

Sefton Council



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

Annual Report 2024 - 2025

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Section One: Introduction and the Work of SACRE

Words from the Chair

I am pleased to present the Annual Report of the Sefton Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) for 2024–25. Over the past year, we have continued to support schools and teachers across the borough to ensure that Sefton’s children and young people receive a high-quality religious education.

Our work remains rooted in the belief that Religious Education plays a vital role in promoting understanding, respect, and community cohesion. A well-designed syllabus, taught by skilled and supported teachers, helps pupils think critically, understand different perspectives, and reflect on life’s deeper questions. It also enables them to develop their own beliefs and values while learning to respect the rights of others to hold different views.

In the year ahead, we will begin our statutory five-year review of the Agreed Syllabus, building on our strengths and ensuring that RE continues to meet the needs of Sefton’s diverse community.

We are grateful for the ongoing commitment of SACRE members representing schools, faith communities, and the local authority. SACRE continues to be a valued forum for partnership and diversity, and we look forward to broadening our membership further in 2026 to reflect the full range of perspectives within our borough.

This year, SACRE has continued to support the growing NATRE-affiliated RE teacher network and has made good use of members’ expertise to strengthen subject knowledge and practice. In the year ahead, we will develop our continuing professional development (CPD) offer and prepare for the revised syllabus, ensuring that schools continue to receive the support they need.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere thanks to all Council Members, our advisers, and staff for their commitment and enthusiasm. With their continued support, Sefton SACRE will go on nurturing respectful, thoughtful, and well-rounded young citizens.

Cllr Diane Roscoe
Chair of Sefton SACRE 2024-2025

Overview

This annual report is prepared by Sefton SACRE. SACRE as a body is required to advise the Local Authority on matters relating to Religious Education and Collective Worship. This report provides a picture of the support given for Religious Education and Collective Worship during 2024-2025. The report is a public document which is also sent to the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE) and the Department for Education.

For further information on the report or on RE and Collective Worship in Sefton, contact Alastair Ross at enquiries@penninelearning.com.

For information on SACRE please contact the clerk, Jane McNeice at Jane.McNeice@sefton.gov.uk

Dates and content of meetings

There were four meetings of Sefton SACRE during the year 2024-25 held at the Professional Development Centre, Formby on 26th September 2024, 4th December 2024, 24th June 2025 and at Meols Cop High School on 17th March 2025. Meetings are open to the public and minutes are also available on-line.

Cllr Diane Roscoe was appointed chair of SACRE in June 2024 and was ably supported by James Hansen as Vice Chair. As SACRE has been reconstituted, we have looked carefully at membership of different groups, and we are conscious that diversity in representation is needed including the range of faiths and beliefs in the area as well as working with Multi Academy Trusts.

As well as considering the general position of RE and collective worship in the borough, SACRE discussed the following issues at its meeting during the year:

- The Local Agreed syllabus and CPD implications for subject leaders and non-specialist teachers.
- Clarification of funding for Sefton SACRE responsibilities and activities.
- Review of provision for RE, including time allocation in all schools in the borough.
- Improving representation on SACRE from those groups currently under-represented.
- Completion of SACRE self-evaluation.
- Supporting the call for evidence of the National Curriculum review in England and also discussions with local MPs
- Reviewing collective worship guidance for all schools in the borough.
- National Association of SACREs (NASACRE) – items of interest or action, including information from NASACRE conference and training for SACRE members.

SACRE Priorities and actions for 2024-25

Monitor the provision of RE and Collective Worship in all schools and identify priorities for support through data analysis of Ofsted reports, Workforce census data from the DfE and from GCSE results.

Provision for Collective Worship was enhanced through producing a calendar of both religious and non-religious events. We also produced a set of inspirational quotes/ thoughts of the day especially for secondary schools. Unfortunately, GCSE data was not available in a timely fashion for us to identify school support. SACRE members have scrutinised school websites to identify schools for individual letters and possible support especially in the areas of compliance and coverage.

Provide effective support for coordinators and subject leaders through primary and secondary RE networks. Identification of need to be requested at meetings of Primary Headteachers and Secondary Headteachers.

The Sefton and Friends RE Hub has grown in strength this year and local faith and belief representatives have attended these sessions in order to help enhance the lived experience with RE. The School Improvement Groups in Sefton have also nominated representatives to attend these sessions and use this as an opportunity to disseminate good practice.

Provide CPD for schools through middle leaders training (New Coordinator Course) and for teachers to develop subject knowledge and consistent planning of units of work.

SACRE have identified that the best way to reach more coordinators and subject leads is through the School Improvement Groups in Sefton. A set of artefacts and resources have been purchased for each group and training will be provided in the use of artefacts to enhance RE teaching. SACRE will be writing to all schools to share glossary terms that can help teachers develop their subject knowledge.

Develop close working links with the communities department and actively take part in community cohesion events.

This has been difficult to achieve as meetings with the communities department of the borough have had to be rearranged on several occasions. This area of development will need to remain a priority to help achieve effective community cohesion in the area.

Self-evaluation

During the year, Sefton SACRE completed a process of self-evaluation based on the NASACRE template. Arising from this the following areas future development were identified and will be built into the development plan for the next two years.

Section 1: Management of the SACRE and partnership with the LA and other key stakeholders

- Ensure SACRE plans are linked to other local work and projects and ensure these are costed on the development plan.
- Hold meetings in a variety of different places including schools and places of worship to raise the profile of SACRE.
- Continue to widen the diversity of SACRE membership through developing links with interfaith organisations.

Section 2. Standards and quality of provision of Religious Education

- Continue to analyse data and use this to identify support for schools through website checking, Ofsted report analysis, GCSE results, School census information and a questionnaire to all schools.
- Provide CPD for schools through middle leader/ coordinator training and also the use of artefacts and resources to enhance teaching.
- Continue supported the NATRE linked Sefton and Friends RE Network and ensure all SIG groups are represented at these meetings.

Section 3: The effectiveness of the locally agreed syllabus

- To review the Local Agreed Syllabus in light of national guidance including full consultation with schools through questionnaire and online meetings.
- Ensure an ASC budget has been planned and allocated in partnership with the LA to include consultation meetings, administrative support and design/distribution costs.
- Provide effective training on implementing the AS, supported by all schools, leading to teachers being clear about standards and expectations in the AS and the implications for teaching and learning.
- Provide clear guidance about ways in which schools might begin the process of reviewing their own provision for RE in the light of the revised syllabus.

Section 4. Collective Worship

- Evaluate the practice of Collective Worship in the borough through questionnaire.
- Continue good communication of collective worship principles and themes to schools.
- Provide advice and support for collective worship coordinators through newsletter and CPD opportunities.
- Provide training for SACRE members on determinations.

Section 5: Contribution of SACRE to promoting cohesion across the community

- Seek further representation on SACRE of different faith groups.
- Link the core values of Sefton MBC with SACRE in order to support effective community cohesion.
- Develop close working links with communities department and actively take part in community cohesion events.

Further details of the self-evaluation or the development plan can be obtained via the clerk to SACRE.

Meetings for 2025-26

Meetings for the 2025 – 2026 academic year have been provisionally set for 30th September 2025, 1st December 2025, 16th March 2026 and 23rd June 2026. Themes for these meetings have been agreed as part of the SACRE Work Plan. For more information contact the clerk, Jane McNeice at Jane.McNeice@sefton.gov.uk

Priorities for 2025 – 26

- To review the Local Agreed Syllabus in light of national guidance including full consultation with schools through questionnaire and online meetings.
- To set up an Agreed Syllabus Conference in partnership with the LA and secure its budget to include the syllabus, consultation meetings, administrative support and design/distribution costs.
- Provide effective training on implementing the AS, supported by all schools, leading to teachers being clear about standards and expectations and the implications for teaching and learning.
- Continue to analyse data and use this to identify support for schools through website checking, Ofsted report analysis, GCSE results, School census information and a questionnaire to all schools.
- Provide CPD for schools through middle leader/ coordinator training and also the use of artefacts
- Evaluate the practice of Collective Worship in the borough through a questionnaire.
- Develop close working links with other departments of the Council and actively take part in community cohesion events.

Section Two: Statutory Responsibilities: Religious Education

The Local Agreed Syllabus

The Local Agreed Syllabus is the statutory curriculum for all maintained schools in the borough. This syllabus has been produced by RE Today Services and follows RE Council guidance laid out in 2013 as well as the Commission on RE Report 2018, the Ofsted Inspection Handbook 2019 and Ofsted Research Review. Other academies and free schools must teach RE according to the requirements of their trust deed or funding agreement. Although SACREs and local authorities do not have any responsibility or authority for their curriculum, it welcomes use of these resources by all local schools. The Local Agreed Syllabus is reviewed every five years. SACRE will prioritise this year the review of the syllabus in light of new guidance published by the RE Council and NASACRE. This will involve consultation with schools and faith and belief groups. A local Agreed Syllabus Conference and working party will be set up to evaluate and publish a new syllabus for Sefton ready for 2027.

Standards and Monitoring

Ofsted Reports Round Up

An analysis of Ofsted reports in the borough was carried during the period of this report. A search was included for any reference to RE/ SMSC and understanding faiths and beliefs.

Five recent inspection reports for the 2024–2025 academic year commented positively on the Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) element of Personal Development. The key points within these judgments provide useful insight for SACRE in its role of monitoring and supporting effective delivery of both the RE and SMSC curricula.

Inspectors noted that pupils are given regular opportunities to build independence and resilience. Pupils learn about a range of different faiths and belief systems. This supports their understanding that every individual is unique, with their own family context, cultural background, and personal beliefs. As a result, pupils are increasingly confident and mature when discussing equality and the importance of respecting others.

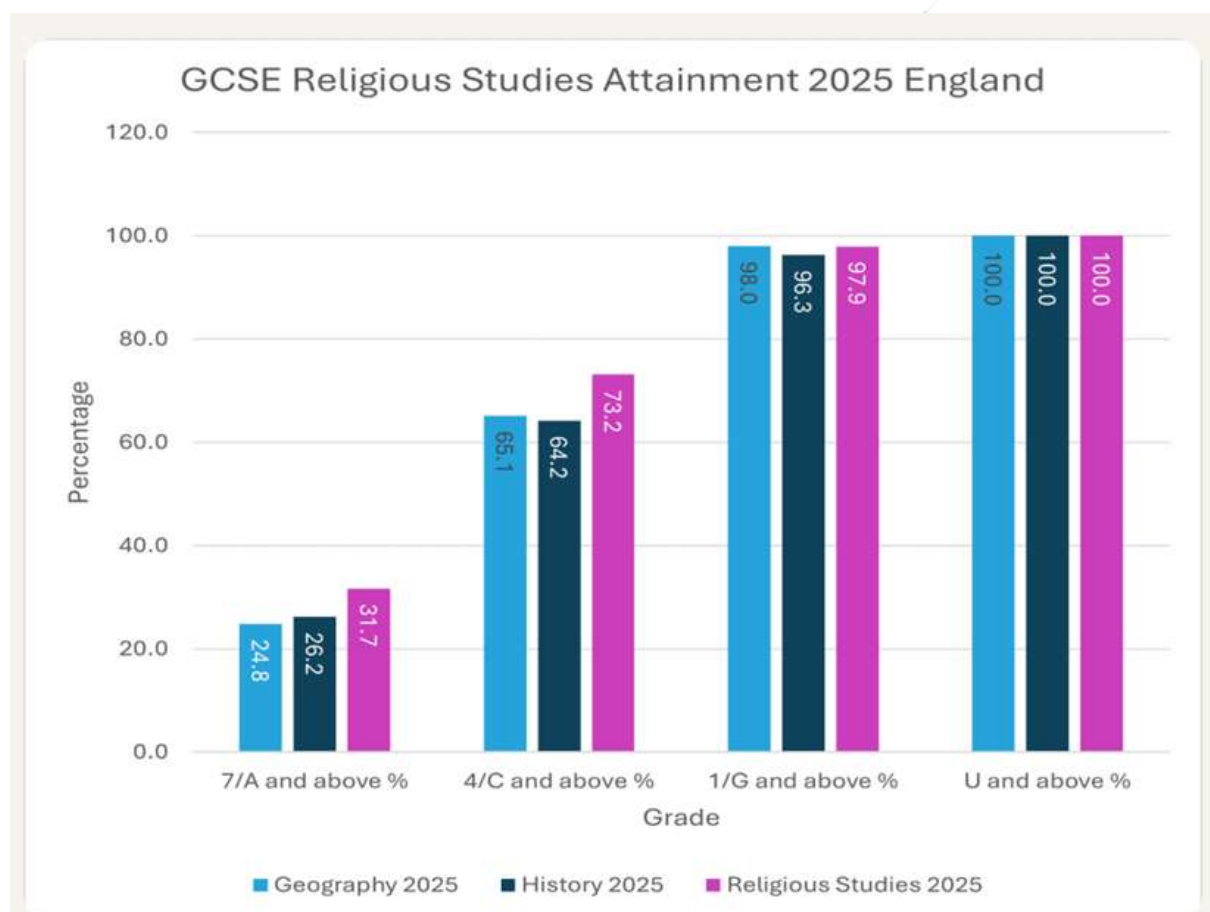
Reports also highlighted that pupils develop a secure and meaningful grasp of fundamental British values, including tolerance of others and appreciation of diversity. The curriculum encourages open-minded attitudes and helps pupils recognise and value difference. In addition, pupils contribute positively to school life through a broad range of roles and responsibilities, which further strengthens their sense of belonging and active citizenship.

Examination results: The National Picture

A data report produced by the National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE) in September 2025 explains that nationally Religious Studies continues to demonstrate high attainment and is especially strong for girls.

Attainment in RS shows stronger outcomes than history and geography, particularly at higher grades. Across England, 31.7% of RS candidates achieved grade 7/A+, compared to 26.2% in History and 24.8% in Geography.

For England as a whole, RS entries are stable at around 240,000 annually, showing resilience compared to other optional subjects, despite curriculum pressures.



NATRE Report on GCSE Results 2025 September 17, 2025

Examination Results: Sefton

Local analysis is based on unvalidated GCSE data with four schools missing as at November 2025): Deyes High School, Kings Leadership Academy, Range High School, St Michael's CE Academy.

	2023 -2024	2024 -2025
National Average Grades 9 -4	70.59%	73.2%
Sefton Average Grades 9 – 4	54.36% %	59.8%
Sefton Y11 cohort entries for GCSE	53%	62.1%
Sefton Y11 cohort no entry percent	47%	37.8%
Sefton Number of schools entering Full or Short Course	16	14
Sefton Number of schools entering full or nearly full cohort (including 6 church schools)	10	9

Sefton SACRE would like to congratulate students who achieved so well in their GCSE exams in June 2025. SACRE is pleased to note that the percentage of students entered for GCSE has increased this year.

SACRE would still like to investigate the provision for non-examined Key Stage 4 students as some schools have not been included in the above data and some have only small numbers of entries compared to Y11 cohort sizes.

School website information

Another source of information about RE provision and quality is school websites. The content of these is variable but they can give an insight into a school's approach and curriculum. During 2024-25 SACRE undertook to conduct some research into school websites but this was patchy and incomplete. Therefore, SACRE will make this a key task for 2025-26. Information gleaned can be triangulated with other sources to enable a fuller understanding and to provide evidence for celebration and selective intervention.

RE Quality Mark

Sefton SACRE encourages all schools to apply for the REQM mark. We will do this through courses, networks and newsletters. Budget has been allocated to subsidise up to ten schools undertaking the REQM by paying half the fee. Additionally, Sefton schools are offered the opportunity for a review of their Religious Education with criteria based on the bronze REQM. It is hoped this can be a gateway to entry to the national quality mark.

Professional development and support for schools

General support

During the year the professional support services of Pennine Learning were commissioned. Pennine Learning is a small company specialising in RE and community cohesion. The team at Pennine Learning will provide 15 days support per year in total, though this is arranged as flexibly as possible to facilitate effective working with schools and others. They also support SACREs and RE in West Yorkshire and Greater Manchester, enabling appropriate collaboration and partnership.

Through the RE consultants, support will be available to schools, and used by teachers, in a number of ways, including:

- Maintenance of the syllabus and its schemes of work, including prompt response to queries.
- Consultancy over specific or general RE issues, including advice about withdrawal from RE.
- Availability by phone, email or virtual meetings.
- Support for schools wishing to develop and improve RE following Ofsted inspections.

Training

The teachers' group on SACRE have set up network meeting for teachers of RE to meet and share good practice. These networks are affiliated to NATRE and are posted on the RE Hubs website. This will ensure that RE leaders are kept up to date with developments in RE nationally. The RE Consultant will also support these networks in advising what might be included e.g. work on subject knowledge provision mapping. SACRE will in their work plan decide on other training and support for schools and this will be planned for and costed accordingly.



RE Reviews and SACRE RE Award

The review and award will be made available on line and face to face to as many schools as possible in the time available. A 'Deep Dive' in Religious Education is also offered to schools. This half-day session focuses on a review of curriculum provision, looking at its scope, rigour and sequencing. These opportunities will be promoted via RE networks and newsletters.

Other information

A range of guidance is available for all schools on a wide range of related areas, including:

- RE Policy
- Withdrawal from RE
- Collective Worship
- Celebrating Diversity
- Engaging with faith communities
- Sensitivity to Faith in Schools (Sharing the Journey)

Section Three: Statutory Responsibilities: Collective Worship

Standards and Monitoring of Collective Worship

Guidance is offered to schools and Ofsted reports are scrutinised to keep up to date with current issues and concerns. It has been difficult for schools to maintain an effective programme of collective worship since the pandemic and one of SACRE's key priorities in the coming year will be to remind, facilitate and support schools. This will include offering light-touch review conversations with practical suggestions of themes and thoughts for the week.

Complaints and determinations

There were no complaints made during the year to SACRE about Collective Worship. There is no determination to vary statutory requirements in a maintained school in Sefton. The process for applying for a determination has been agreed in the period of this report. Responsibility for determinations in English academies and free schools rest with the Schools Funding Agency.

Professional development and support for schools

Through the consultant, SACRE is always ready to advise or support schools on request. It has been noted that some SACRE members are well-placed to support collective worship in schools and opportunities for discussion about this will be included on the agenda in 2024-25. A half-day course on planning for collective worship/ inclusive assemblies may be offered in spring 25 to aid schools in developing an effective and inspiring programme. It is hoped that SACRE members will become more involved in practical support and monitoring. These questions may be helpful to SACRE members in reflecting on the value and effectiveness of collective worship in school:

1. Collective: How does the assembly celebrate and promote a sense of community within the whole school (or group)?
2. Educational: Is there a clear aim and focus, with appropriate learning? Does it engage and interest pupils and staff?
3. Spiritual: How does the assembly nurture pupils' awareness of their beliefs and values - and those of others (including non-religious beliefs)? How does it develop a sense of the meaning, purpose and value in their lives?
4. Reflective: Is there space and opportunity for thoughtful reflection, in the assembly or as a follow up? If prayers are used do these allow for different approaches and responses?
5. Inclusive: How does the assembly programme develop understanding of different perspectives and cultures? How does it promote values of tolerance, diversity and equality?
6. Responsive: How did pupils respond and participate?

Other information

Parents have a statutory right to withdraw their children from collective worship. Guidance on good practice and protocols for withdrawal is available to schools; consultants are available if further support is needed. SACRE recognises parents' legal rights but hopes all children will be enabled to receive stimulating and balanced RE as part of their entitlement to a broad curriculum. Guidance is also provided to schools in fulfilling statutory obligations over collective worship and promoting good SMSC development.

This year SACRE has also produced suggested themes, thoughts for the week and a calendar of festivals for schools in order to help them plan for inclusive collective worship throughout the year.

Sections Four and Five: Links with other organisations and other involvement

SACRE has developed active links with the following organisations:

- National Association of SACREs (NASACRE)
- The Association of RE Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants (AREIAC)
- Sefton and Friends RE Hub
- Local faith organisations and interfaith groups
- Sefton School Improvement Service
- RE Today Services and NATRE
- The North West Hub of SACREs
- National RE Hubs

Section Six: Sefton SACRE arrangements

Sefton MBC funds the operation of SACRE by contracting its consultants, providing a clerk and supporting its work through links with senior education officers.

SACRE membership includes representatives from all four constituent committees.

Group A	Faith and belief communities except for the Church of England
Group B	Anglican representatives
Group C	Teachers and schools
Group D	Sefton MBC

Membership and attendance for 2024-25 was as follows:

		Attendance
Buddhist	Vacancy	0
Hindu	Bina Shukla	0
Jewish	Gillian Moonman	4
Muslim	Vacancy	0
Sikh	Vacancy	0
Humanist	Nick Senior	3
<i>Bah'ai</i>	Vacancy	0
Christian denominations (Methodist)	Vacancy	0
Christian denominations (Orthodox)	Vacancy	0
Christian denominations (RC)	Vacancy	0
Christian denominations (Pentecostal)	Vacancy	0
Christian denominations (Quaker)	Vacancy	0
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints	Vacancy	0
Christian denominations (Baptist)	Daniel Parkes resigned June 2025	0
Christian denominations	Vacancy	0
Church of England	Sarah Knipe	2
Church of England	Andrew Norcross	4
Church of England	Sandie Edward	1
Church of England	Vacancy	0
Church of England	Vacancy	0
Teachers associations	Lauren Wood (maternity leave)	0
Teachers associations	Alex Smith (resigned September 2025)	1
Teachers associations	Sefiah Crato	4

Teachers associations	Amy Foster	1
Teachers associations	Matt Power	2
Headteacher Primary	Ruth Baldwin (co-opted)	0
Headteacher Primary	Paul Swift	2
Headteacher Primary Academy	Vacant	0
Headteacher Secondary Academy CEO	Vacant	0
Headteacher Secondary Academy	Kate Campbell (resigned September 2025)	0
Local authority	Diane Roscoe (Chair)	4
Local authority	Jacqui Patterson	4
Local authority	John Pugh	0
Local Authority	Carla Thomas (sick leave)	1
Local Authority	James Hansen (Vice Chair left June 2025)	2
Local Authority	Carol Richards	0
Local Authority (substitute)	Chloe Parker	0
Local Authority (substitute)	Gareth Lloyd-Johnson	0
Local Authority (substitute)	Dominic McNabb	1

SACRE needs to ensure there continues to be consistent attendance and needs more representatives from faith communities and teachers .

Training is provided by NASACRE and offered to SACRE members both locally and through the NASACRE webinars.

Section Seven: Advice to the Local authority

The following advice is given by SACRE to the local authority:

1. To provide opportunities for SACRE to support community cohesion through, for example, joining up its work with other areas of the Council such as those working with community or faith engagement.
2. To review the funding of SACRE to ensure it is in line with national recommendations and good practice.
3. To review the membership of SACRE to ensure it reflects the breadth and diversity of the borough in terms of faiths and beliefs and school structures.
4. To investigate the provision of quality teaching of RE at Key Stage Four for the non-examined students.

No appendices are attached to this report; all the relevant information is contained within the main body. However, any further information can be requested via the clerk, Jane McNeice at Jane.McNeice@sefton.gov.uk