



**The Surrey**  
**Standing Advisory Council**  
**on**  
**Religious Education**



**Constitution**

Revised: October 2023  
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# Constitution of the Surrey Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

A Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education is a statutory body established by the Local Authority under the provisions of [Section 390-397](#) of the 1996 Education Act to perform statutory functions.

## The Aims of the SACRE

Surrey SACRE seeks to ensure that all pupils in our schools develop spiritually, academically, emotionally and morally, as well as socially, culturally and physically, so that they are able to understand themselves and others and cope with the opportunities, challenges and responsibilities of living in a rapidly changing world.

Surrey SACRE aspires to work with schools and the Local Authority to:

- encourage schools to place a high priority on the quality of provision in RE, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) and collective worship;
- enhance the quality of Religious Education (RE) and collective worship in Surrey schools;
- celebrate the religious and cultural diversity found in Surrey;
- provide a Religious Education syllabus\* with challenging learning opportunities that promote an ethos of respect for others, challenge stereotypes and build understanding of students' own and other cultures and beliefs;
- promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development through meaningful and engaging collective worship and reflection;
- contribute to community cohesion by engaging the whole school community in an exploration of identity and community in the local, national and global context;
- make appropriate provision to meet the needs of all pupils represented within their school community;
- raise standards of pupil attainment in RE to equate to national expectations of performance levels in other core subjects;
- build links between schools and local faith / belief communities.

*[\*October 2019 Official Note: The funding agreement for an Academy without a religious designation states that it must arrange for RE to be given to all pupils in accordance with the requirements of an agreed syllabus. Academies can opt to use the locally agreed syllabus.]*

## Section 1 - Composition

1.1 In accordance with the provisions of the Education Act 1996 (Section 390(4)), the Surrey Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education ("SACRE") shall consist of representative members appointed by Surrey County Council ("the Local Authority") to represent respectively:

**A:** such Christian denominations and other religions or beliefs and denominations of such religions or beliefs as, in the opinion of the Local Authority, will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions or beliefs in the area;

**B:** the Church of England;

**C:** such associations representing teachers as, in the opinion of the Local Authority, ought, having regard to the circumstances of the County, to be represented; and

**D:** the Local Authority

1.2 It is the statutory responsibility of the Local Authority to appoint the members of the SACRE. The composition of the groups of representative members ("the representative groups") shall be as follows:

**Group A: Christian denominations other than the Church of England, and other religions and beliefs, which are currently, but not necessarily limited to:**

Other Christian denominations, five (5); Hindu (Sanatana) Dharma one (1); Islam one (1); Judaism one (1); Baha'i one (1); Buddhism one (1); Sikh one (1); Humanism one (1).

Representatives on Group A must be nominated by an appropriate representative group, either national or local. Nominating bodies are identified within the [Membership List \[Appendix B\]](#) Where a faith or belief group not currently represented on group A wishes to be represented on SACRE, a representative of that group will be asked to apply to the Local Authority and attend a SACRE meeting to present their request. After due consideration, SACRE will then refer the matter to the Local Authority, recommending approval, rejection or co-option, with reasons. The Local Authority will then determine whether the group appropriately contributes to the principal faith and belief traditions of Surrey and that its appointment will be consistent with the efficient discharge of Group A's functions.

**Group B: The Church of England**

Four (4) members, representing the Dioceses of Guildford, Southwark and London

**Group C: Teachers**

Six (6) members, representing Professional Associations and / or other nominated professionals, which may include local network groups for RE, such as NATRE.

**Group D: The Local Authority**

Five (5) elected representatives as nominated by the political groups on Surrey County Council at the Council's Annual meeting. Wherever possible, Group D should reflect the balance of party membership of elected representatives.

1.2.1 Representatives on SACRE should seek to represent the views and opinions of their nominating body, association or group. All members of SACRE are expected to work within the Code of Conduct. (see appendix A)

1.3 The Local Authority shall appoint an appropriately qualified person to advise and guide the SACRE, hereafter known as "the Advisory Officer" or "the Adviser".

1.4 The appointed adviser may speak on matters when requested or they see fit, but shall be independent of any representative group and have no right to vote.

1.5 SACRE may co-opt members on the nominations of any of the representative groups on the SACRE for such purposes and such length of time as the SACRE shall decide. Co-opted members may resign at any time and may be removed by the representative groups or the Local Authority at any time. Co-opted members may speak and fully participate in meetings, but have no right to vote.

1.6 A Chair for each SACRE group shall be elected on an annual basis, from nominations from the representative groups, with election decided by a simple majority vote of members present at the Autumn term meeting. Such nominations are to be submitted to the SACRE clerk 14 days prior to the date on which the meeting shall take place. Group Chairs are eligible for re-election.

1.7 Substitutions for absent members

In the event of a member being unable to attend a meeting, their nominating body may send a substitute and should notify SACRE in advance of that meeting. Only named substitutes may attend or vote in place of the absent member and should be fully briefed by them.

1.8 The composition of Surrey SACRE is attached as [Membership List \[Appendix B\]](#) This is reviewed and updated as membership changes.

## **Section 2 – Duration of Membership**

2.1 Members of SACRE will be appointed for a period of four years, in line with the constitution review period. The term of office for members shall be from the meeting at which they are appointed. Existing members shall be permitted to be re-elected.

2.2 Any member of the SACRE may, at any time, resign from office, by writing or emailing to the Chair and the Clerk. The Local Authority should then apply to the relevant nominating body for a suitable replacement.

2.3 A member of the SACRE may be removed from membership by the Local Authority at any time if, in the reasonable opinion of the Local Authority, the person ceases to be representative of either the denomination or association which he/she was appointed to represent on the SACRE.

2.4 Where a SACRE member fails to attend three consecutive meetings of the SACRE and is not represented at any of these meetings by a named substitute, s/he shall cease to be a member of the SACRE.

2.5 In the event of removal as contained in section 2.3 or 2.4 or resignation as in section 2.2, a vacancy shall arise and nominations from appropriately qualified persons from the nominating body shall be sought.

2.6 Any subsequent appointment shall be subject to the agreement of the Local Authority. It is incumbent upon the Local Authority to notify SACRE of any new appointment.

2.7 Subject to the conditions of paragraph 2.3, members of SACRE having served the full term are eligible for re-appointment.

## **Section 3 – Chair and Vice-Chair**

3.1 The SACRE shall appoint the SACRE Chair from nominations received from the representative groups, with election decided by Group vote, from the members present at the meeting.

3.1.1 Such nominations are to be submitted to the SACRE clerk 14 days prior to the date on which the meeting shall take place. The period of office for the Chair of SACRE shall be four years.

3.2 The Vice-Chair shall be elected on a bi-annual basis, from nominations received from the representative groups, with election decided by Group vote, from the members present at the meeting.

3.2.1 Nominations for the position of Vice-Chair are to be submitted to the SACRE clerk 14 days prior to the date on which the meeting shall take place.

3.2.2 Persons continuing to be members of SACRE are eligible for re-appointment to the position of Chair and Vice-Chair.

3.2.3 In the event of a tied vote for either of these officer positions, each nominee will serve a 2-year term of office (Chair) or 1-year term of office (Vice-Chair).

3.3 The Chair of SACRE shall be responsible for convening and chairing the meetings of SACRE in accordance with the principles of this constitution and any appropriate guidance issued by the Local Authority.

3.4 The Chair, or her/his delegate, shall be responsible for liaising on SACRE's behalf with appropriate bodies or representing SACRE at appropriate local or national level meetings, including those of NASACRE (Section 11.1)

## Section 4 - Duties

4.1 The SACRE shall, either at the request of the Local Authority or on its own initiative, advise the Local Authority upon general matters connected with Religious Education to be given in accordance with the Surrey Agreed Syllabus and Collective Worship, and meeting the requirements of the law, including but not limited to advice upon:

- a) the choice of teaching materials for Religious Education
- b) aspects of continuing professional development for teachers of Religious Education
- c) teaching methods for Religious Education
- d) matters related to the conduct of collective worship in community schools

4.1.1 The SACRE shall work with the Local Authority and its nominated strategic partners to monitor the implementation of the Agreed Syllabus and the quality of provision for Religious Education in community and voluntary controlled Surrey Schools and of Collective Worship in community schools.

4.2 SACRE shall, at least every five years, convene an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) to review, and if appropriate re-publish, the Locally Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education. The establishment of the Agreed Syllabus Conference shall be subject to the regulations governing the establishment of an ASC contained in [Schedule 31 of the 1996 Education Act](#).

4.2.1 The representative groups on the SACRE may, in addition to section 4.2, at any time request a review of the Agreed Syllabus. Such a request shall be subject to a vote following the usual procedures contained in Section 5 of this constitution.

### 4.3 Determinations

Details of the determination process and application forms can be found within SACRE's guidance document '[Time to Reflect](#)', which can be downloaded from SACRE's webpages. Upon receipt of an application by a community or foundation school without a religious character, the SACRE shall determine whether the requirement for collective worship that is 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character' should apply to that school or any class or description of pupils at that school. Application shall be determined and decisions shall be reviewed in accordance with [Section 394 of the Education Act 1996](#).

Such determinations shall be reviewed by the SACRE no later than 5 years after the determination was granted.

### 4.4 Annual Report

The SACRE shall publish an annual report with respect to the exercise of its duties including matters on which it has advised the Authority, any determinations made on applications concerning collective worship requirements and any action taken by the representative groups in terms of a review of the Agreed Syllabus. The report shall be published before 31st March each year in respect of the preceding year.

4.5 The report shall be presented to the appropriate representative of the Secretary of State for Education and circulated to relevant and interested persons, including NASACRE, members of SACRE, the Local Authority and schools within the Local Authority.

### 4.6 RE in Academies and Free Schools

The Local Authority recognises that academies and Free Schools may choose to adopt an agreed syllabus that is not their locally agreed syllabus, as long as it meets the legal requirements as above (4.2). Academies and Free Schools choosing to use the Surrey Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education may be advised by the SACRE on matters relating to RE following the principles outlined in 4.1.

#### 4.6.1 Determinations in academies

A SACRE cannot renew an academy's or Free School's determination or grant a new one; any such renewal should be made directly to the Secretary of State for Education via the Education and Schools Funding Agency, having first consulted with the school's governing body and parents.

### **Section 5 - Voting Procedures**

5.1 On any question to be decided by SACRE by vote, all four groups A, B, C and D shall be entitled to vote, and each group shall have a single vote. Co-opted members are not permitted to participate in the vote.

5.2 Before any representative group casts its single vote on any issue to be decided by the SACRE, it shall meet to discuss the issue. The decision of the representative group shall be determined by a simple majority vote in which each member of the group has one vote.

5.3 In the event of a tied vote, the vote will be deferred to the following meeting.

5.4 The committees on an ASC (Agreed Syllabus Conference) must vote unanimously on the adoption of any new or revised agreed syllabus in accordance with the [1996 Education Act Schedule 31](#).

### **Section 6 - Quorum**

6.1 Meetings of the SACRE shall be quorate if nine (9) or more representative members are present including at least one (1) representative member from each of the four (4) representative groups and in addition, at least one Group A member from a faith or belief other than Christianity. If the meeting is not quorate business shall not be transacted.

### **Section 7 - Administrative Arrangements**

7.1 The Local Authority shall make appropriate arrangements for a person to act as Clerk to the SACRE.

7.2 The *Director for Children, Schools and Families*, or anyone nominated by her/him, shall be entitled to be present throughout the proceedings of the SACRE and shall be entitled to give advice as she/he thinks appropriate. Such person shall have no membership of any representative group or right to vote on any matter.

7.3 The SACRE shall meet at least three times in each year and more often if it considers it necessary to do so.

7.4 The agenda for SACRE meetings will be determined by the Chair and the Advisory Officer.

7.5 The agenda shall include matters arising in the course of the business of the SACRE and other matters required by statute or suggested by members of the SACRE before the agenda is set. Unless agreed otherwise by the SACRE, the agenda and reports for each meeting shall be circulated at least seven (7) days before the meeting to each member of the SACRE.

7.6 Minutes shall be circulated within fourteen (14) days after the meeting and formally approved at the next full SACRE meeting.

### **Section 8 – Inclusion, Diversity and Community Cohesion**

8.1 The membership of SACRE shall seek, as far as is possible and within the bounds of statute, to represent the broad spectrum of faith and belief positions found within the County of Surrey.

8.2 The membership of SACRE shall be subject to review either at the request of existing members or the Local Authority. A current list of members is included as appendix B.

8.3 SACRE shall take reasonable steps to ensure that its meetings and communications are accessible to all members.

8.4 Meetings of SACRE shall be held in public, except where statutory obligations require otherwise.

8.5 The constitution of SACRE and the minutes of meetings shall be made available to interested persons on request from the Clerk or via links on the SACRE pages of the [Surrey County Council website](#).

## **Section 9 – Working Groups**

9.1 SACRE may require the establishment of working groups to undertake work on its behalf.

9.2 The remit and constitution of such working groups shall be decided at a full meeting of SACRE.

9.3 Such working groups may seek advice and guidance from such appropriate sources as deemed necessary to fulfil their obligations to SACRE.

9.4 Working groups shall be dissolved following the completion of the task for which they were established, or at any time following their establishment at the request of SACRE or the Local Authority.

## **Section 10 – Youth SACRE**

10.1 When personnel and sufficient support from schools allow, SACRE may convene a body to be known as “The Surrey Youth SACRE”, hereafter referred to as “Youth SACRE”. The membership of Surrey Youth SACRE should, wherever possible, represent the broad spectrum of faith and belief positions found within the County of Surrey.

10.2 When in operation, Youth SACRE shall be convened at least twice per year and on at least one of those occasions, shall meet with Surrey SACRE to represent the views and ideas of young people on issues relating to the teaching of Religious Education and provision of Collective Worship.

10.3 Youth SACRE shall have no voting rights when present at meetings of Surrey SACRE.

## **Section 11 – Affiliation**

11.1 Surrey SACRE shall be affiliated to the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education (NASACRE) and shall be represented at appropriate meetings.

11.2 The Advisory Officer to SACRE, appointed by the Local Authority, shall be a member of the Association of Religious Education Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants (AREIAC).

## **Section 12 – Accountability**

12.1 Surrey SACRE shall be accountable to Surrey County Council.

12.2 Surrey County Council shall in turn provide such funding to the ASC & SACRE as necessary to ensure the fulfilment of its statutory obligations and any additional requirements as may be contained within this constitution or may from time to time be requested by the appropriate legal authority.

## **Complaints -**

Any complaints about the SACRE or SACRE members should be submitted to the Surrey County Council complaints procedure. More details can be downloaded from <http://www.County.complaints@surreycc.gov.uk>

Wherever possible, Surrey County Council tries to deal with a complaint at the service point involved. Any complaints should be addressed, in the first instance, to the SACRE Clerk.

## Appendix A: Surrey SACRE Code of Conduct

### Surrey SACRE encourages all its members to:

- *attend all SACRE meetings and take a full and active part in its work;*
- *participate in and review the work of SACRE for the benefit of the whole community;*
- *listen with respect to the views of other members and where a situation of disagreement occurs, disagree respectfully;*
- *express views and opinions openly, honestly and sensitively, always recognising that they are on SACRE as a representative of a community and that others may have views different to one's own;*
- *assume at all times that other members of SACRE are honourable and concerned with the best interests of SACRE;*
- *seek reasoned consensus where views diverge and never disrespect the views of other SACRE members or seek to convert them to a different belief stance;*
- *actively consult with, and report back to, the membership body which they represent so that debate is fully informed;*
- *actively challenge and resist stereotyping;*
- *remember that the central aim for the SACRE is to improve the quality of provision in RE and collective worship for all pupils in Surrey.*

### Visiting schools

From time to time, SACRE members may have the opportunity to visit schools. SACRE members should remember that it is a privilege to visit a school. They are there as invited guests, not to make judgements about the school or to "inspect" RE and collective worship. Members should:

- *only visit a school when invited;*
- *inform the Clerk of SACRE and the SACRE's RE adviser of any invitation received and visits made;*
- *ensure that you do not say or do anything, which could be viewed as denigrating any religion or ethical belief system;*
- *avoid being critical of others or imposing their own views;*
- *any confidential information disclosed should not be passed on but along with any possible concerns or confusions about what may have been seen should be discussed with the Chair and RE adviser before being reported back to SACRE.*

### Visiting schools as a representative of a faith or belief community

Some faith or belief community representatives may be more regular visitors to schools and invited to support RE and/or collective worship. In these cases, representatives should conduct themselves in accordance with the separate code of conduct set out in SACRE's guidance document

[\*\*'Encounters with Faith and Belief'\*\*](#), which states that:

***members of belief communities taking part in the life of the school, including visits to places of worship, should:***

- be willing to share their own experiences, beliefs and insights, but avoid:
  - i. criticising the experience and insights of others and
  - ii. imposing their views on pupils in any way
- be familiar with the school's aims, ethos and policies and plan their involvement in the light of the aims and curriculum at the school;
- seek to use engaging teaching and learning methods that involve the pupils actively, and to communicate at appropriate levels for the age group(s) concerned;
- be willing to respect and value the beliefs of any pupils and adults in the school when they are different from their own;



- develop ways of speaking to pupils that communicate their open approach, avoiding any hidden agenda to 'convert' or proselytise.

*A key question to help visitors reflect on their approach – the 'golden rule' of the conduct:  
**'If a member of another religion or belief visited my child's school and contributed in the same way that I have done, would I, as a parent, be happy with the education given?'***

The complete guidance document supporting visits & visitors to schools, called '**Encounters with Faith and Belief**', can be found using the hyperlink [here](#).

## Appendix B: SACRE Membership *(this is reviewed & updated to reflect membership changes)*

### SACRE Membership (as at March 2024)

**Chair** Sarah Harris  
**Vice-Chair** Rev. Allan Taylor

#### Committee A: Other Faiths and Beliefs (10 members, 2 vacancies)

Jennie Johnson (Group Chair)	Humanists UK
Rev. Allan Taylor	Methodist Church
<i>Vacancy</i>	United Reformed Church
Rosslyn Doney	Cranleigh Baptist Church
<i>Vacancy</i>	Society of Friends
Peter Ward	Roman Catholic, Diocese of Westminster & Diocese of Arundel and Brighton
Rajendra Pandya	Hindu (Sanatana) Dharma, Kingston Interfaith Forum and Shree Vishwa Sanaatan Dharma Mandir, Croydon
Inderjeet Singh Rehncy	Sikh [ <i>nominating body TBC</i> ]
Kawther Hashmi	Surrey Muslim Association ( <i>to March 2024</i> )
Sadia Irfan	Surrey Muslim Association ( <i>from March 2024</i> )
Sarah Harris	Jewish Board of Deputies
Patrick Jatumet	Buddhist, Woking Dhammakaya Temple
Simon Mortimore	Bahá'í [ <i>nominating body TBC</i> ]

#### Committee B – The Church of England (3 members, 1 vacancy)

Jane Whittington (Group Chair)	Diocese of Guildford
Shaun Burns	Diocese of Southwark
Rev. Sarah Hutton	Diocese of Guildford
<i>Vacancy</i>	Diocese of London

#### Committee C – Teachers (6 members, 0 vacancy)

Deborah Jackson	NEU (National Education Union)
Saadia Nawaz	NASUWT ( <i>elected June 2022</i> )
Alex Page	Secondary teacher, The Priory School, Dorking
Louisa Smith (Joint Group Chair)	Secondary & Academies teacher rep. ( <i>from March 2024</i> )
Rashida Nasir	Primary teacher representative ( <i>Surrey RE networks</i> )
Saima Saleh (Joint Group Chair)	Primary & Academies teacher rep. & NATRE exec member

#### Committee D – Local Authority (3 members, 2 vacancies)

Cllr Jordan Beech (Group Chair)	SCC member, Conservative
Cllr Buddhi Weerasinghe	SCC member, Conservative
Cllr Bob Hughes	SCC member, Conservative
Cllr Dennis Booth	SCC member, Conservative ( <i>from March 2024</i> )
<i>Vacancy</i>	SCC member

#### Officers in Attendance

Rachel Boxer (Adviser)	Associate Consultant for Primary RE, Surrey SACRE & Guildford Diocese
Liz Mitchell	Clerk to SACRE ( <i>from September 23</i> )
Carrie Traill	Commissioning Officer, SCC ( <i>from March 2024</i> )
Nicola Morgan	Senior Educational Effectiveness Advisor, acting in place of Commissioning Officer ( <i>from March 2023 to March 2024</i> )