

Public Document Pack
SOUTHEND-ON-SEA CITY COUNCIL

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Date: Tuesday, 21st January, 2025
Time: 2.00 pm
Place: Committee Room 6 - Civic Suite
Contact: Rob Harris

Email: committeesection@southend.gov.uk

A G E N D A

- 1 Apologies for Absence
- 2 Declarations of Interest
- 3 SACRE Constitution and Membership Update
- 4 RE Advisor Update
- 5 SACRE Annual Report Preparation (Pages 3 - 8)
- 6 NASACRE Updates (Pages 9 - 24)
- 7 Date and time of next meeting

This page is intentionally left blank

SACRE Annual Reports – what is necessary and what is desirable? 5

SACREs have responsibility for advising a Local Authority (LA) on its schools.

For Religious Education (RE), SACRE advises community, voluntary controlled and Trust and Foundation schools without a religious designation.

For Collective Worship SACRE advises the LA on community, Trust and Foundation schools without a religious designation.

SACREs have a duty to publish an annual report, ideally by the 31st December each calendar year but if necessary in the following calendar year. This report has to be sent to the Secretary of State for Education as well as to key partners, including schools, teacher training institutions, libraries and councillors. The main purpose of the annual report is to hold the LA to account, by informing the Secretary of State and key partners what advice SACRE gave the LA during the year and how that was responded to; this includes advice on RE and Collective Worship in those schools for which the LA has responsibility.

Suggested structure to the annual report:

1. Chair's introduction and context
2. Advice to statutory bodies
 - a) Local Authority
 - b) Schools
 - c) Government or other statutory bodies
 - d) Response to the advice given, where appropriate
3. Standards and quality of provision of RE (with examples of good practice if appropriate)
 - a) Public examinations
 - b) Attainment in RE not covered by public examination
 - c) The quality of RE provision in schools
 - d) Withdrawal from RE
 - e) Complaints about RE
4. Agreed Syllabus
 - a) If there was a review of the syllabus under report
 - b) When the next review will take place

5. Collective Worship (with examples of good practice if appropriate)
 - a) Compliance with the statutory requirement
 - b) Quality of Collective Worship
 - c) Determinations
 - d) Complaints about collective worship
6. Management of SACRE
 - a) Attendance at SACRE, by Committee
 - b) Membership and training
 - c) Complaints about RE and Collective Worship
7. Contribution of SACRE to the wider Local Authority agenda
 - a) Identify what SACRE has contributed to other agendas
 - b) SACRE's contribution to the LA's public sector equality duty
 - c) What SACRE has done to support schools through events and training
 - d) Links to broader community initiatives
8. Summary
9. Membership of SACRE, local authority officers who attend, clerk and professional advice.

This is not meant as an exhaustive framework, but a useful guide.

The necessary

Firstly, it is important to recognise that SACREs are bodies that give advice (see 2 above). Hence, the annual report needs to state what advice was given and how that advice was acted upon in the year under review. It is important that the report makes clear to whom the advice was given.

The three main audiences, in order of priority, are:

- The Local Authority, this includes the portfolio holder for children's services, the director of children's services and any official of the LA (2a).
- The schools within the LA for which the SACRE is responsible and other schools within the SACRE's geographical area (2b).
- The government, including the Secretary of State, Ministers or civil servants (2c).

The annual report should answer the following questions (reported on in section 2):

- How did they respond to the advice?
- Was it acted upon? Or ignored?
- Did those being advised do something different and, if so, to what effect?

If SACRE cannot do this, it will be important to state why.

Here are some questions to consider (this could be included in sections 1 or 8, or both):

- Is SACRE taken seriously enough?
- Is SACRE adequately supported by professional staff, such as a clerk and adviser?
- Is SACRE adequately funded to perform its duties?

If the answer to any, some or all of these questions is no, then that needs to be acknowledged in the report.

Secondly, the report needs to include data about SACRE attendance by Committee, as well as any monies that it receives from the LA to carry out its responsibilities, including the time of an adviser and a clerk (see 5 above). As SACREs are statutory bodies that meet in public, they need to be properly clerked by the LA as their meetings are part of the public record.

SACRE should also report on any monitoring of RE (3) and Collective Worship (5) it has carried out and the results of such monitoring. Indeed, such monitoring should be the basis of at least some of the advice given. Similarly, a SACRE is required to advise on the appropriate materials used in classrooms to support teaching and learning in RE. SACRE should report on any such materials that it has looked at and advised upon (2 above). SACREs also need to report on the work of any Agreed Syllabus Conference within that calendar year, or indicate when another Conference is due (see 4 above).

SACRE has a statutory role in considering and granting determinations (see 5c above).

Determinations are made where a school, on behalf of a number of parents, requests Collective Worship other than that set down by statute. If a SACRE grants or refuses a determination it should be noted in the annual report (5c). There is no reason for a full explanation of why SACRE made that decision, as that information will be available from the report presented to SACRE and the minutes of that meeting. Likewise, SACRE has a role in investigating complaints against schools in relation to RE (3e) and Collective Worship (5d) and the number of such complaints dealt with should be noted in the report, with an indication as to whether the complaints were upheld or not. In terms of complaints investigated, it would be rare to mention the schools or individuals involved, as these matters would usually be discussed with the exclusion of press and public.

SACREs should have a clear picture of the number of schools their advice applies to, and the number of pupils those schools educate. This would include a breakdown of schools by phase (see 2b) above).

The desirable

SACRE may have achieved a host of things that it should celebrate. It may have provided evenings for teachers to meet members of faith communities of significance in the Local Authority (see 7 above). It might be that SACRE has hosted lectures. It could be supporting other LA agendas, such as Prevent. Whatever SACRE has done can be celebrated in the report.

It might also be possible to highlight good practice, so that schools can see examples of what they might do to improve RE (see 3 above) and Collective Worship (see 5 above) in their school. It is also desirable that the Chair of SACRE writes a short introduction (see 1 above) to the Annual Report – maybe in the form of a ‘state of the nation’ address - setting out key issues for RE, Collective Worship and SACRE in the coming twelve months.

Conclusion

SACRE’s annual report is SACRE’s opportunity to hold the Local Authority to account. As a statutory body, it has this duty and responsibility. If RE and Collective Worship are of low priority in the LA’s schools and it does nothing to correct that, then the Secretary of State needs to know, as do key partners. If the LA is promoting RE and Collective Worship and the status of RE is high, then it should be celebrated.

SACRE also needs to celebrate what it and others have done to promote high quality RE and Collective Worship.

New SACRE Annual Report framework

Format for the new Annual Report. NASACRE in conjunction with the DfE will be doing a national analysis of Annual Reports using this framework from September 2021.

1. An introduction including:

- Table of contents
- Words from the Chair of SACRE
 - welcoming new members, celebrating successes, thanks, etc.
- Overview, number of times SACRE has met and attendance at meetings, venues, and a brief overview of content of these meetings including Self-evaluation too – link to SACRE Development plan
- Overview as above for the ASC if this is currently sitting, working groups, progress
- *Executive summary (if report is over 10 A4 pages long this might be helpful as a separate document, so readable for schools?)*

2. A section on RE (statutory responsibilities) including:

- The local agreed syllabus and RE in schools, including whether any academies have adopted the LAS
 - Monitoring the AS, relationship with an AS review
 - Work of the ASC and associated working parties if this is currently sitting showing progress, links to other work nationally or locally
- Standards and monitoring of RE
 - This can include monitoring by scrutinising exam data, conversations with schools, teacher groups, website trawls, presentations from teachers. What has SACRE done and how has the monitoring helped SACRE to commend successes and support improvements?
 - Have any schools applied for or achieved REQM awards?
- Teacher training and materials and advice for schools
- Other information (withdrawals and how the SACRE monitors, advises or supports schools with this, complaints)
- Advice to the LA

3. A section on Collective Worship (statutory responsibilities) including:

- Standards and monitoring of CW
 - This can include monitoring by scrutinising Ofsted reports, conversations with schools, teacher groups, website trawls, presentations from teachers. What has SACRE done and how has the monitoring helped SACRE to commend successes and support improvements?
- Determinations
 - How many are current and how many have been applied for and what happened? Link to Determination Process documents online. Is that refreshed, or does it need updating?

- Teacher training provided (locally or national training circulated to schools) materials and advice for schools
 - Other information (withdrawals and how the SACRE monitors, advises or supports schools with this, Complaints)
 - Advice to the LA
4. A section on links with other bodies
- National bodies, e.g. NASACRE, the REC, central faith and belief organisations
 - Local bodies, e.g. Dioceses, Inter Faith Groups, Peace Walks, HMD events
5. A section on other areas of SACRE involvement locally
- Governor training
 - Advice on issues within the community, e.g. Ramadan advice for schools in partnership with the local communities
6. A section on SACRE's own arrangements (**statutory responsibilities**) including:
- Professional and administrative support and how the LA supports the SACRE (clerking, adviser, links to council initiatives)
 - Membership, representation & recruitment - quoracy, issues and successes with recruitment
 - Training for SACRE (and ASC) members
 - Finance given to SACRE for its work
7. Appendices
- Table of GCSE – short and full, A/S & A Level RS results
 - Details on CPD provided to schools
 - Any LA/SACRE policy statements on RE or CW
 - Development plan tied to funding
 - Circulation details for this AR

National RE Updates for SACRE Autumn 2024 For Southend SACRE

6

Calls for a National Plan for Religious Education

The Religious Education Council of England and Wales (REC) and the National Association for Teachers of RE (NATRE) have now called on the new Education Secretary, Bridget Phillipson MP, to introduce a National Plan for RE that provides a fair allocation of resources and prioritises the subject as part of Labour's plans to recruit more specialist teachers.

RE has recently seen a restoration of the teacher training bursary, but a shortage of specialism in schools remains a challenge given the long-term growth of the subject. The number of those recorded as teaching RE has remained roughly the same since 2011 at 16,200, while those delivering Geography and History lessons has risen by 1,700.

NASACRE News

Webinar Programme

The next in the series of NASACRE's training has been announced. Please consider which you can attend.

21 January 2025, 7-8pm: Calling all members of SACRE Group D – How to be an effective member of your SACRE?

25 February 2025, 7-8pm: Being an effective SACRE Clerk

11 March 2025, 7-8pm: Working on an Agreed Syllabus Conference – supports and processes

Various dates in March 2025, 6:30-8pm: NASACRE in Conversation
Free session for any SACREs to attend

24 June 2025, 6:30-8pm: So, you've joined your local SACRE...

Open University Religion, Belief and Worldviews Hub

The Open University Religion, Belief and Worldviews Hub can be accessed by all interested parties [Religion, belief and worldviews hub | OpenLearn - Open University](#). The Hub provides resources for schools and educational settings to support the delivery of RE in classrooms from Early Years through to post 16 education. The focus of the Hub is 'Religion and Belief' as a protected characteristic in UK legislation. Materials on the Hub have been provided by colleagues from The Open University, with classroom resources and online CPD opportunities for leaders and teachers of RE.

Strictly RE 2025

The annual NATRE conference for all RE professionals returns on 25th January 2025 and will be face to face following recent online conferences. This has become the annual date in the diaries of those

within RE and will be held at Leonardo Hotel in Birmingham. Click on the link to register interest in attending Strictly RE 2025. [NATRE Strictly RE 2025: National Religious Education Conference](https://www.natre.org.uk/courses-events/upcoming-courses-events/?page=1)

Upcoming RE Today Courses for the Spring Term

For more details on any of these courses, click here: <https://www.natre.org.uk/courses-events/upcoming-courses-events/?page=1>

PRIMARY PHASE

Help! I'm the RE Subject Leader

28/1/2025

cREative Primary RE

19/3/2025

SECONDARY PHASE RE

GCSE RS – Better Thinking, Better Writing, Better Results

10/02/2025

Peaceful and Purposeful Discussion in RE

03/03/2025

The RE Update: A day course for every secondary RE teacher

20/03/2025

CROSS PHASE (BOTH PRIMARY AND SECONDARY)

Introducing a Religion and Worldviews Approach

12/02/2025

The Ethics Cup

Saint Andrew's University are offering secondary schools the opportunity to participate in The Ethics Cup. Unlike traditional debating tournaments, pupils are asked to prepare to simply discuss a particular case with the other competing teams on the day of competition. The cases are not presented in a resolution format, there is no requirement for the teams to disagree with each other, and the competition is not won by proving the other team wrong. Each team is instead asked to craft its own position with as much nuance as judged appropriate. It is a collaborative discussion with a panel of three judges awarding points for insight, thoughtfulness, and civility.

This allows the pupils to put forward their own genuine beliefs, formed through prolonged thought and investigation, rather than a constructed polemic prescribed by the competition.

Schools can access information about The Ethics Cup here [The Ethics Cup – University of St Andrews Centre for Ethics, Philosophy and Public Affairs \(st-andrews.ac.uk\)](https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/ethicscup/)

RE Teaching in English Secondary Schools

The school workforce data is sourced from the annual school census which is submitted by schools in England to the DfE in November. Not every school completes the census each year however the data demonstrates who teaches RE in schools.

44% of teachers of RE have a post A Level qualification in the subject, compared to 80.3% for English, 76.6% for mathematics and 78.5% for History.

There has been an increase in the number of teachers of the other humanities subjects, history and geography between 2011 and 2023, however, the number of teachers of RE has remained static in the same period.

In response to a parliamentary question about how many RE lessons were taught by a teacher with another specialism, 51% of RE lessons were taught by teachers with another specialism, compared to 27% for history and 28% for geography.

A Level Religious Studies steady in England but a decrease in Wales

The overall trend in A level entries for Religious Studies over the last 5 years has been steeply downward in Wales but fairly stable in England.

Since 2020 entries in Wales have fallen by 37% from 1126 to 702. During the same period, entries in England, remained fairly stable with a fall of just under 0.5% from 14,564 to 14,499.

Even though the trend for entries in England is downwards, this is within a context where most Humanities subjects have experienced a fall in entries and most science, technology, engineering and maths subjects have seen an increase. It is worth noting that financial incentives for schools will have boosted these entries including the advanced maths premium scheme and a number of schemes established to boost science learning in schools.

Of the Humanities, Religious Studies in England was one of the smallest decreases between 2023 and 2024 at 1.3%.

Religious Studies remains a popular GCSE despite specialist teacher recruitment challenge

The number of students taking full course Religious Studies in England and Wales at GCSE has remained stable at 233,288 following a 0.5% rise in entries from 2023 making it one of the most widely studied humanities at GCSE.

223,034 students took RS GCSE (full course) in England, an increase of 0.3%. In Wales 10,254 students took the subject, an increase of 6.4%. For the third year running, the number of students taking a GCSE short course rose in England, this year by 9.5% to 20,627. In Wales however, entries fell by 27.1% to 2,201.

This is despite an ongoing challenge in recruiting specialist teachers amidst a gulf in government funding.

OCR Review – Striking the Balance: A Review of 11 – 16 curriculum and assessment in England

Oxford, Cambridge and RSA have published a report into the content of the curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 and the role and form of assessment including SATs and GCSE qualifications. The review was chaired by Charles Clarke and draws focus to four key areas

- Reducing the assessment burden
- Digital assessment and learning
- English and maths at 11–16
- Curriculum evolution at 11–16

The research was undertaken with over 2000 teachers and students at a variety of events as well as working with education specialists to draw the conclusions for each of the four areas.

Commentary in the section of the report on curriculum evolution points to an over-crowded curriculum in which some subjects have been overlooked due to a focus on EBacc subjects, there is reference not only to the creative subjects but also physical education and the following comment is made in relation to religious education

‘Another important aspect of the evolution of the curriculum is the teaching of religion and belief in schools. This remains a statutory requirement often honoured, outside faith schools, in the breach rather than the observance.’ – page 74

It is made clear in the report that although it is not necessary for all pupils in a school to follow the subjects contained within the EBacc there is a strong move within schools for pupils to study these as EBacc uptake is an accountability measure of school performance. The review calls for an independent curriculum authority to oversee the changes to the sector and to ease the examination burdens placed on students in Year 11 through a wholesale review of the processes and purposes of assessment in the education sector.

A copy of the review can be found here: [717919-striking-the-balance.pdf \(ocr.org.uk\)](https://ocr.org.uk/717919-striking-the-balance.pdf)

New Director for the National Association of Teachers of RE

After over a decade of dedicated service to NATRE as CEO, Fiona Moss has taken a new position at Culham St Gabriel’s Trust (CSTG) as Education and Programmes Manager. Fiona has made significant contributions to NATRE and the world of RE during her time as CEO, whether it be

lobbying political parties and government through to enabling the high-quality resources delivered by the NATRE Executive for its members.

Katie Freeman, the Chair of NATRE expressed these sentiments

All of us at NATRE would like to congratulate our wonderful Fiona Moss on her new role at CSTG. Fiona is a Powerhouse of RE and so many of us have stories about how she has inspired and supported us in our journeys within the RE community. Quite honestly NATRE won't be the same without her but we know that she will continue her important work in her new role and will be a vital part of the new CSTG team. She will be hugely missed but we look forward to continuing to work with her in new ways. Congratulations Fiona on your new role and thank you for all that you have done for NATRE members past and present!

Angela Hill, National RE Adviser and Editor of RE Today magazine has now taken over the role as Director of NATRE following Fiona's departure. Angela commented stated

I am honoured to take on the role at such a pivotal time for the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education. I look forward to working with the newly formed NATRE executive team to continue advancing the vital work of supporting and empowering all teachers, teaching the subject. Together, we will build on the strong foundation laid by Fiona and strive to create even greater opportunities for all teachers of religious education.

In welcoming Angela to her new role, Katie Freeman stated

NATRE are excited to welcome Angela Hill to her role working with and supporting the executive. Angela knows NATRE well as she has been working with us in her role as RE today's editor and we are looking forward to working with her more closely. She is a talented and knowledgeable adviser who will be able to support us with our existing projects as well as planning new ones. Congratulations Angela on your new role, we are so excited to see you develop your new role and we can't wait to work with you.

This page is intentionally left blank

National RE Updates for SACRE from RE Today Spring 2025 for Stockton-On-Tees SACRE

NATRE Primary Provision Survey

In 2024 NATRE conducted their biannual survey into religious education in primary schools. The findings are used by NATRE to provide guidance to its work with RE teachers.

Most Agreed Syllabuses recommend that the equivalent of approximately 60 minutes per week be spent on RE at Key Stage 1 and about 75 minutes at Key Stage 2. The survey data suggests that in just under a third of schools without a religious character (30.7%) insufficient time is being spent on the teaching of RE to ensure that pupils make good progress. On the other hand, in around 94% of schools timetable time has either increased or remained the same.

A third of subject leaders have no set or no budget for RE. Funding is an issue for all schools in the current climate. If resources are up to date and appropriate to modern teaching methods, it is vital that subject leaders have appropriate funds at their disposal. School funding is expected to rise this year and RE subject leaders will need to make the case for appropriate resourcing for RE. The most common budget is less than 50p per pupil per year and 35% of primary schools in the survey have no budget or no set budget at all.

Adults other than teachers are less likely to teach RE than was the case from the 2024 survey. In 54% of schools (63% in 2022) some RE is being delivered by this group of adults other than teachers. This was raised as a matter of concern by Ofsted in 2013 when in 24% of schools RE was delivered by teaching assistants. In just over one in five schools, (one in four in 2022) more than 25% of RE teaching is delivered in this way

A large proportion of primary teachers have no training in RE. More than 56% of the teachers in primary schools report that they received between 0 and 3 hours of training to teach RE in their initial teacher training (ITE). This represents an increase from 40% in 2022. 18% of these received no hours at all. This serious issue was the focus of Recommendation 6 of the Commission on RE (2018) Report. It links with the question about teachers' confidence. 60.5% of our respondents' colleagues feel reasonably or very confident in how to teach RE and 63.2% about what to teach in RE.

Wide variations in teachers' confidence to teach about different traditions. Teachers' confidence in teaching specific religions and beliefs varies significantly. Christianity, Islam and Judaism were ranked most highly in terms of teachers' confidence about their subject knowledge. Conversely, they were much less confident about teaching religions such as Zoroastrianism, the Bahá'í faith, Jainism and Paganism and also about non-religious worldviews such as Humanism.

RE is now commonly led by more experienced teachers. Far fewer subject leaders are recently qualified teachers than when we first began conducting this survey. Not only are the overwhelming majority of subject leaders, those with more than 10 years teaching experience but also they tend to hold the position for a number of years, 67% for more than 3 years and 42% for over 5 years.

The number of parents exercising the right to withdraw their child from RE is small but remains at around one in five schools but generally affecting fewer than 10 children per school, most frequently

one or two. 82% of schools reported that there had been no withdrawal from RE in the last academic year. The fact that parents can withdraw their child from RE without giving any reason or justification means that the ability of schools to educate pupils for life in a diverse modern world is compromised. The most common use of the right of withdrawal is from teaching about anything other than the home religion or belief. This is cited in 54% of cases.

Spirited Arts 2025

NATRE has announced the subject areas for its annual Spirited Arts competition for 2025. This annual competition asks pupils to use their creative talents to explore questions of religious and non-religious worldviews.

This is the 21st year for Spirited Arts and there are six themes for pupils to choose from

- Living in a Diverse World
- Stories that Change Lives
- Thinking about God
- Sacred Places
- All God's Creatures? (Sponsored by [AIA](#) & [VinE](#))
- Making Sense of Life

Schools can submit up to entries which should be received by the closing date of 31st July 2025. Full details are available at [Spirited Arts 2025 - Inspiring students to explore big questions through art](#)

Explaining Atheism

RE Today is delighted to be working with the Explaining Atheism research project as part of its outreach programme.

Leading on behalf of RE Today is National RE Adviser, Stephen Pett, who has been working with a number of researchers from Explaining Atheism to bring findings from their core research and affiliated research projects into classrooms across the UK.

Stephen is working in collaboration with filmmaker Briony Campbell and photographer Aubrey Wade to create learning resources from their projects. In October 2024 this work was trialled with groups of RE pupils at a pop-up exhibition and workshop series at Conway Hall in London, led by Lat Blaylock.

RE Today will be publishing teacher resources to link to the Explaining Atheism research. Earlier research from the project has been featured in *Challenging Knowledge in RE: Studying Worldviews* (2021) and *Investigating Non-Religious Worldviews* (2023).

Speaking about this opportunity, RE Adviser Stephen Pett said:

"It is a privilege to work with the researchers on this extensive and illuminating project. Findings help to show something of the complexity of what it means to have non-religious worldviews in the UK and in five other countries around the world. The multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches

are helpful for the RE community as we embrace the use of diverse ways of knowing in the classroom. I look forward to presenting our teaching and learning materials when they are ready to go!"

The video will serve as a helpful resource for RE teachers across the UK. It highlights the importance of including non-religious perspectives in the conversation, ensuring that all pupils can engage meaningfully with the diversity of worldviews that shape our world.

Jerusalem Trust Applications – RE Grants for Schools

Applications are now open for RE Grants for Schools from the Jerusalem Trust. The Jerusalem Trust’s Small Grants to Schools Scheme supports the teaching of Christianity within Religious Education. The scheme operates by providing schools with grants of up to £600 to purchase Christianity resources for use in RE lessons. The grants are available for all state funded schools in England and Wales.

Any school wishing to apply for the grant should visit [Grant Criteria – The Jerusalem Trust](#) which outlines what the grant will and will not cover and there is also a Frequently Asked Questions section available for schools to support them in making an application [FAQs – The Jerusalem Trust](#) .

At the time of the writing of the XXXXXX SACRE update there is availability for both primary and secondary schools to apply for the grant. The application will take between 15 and 20 minutes to complete.

Support for GCSE and A Level

Meeting for teachers of A-Level Religious Studies

Tuesday 28 January 2025 6-7pm

This is a FREE CPD opportunity – everyone welcome!

Agenda

Agnes Slusarska is a teacher and researcher. She has been working on an inquiry based approach to teaching Ethics + DCT for the OCR A level. She will be sharing resources for guided and open style inquiry which use technology to promote good researching practices at A level.

Joe Kinnaird is Head of RE at the Coopers Company and Coborn School in East London. He’s going to share some strategies to support evaluation and essay writing.

Meeting to be held online– link sent in advance

Email if you are not already signed up to the A-level NATRE Group and would like to.

k.steele@worc.ac.uk



RS GCSE

Virtual network meeting

Wednesday 5th February 2025 from 4 - 5pm

This NATRE associated GCSE group is hosted by Matt Pitcher for teachers of RS GCSE.

This meeting will focus on sharing tips and revision resources

[@re-runner.bsky.social](#)

X [@re_runner](#)

NASACRE and Westhill Awards

Westhill Endowment supported by NASACRE is once again offering the chance for SACRES to bid for funds to run a 2-year project involving schools, teachers and the local community to promote diversity in RE and Collective Worship. Projects should inspire young people to connect with diversity in their local area and should produce compelling learning experiences in RE or collective worship.

The idea is that the projects will foster collaboration between SACRES and local schools, strengthening the provision and impact of RE and Collective Worship. There may be connections created between schools and local communities as part of the project. The theme in recent years has been Education into Diversity and this will continue, though renamed Developing Diversity, encouraging SACRES to think about how RE and Collective Worship are preparing pupils and students for life and work in multi-religious and multi-secular Britain.

Applications should be completed using the application form on the NASACRE web site and be submitted by 28th February 2025 and sent to westhill@nasacre.org.uk and diane@westhillendowment.org. The successful SACRES being notified at the annual NASACRE conference in May.

RE Hubs

The RE hubs are offering training for speakers who would like to support schools bring to life their curriculum through first hand experience of meeting and talking with people from different religions and non-religious worldviews, as well as experts in social sciences, philosophy and theology.

Once the training has been completed then speakers are kite marked and then included on the RE hubs web site for the local region. Schools can then access a full list of speakers in their area to help bring RE to life in the classroom. There are a range of training dates available through the RE hubs website from 29th January 2025 through to 7th July 2025. Potential speakers, which may include members of SACRES can register at [Register as a school speaker](#)

NATRE responds to the DfE Call for Evidence for the Curriculum Review

NATRE has submitted a response from the National Executive to the Curriculum and Assessment Review. What follows is an executive summary of that response.

The NATRE response to the Curriculum and Assessment Review highlights the challenges and opportunities in Religious Education (RE) across England. It emphasises the subject's critical role as an academic subject, in fostering respect, understanding, and critical thinking in a multi-religious and multi-secular society while addressing the negative impact of recent government policies.

One major concern highlighted in our response is the exclusion of RE from the EBacc, which has devalued its status. Additionally, the decline in local authority capacity has limited the ability of Standing Advisory Councils on RE (SACRES) to support schools effectively. The absence of

accountability measures for academies, coupled with outdated GCSE and A-level content, has further contributed to inconsistencies in the delivery and quality of RE.

Despite these setbacks, NATRE acknowledges positive developments. GCSE and A-level entries have remained relatively stable in England, showing the enduring interest in RE. Innovative projects, such as the Religious Education Council's Religion and Worldviews Project, have developed resources like the Handbook for Syllabus Writers, which guides curriculum development. Other initiatives, like NATRE's Spirited Arts Competition, encourage creative engagement with RE and provide examples of good practice.

NATRE identifies the misuse of the parental right of withdrawal as another key issue. Sometimes this right is misused to prevent their children from learning about diverse worldviews, or to make time available for other activities, e.g. literacy/numeracy interventions, undermining the subject's inclusivity and compromising the principles of the Equality Act. NATRE supports reviewing this right, citing the Welsh model as one for consideration, where the right to withdrawal has been removed. The response advocates for several key recommendations. These include updating GCSE and A-level content to reflect modern religious and non-religious perspectives, implementing national standards for RE to ensure consistency, and enhancing accountability measures for academies. NATRE also emphasises the importance of teacher professional development, calling for increased access to Subject Knowledge Enhancement (SKE) courses and bursaries to address teacher shortages and ensure high-quality delivery.

Insights from pupil feedback reinforce the importance of improving RE. Primary pupils expressed a strong interest in learning about different religions, visiting places of worship, and engaging with people from various beliefs.

One pupil noted, *"It's exciting to learn about things I've never heard of before,"* while another highlighted the importance of visiting places of worship to *"see what others do."*

Secondary students valued discussions on philosophical and moral questions, with one stating, *"Debates in RE make us think about what's right and wrong."* whilst commented, *"My RE lessons make me think hard about life. It is challenging in a good way because we have to think hard about the subject and look deeply into it."*

These responses align with NATRE's vision of an engaging and inclusive RE curriculum. By addressing current challenges and implementing these recommendations, NATRE envisions a National Plan for RE that would help secure a future where RE is consistently high-quality, relevant, and integral to preparing young people for life in a diverse and interconnected world.

NATRE's response articulates the complexities of RE in its place in the curriculum and highlights the need for further, meaningful engagement with teachers of RE in the next steps in the Curriculum and Assessment Review.

Upcoming RE Today Courses for the Spring Term and beyond!

For more details on any of these courses, click here: <https://www.natre.org.uk/courses-events/upcoming-courses-events/?page=1>

Primary Phase CPD

Help! I'm the RE Subject Leader

28th January 2025 (Full Day 9.30am – 3.30pm)

Boost your knowledge and confidence with this one-day course, it will equip you to be an effective and inspirational RE subject leader in the primary school. Explore the role of the subject leader, using practical activities to develop your understanding of RE and your leadership and management skills. Focus on creative task setting, planning a scheme of work using your locally agreed syllabus or faith community guidelines, and effective and manageable monitoring and self evaluation. Leave feeling motivated, inspired and equipped with ready-to-use ideas to engage staff and pupils.

cREative primary RE

19th March 2025 (Morning 9.30am – 12.30pm)

How can I ensure children are engaged in RE lessons? What strategies can I use to make sure pupils are inspired during RE? This session is packed full of ready-to-use ideas for anyone who wants to engage pupils more fully in RE sessions. There will be a focus on the Spirited Arts competition 2025. Perfect for all primary practitioners who teach RE including Early Career Teachers, Subject Leaders and Teaching Assistants; with a wide range of practical classroom ideas for primary RE, there is sure to be something for everyone.

Primary - Understanding Christianity

19th May 2025 (Afternoon 1.00 pm – 4.00 pm – with two additional dates in Autumn 2025 and Spring 2026)

Get the confidence and subject knowledge to teach about Christianity: Text Impact Connections through this tried and tested course which is supported by a substantial whole school teachers handbook. Many locally agreed syllabuses include requirements for teaching Christianity that are directly supported by this resource. This resource supports good quality teaching about Christianity and can be used within the requirements of your syllabus guidelines.

Secondary Phase CPD

GCSE RS – Better thinking, better writing, better results (Feb 2025)

10th February 2025 (Afternoon 1.30 pm – 4.30pm)

This session offers practical strategies to help your pupils to avoid some of the common pitfalls of the GCSE RS examinations. We consider ways to approach teaching the GCSE that will encourage deeper, more critical

and analytic thinking, along with ideas to keep everyone engaged. This session will offer tips for refining pupils' exam technique, too.

Peaceful and Purposeful Discussion in RE

3rd March 2025 (Twilight 3.30 pm – 5.30 pm)

The best RE is not afraid of controversy! This session will explore practical strategies for helping pupils engage in peaceful and productive discussion of contested issues in RE.

The RE Update: a day course for every secondary RE teacher (March 2025)

19th March 2025 (Full Day 9.30 am – 3.30 pm)

Refresh your repertoires of teaching and learning strategies with this wide-ranging course, which will equip you with fresh classroom ideas and materials around some key current issues in the subject. Hear about the latest developments in the delivery of RE across the Key Stages. This wide-ranging course from Ian Nicholson will present fresh classroom ideas and materials to meet the needs of teachers of RE around some key current issues in the subject.

[Cross Phase CPD](#)

Introducing a Religion and Worldviews approach

12th February 2025 (Afternoon 1.30 pm – 4.30 pm) OR

7th May 2025 (Afternoon 1.30 pm – 4.30pm)

What is a religion and worldviews (RW) approach? How is it different from current RE practice? What are the benefits to teachers and pupils? This session offers a practical introduction to worldviews and explores what an RW approach means for subject content and how we teach it, as well as reflecting how it develops pupils' personal worldviews. Drawing on the 2024 RE Council Handbook and Frameworks, including resources and strategies, this session will show how to enrich and deepen pupils' understanding of religious and non-religious worldviews.

This page is intentionally left blank

National SACRE Sessions 2024 -2025

Autumn 2024		Spring 2025		Summer 2025	
Title	Who/Date	Title	Who/Date	Title	Who/Date
Hindu Dharma (Primary)	IN – Wednesday 23 rd October	UMUI (Primary)	SP - Monday 3 rd February	Judaism (Primary)	DY – Tuesday 10 th June
Hindu Dharma (Secondary)	IN – Wednesday 6 th November	UMUI (Secondary)	SP - Wednesday 26 th February	Deepening Learning (Secondary)	AH - Wednesday 18 th June
Ways of Knowing (Primary)	SP - Tuesday 15 th November	Oracy (Primary)	DY – Wednesday 5 th March	Global Christianity (Primary)	JC/JDC – Thursday 5 th June
Ways of Knowing (Secondary)	SP - Wednesday 23 rd October	Oracy (Secondary)	JC – Thursday 6 th March	Global Christianity (Secondary)	JC – Wednesday 25 th June
Personal Knowledge (Joint)	JDC – Thursday 17 th October	Buddhism (Primary)	IN – Wednesday 15 th January	Sikhi (Primary)	JDC – Thursday 22 nd May
		Buddhism (Secondary)	IN – Wednesday 12 th March	Sikhi (Secondary)	AH- Wednesday 9 th July

For these sessions there will be a Zoom code created which will be sent through to the relevant SACRE to be circulated to those people who will be attending. You will be the host for the meeting. The aim is for there to be a session of input from yourselves and then there will be the breakout rooms for each of the SACREs who will be attending the session and then there will be a catch all session for everyone at the end.

This page is intentionally left blank