
- *How is your RE syllabus implemented?*
- *What is the impact of your RE syllabus?*
- *Do the non-specialists teaching RE have enough knowledge, skills and understanding?*
- *Does your school have an RE link governor?*
- *Is writing at length a vehicle that RE could champion?*

The Commission on Religious Education's “Religion and Worldviews: the way forward”

Every so often a document is published which ought to have a profound impact on RE in our schools and, without doubt, Autumn 2018's publication of “Religion and Worldviews: the way forward” is one such document, but whether more pressing national concerns will result in its content being ignored, only time will tell. What is apparent is that, although almost everyone has found a few things they disagree with, the vast majority of people like most of its content and its assessment of contemporary realities, whether such realities apply to religion and belief in society at large or RE in our schools.

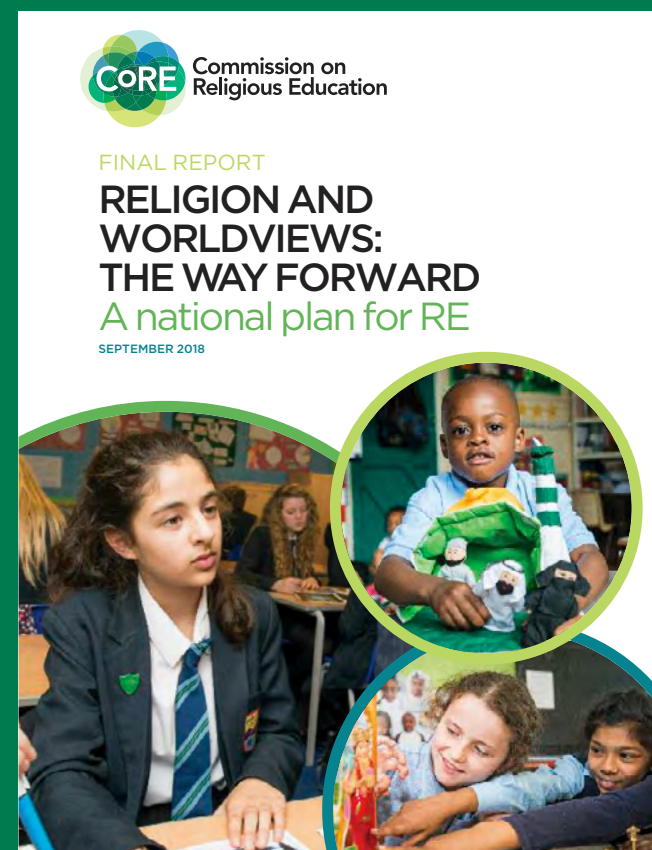
Taking as its starting point that the contemporary world cannot be understood without addressing religion and belief seriously, and confirming that, when taught well, RE is a subject benefiting from as much academic rigour as every other subject on the curriculum, it strongly argues for a statutory national entitlement shaped in ways very similar to national entitlements in other subjects. It also argues that we “move beyond an essentialised presentation of six ‘major world faiths’ and towards a deeper understanding of the complex, diverse and plural nature of worldviews at both institutional and personal levels”.

This is not the place to summarise the rest of the report; we therefore urge everyone to engage at the very least with its executive summary. The SACRE has

engaged in some discussion already and, collectively, takes a favourable view toward a majority of its content. But we would love to hear from more people about what they think. If, after accessing the report via the internet, you feel inspired to critically evaluate its content, we would be delighted to publish your thoughts in a future SACRE Newsletter. Send copy to Phil André at phil.andre@ntlworld.com

To access the report, type into your search engine its title and versions will be listed in a variety of forms. But do not confuse the earlier interim report with the final report. You need to concentrate on the final report alone, which was published in September 2018.

“It also argues that we “move beyond an essentialised presentation of six ‘major world faiths’ and towards a deeper understanding of the complex, diverse and plural nature of worldviews at both institutional and personal levels”.



Applying for (and achieving) the RE Quality Mark

The question of how schools are able to prove whether their curriculum is one of high quality is an increasingly vital question, particularly with the changes that have already been shared with schools concerning the new Ofsted inspection framework. One way of answering this question could be to investigate the subject quality marks.

Dr. Thomlinson CE Middle School achieved the RE Quality Mark Gold Award in November 2017 and the process was one that I would recommend to other schools. The application process takes about a year. Schools are able to express an interest in the Autumn of the academic year in which they wish to obtain the award. After expressing an interest (and paying a fee) the school will receive a Quality Mark Evidence Form that sets out the criteria to achieve the award. Schools can apply for the bronze, silver or gold award, although some of the quality mark organisations insist on additional fees for those schools which wish to apply for gold before they have first gained a bronze or silver award.

The RE Evidence Form was divided into five categories:

- Learners and Learning
- Teachers and Teaching
- Curriculum
- Subject Leadership
- Continuing Professional Development.

In each category there are sub-sections and schools are required to obtain evidence that demonstrates they are fulfilling that criterion. Obviously there is a considerable body of work to be completed (otherwise the award would be meaningless) yet my colleagues found the process really useful. One example of this was that the award required the school to join a

national subject association, something that the school had never considered before, yet our membership of NATRE (National Association of Teachers of Religious Education) - gold membership naturally - has been really useful and led other subjects to join their respective national subject associations.

The framework prompted colleagues to ask questions of themselves and their practice, questions which may not have actually occurred to them to ask - never mind answer - if it were not for the process that the award involved. A particular example of this was the prerequisite that a participating school looks for opportunities to share their work with schools and networks both locally and nationally.

There is no doubt in my mind that the framework offered by the award is excellent professional development for all schools wanting to participate and can act as a framework to further develop other subjects than RE. Looking over the criterion as I write this article, I am aware how much of the award asks RE to actively look for and promote links with other parts of the curriculum - something which is particularly topical and was an aspect of the most recent training on the new Ofsted inspection framework I attended in November 2018.

The assessor's visit takes approximately two hours. During this time they spend around 30 minutes talking

to a group of 8 to 10 pupils with representatives of each year group. The questions asked concern the pupils' experiences in RE lessons, particularly regarding both the way they are challenged and in ways in which the subject makes them think deeply about issues. The rest of the time is spent speaking to the Head of RE about the evidence they are providing and then to a Senior Leader. The school found the process a very positive one. I feel this is because the criterion is so clear that staff inevitably pitch the evidence at the criteria they feel they can meet.

I would strongly recommend schools to take part in the process, not in order to gain a badge because - as is well known - true education is not about merely gaining very nice badges to put on a school's letterhead (perish the thought!!), but for the deep thinking it promotes for the teachers in the school. I really feel that a quality curriculum is one that teachers have thought about and debated and refined. It is at the very core of what we do as professionals and, if a process is available to help schools make the curriculum even better, then we all should take advantage of it.

Liam Murtagh
Headteacher
Dr. Thomlinson CE Middle School

Welcoming refugee and asylum-seeking children and young people to Northumberland

Northumberland schools have welcomed a number of refugees and asylum seekers over the last three years.

The Home Office has two distinct schemes operating at present:

- general dispersal of asylum seekers - a contracted service with G4S to source accommodation and provide limited support. There is no financial support to local authority areas from central government or G4S.
- the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) - placement arrangements are made directly with the local authority which sources accommodation and provides all support. A financial package is available with this scheme, some of which funds EAL (English as an Additional Language) teachers and interpreters.

G4S places people seeking asylum in dispersed properties currently located in south-east Northumberland. The majority of the current placements in Northumberland are for families in the NE63 postcode (Ashington). Such families have no recourse to public funds and individuals receive £37 per person per week for basic necessities. Their rent and utilities are paid for; however, the £37 payment has to be used for food, clothing, etc. As of 1st December 2018, there were 44 children in this group, 27 of whom are school age.

Since 2016, the County has been welcoming families from Syria, Iraq and Sudan through the VPRS. So far, 25 families have arrived with 76 children and young people, 64 of whom are school age.

EAL support is available to all schools (it is free for local authority schools but charged through a service level agreement for academies). The impact of EAL support has been clearly seen in some schools and positively commented upon by Ofsted in a recent inspection.

EAL teachers have the support of an Educational Psychologist and they work closely with the refugee families' support workers and schools. Together they provide a holistic approach to meeting the sometimes complex needs of the children we work with.

The EAL service also provides support for EAL pupils and their teachers throughout the county. In Northumberland, although there may be fewer EAL pupils than in many other local authorities, the challenges for both teachers and pupils are high. This is largely due to the many EAL pupils in Northumberland schools who are isolated learners, i.e., such pupils may be the only speaker of their language in the class, school or county. Schools frequently ask for advice about inclusive practices

and how to improve communication with families who are just beginning to learn English in their endeavours to make everyone feel welcome.

EAL teachers in Northumberland have established links with other minority ethnic support teams in the North-East including those in North Tyneside, South Tyneside, Newcastle and Gateshead. Collaborative working practices benefit all through sharing good practice and offering continuing professional development opportunities to schools.

For more information about EAL support, please contact Debra Gunn at debra.gunn@northumberland.gov.uk

“Schools frequently ask for advice about inclusive practices and how to improve communication with families who are just beginning to learn English in their endeavours to make everyone feel welcome”

[View contents page](#)



www.northumberland.gov.uk

Forthcoming Important Festivals, etc

5 January	Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh	(Sikh Nanakshahi Calendar)
6 January	Epiphany	(Western Christian)
6 - 7 January	Christmas Eve and Christmas Day	(Orthodox Christian, Armenian Apostolic, Rastafarian)
19 - 20 January	Tu B'Shevat	(Jewish)
27 January	Holocaust Memorial Day	(National)
1 - 2 February	Imbolc	(Pagan)
2 February	Candlemas/The Presentation of the Lord	(Christian)
5 February	Yuan Tan/Chinese New Year	(Chinese)
8 February	Nirvana Day	(Buddhist)
10 February	Vasant Panchami/Saraswati Puja	(Hindu)
12 February	Darwin's Birthday	(National)
19 February	Teng Chieh	(Chinese)
1 March	Women's World Day of Prayer	(Christian)
1 March	St. David's Day	(National)
4 March	Maha Shivaratri	(Hindu)
5 March	Shrove Tuesday	(Western Christian)
6 March	Ash Wednesday	(Western Christian)
6 March - 18 April	Lent	(Western Christian)
8 March	International Women's Day	(International)
11 March	First Day of Lent/The Great Feast	(Orthodox Christian)
17 March	St. Patrick's Day	(National)
20 - 21 March	Purim	(Jewish)

21 March	Holi	(Hindu)
21 March	Hola Mohalla	(Sikh)
21 March	Nawruz	(Bahai, Zoroastrian)
3 April	Lailat-al-Miraj	(Muslim)
5 April	Ching Ming	(Chinese)
14 April	Rama Navami	(Hindu)
14 April	Baisakhi	(Sikh)
14 - 20 April	Holy Week	(Western Christian)
17 April	Mahavir Jayanti	(Jain)
19 April	Good Friday	(Western Christian)
19 April	Hanuman Jayanti	(Hindu)
19 - 27 April	Pesach/Passover	(Jewish)
21 April	Easter Day	(Western Christian)
21 April - 2 May	Ridvan	(Bahai)
21 April	Lailat-al-Bara'a/Barat	(Muslim)
23 April	St. George's Day	(National)
26 April	Holy Friday	(Orthodox Christian)
28 April	Pascha/Easter Day	(Orthodox Christian)
1 May	Beltane	(Pagan)
1 - 2 May	Yom Ha-Shoah/Holocaust Day	(Jewish)
6 May	Start of Ramadan	(Muslim)

P.S. Anyone seeking to identify the dates for additional festivals and/or commemorations from the start of January to early May should access the many lists available on the internet. Some of the best such lists (in terms of inclusiveness and accuracy) derive from the BBC and RE:Online. The Shap Working Party on World Religion also produces a very good list, but the list must be purchased whether in hard or electronic form.

The SACRE members

Committee A: Other Faiths

Mrs. J. Cousin: Roman Catholic Church

Reverend E. H. Marley, OBE: United Reformed Church (URC)

Represented by the URC: Baptist Church

Represented by the URC: Methodist Church
(SE Northumberland Ecumenical Area)

Bhakti Rasa Adhikhara: Hinduism

Mariam Khan: Islam

Harpal Singh: Sikhism

Mrs. D. Van der Velde: Judaism

Committee B: Church of England

Mrs. E. Bainbridge

Mr. C. Hudson

Mr. P. Rusby

Reverend J. Scott

Committee C: Teaching Associations/Unions

Mr. M. Davidson (secondary/high school teacher)

Mr. A. Duffield (middle school teacher)

Miss F. Gannon (secondary/high school teacher)

Mr. T. Nicholls (secondary/high school teacher)

Mrs. H. Shaw (special school teacher, retired)

Committee D: Local Authority

Councillor B. Crosby

Councillor W. Daley

Councillor B. Pidcock, MBE

Councillor T. Thorne

Co-opted Representatives

Mr. S. Dearlove: North-East Humanists

Maddy Wardingham (special school teacher)

Observer (representing the academies and free schools)

Steve Gibson of Northumberland CE Academy

Local Authority Officers in Attendance

Phil André, Part-time RE Consultant

David Cookson, Commissioner for Secondary Education and Sixth Forms

Andrea Todd, Clerk to the SACRE, Democratic Services

