The Solihull Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Annual Report 2025 - 2026



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Section 1: Introduction

A message from the Chair of the Solihull SACRE

It has been a privilege to Chair Solihull's SACRE meetings this academic year. I am incredibly well-supported by members of the Solihull SACRE, several of whom are long serving. These members have accrued a great deal of knowledge and experience from which we and our schools collectively benefit.

The Solihull SACRE's priorities for 2025-2026 have been and continue to be:

- Improving standards and quality of provision in RE
- Developing the advisory role of the Solihull SACRE

The SACRE has welcomed new members including several teachers to Group C. Our Humanist UK representative has been an invaluable appointment to Group A. We also have a new Vice-Chair who brings a wealth of experience in teaching and leading RE in a voluntary aided church school.

In the last twelve months there have been a number of national updates and proposals about long term systematic change within the education system. Below outlines these proposals through the lens of religious education.

The final **Curriculum and Assessment Review** was recently published in November 2025. The report recommended that:

Curriculum and Assessment Review final report: Building a world-class curriculum for all

RE can be controversial and contentious. Different sector and faith organisations have different beliefs and different interests in the present arrangements. We have therefore engaged widely on this subject during the Review, seeking as many views as possible and aiming to identify points of consensus as well as areas of debate. ***Having evaluated the evidence, we are of the view that RE's importance is not currently reflected in its standing in the curriculum. The Review believes that RE should be moved to the national curriculum to improve access to high-quality provision and to prevent further diminishment.*** *However, we are conscious of the sensitivities and complexities involved, including the legislative implications and the wider considerations relating to voluntary aided schools with a religious character. It is important that these issues are accounted for in our recommendations.*

The Review ultimately wishes to see RE in the national curriculum, but it recognises that it is unrealistic for this to be achieved immediately. We therefore believe that a staged approach to reform is the most appropriate way forward. To this end, we recommend that the Government invites the sector to establish an independent task and finish group made up of representatives from faith bodies, secular groups and experts from the teaching and wider education sector, to develop a draft RE curriculum. *This group should be consultative, continuing the work of the Review in liaising with relevant external parties (including faith groups and communities, secular groups and faith and non-faith schools) and should seek to build on the REC's National Content Standard. The group should also consider whether there would be benefit in changing the name of Religious Education. The process of producing a draft RE curriculum will be important in establishing whether a core of RE content can be agreed on across the sector to facilitate any move of RE to the national curriculum.* ***Most stakeholders agree that all pupils,***

regardless of the type of school they attend, should have an entitlement to high-quality RE and that the most effective way to do this is by moving it to the national curriculum. However, if this desired quality and consistency are to be achieved, there will be trade-offs, and all parties will have to make compromises to achieve consensus.

We recognise that making RE a national curriculum subject is not a panacea that will automatically improve the quality and quantity of compulsory RE. Other mechanisms would also be needed, including reviewing the DfE's non-statutory guidance for RE (which has not been updated since it was published in 2010) and the wider framework (which includes SACREs, for example). Following any changes, attention may also need to be given to the subject content of the optional GCSE in Religious Studies.

Finally, the Review has carefully considered the requirement that learners study RE between the age of 16 and 18. Currently, this requirement applies only to learners attending school sixth forms and does not extend to other 16-19 providers, such as sixth form colleges and further education colleges. *The Review considers that, by age 16, students should have a secure grounding in RE, and one that should be strengthened if the recommendation about the national curriculum is taken forward. We also consider the compulsory study of RE to 18 to be inconsistent with 16-19 study's aim of prioritising learners' choices and subject specialisms.* ***As such, we recommend removing the statutory requirement that learners in school sixth forms study RE: the Government should consider this as part of its review of the wider legislation in which RE sits. We believe this will better reflect actual practice and foster parity across 16-19 settings.*** *We recognise that some schools will want to continue providing RE up to 18, and they would be free to do so. If learners wish to continue to study RE at 16-19, level 3 qualifications are available for them to do so.*

Recommendations

We recommend that the Government:

- Adds RE to the national curriculum in due course. A staged approach should be taken, in line with the following steps:

  Stage 1:

  Representatives from faith groups, secular groups and the wider teaching and education sector that we heard from during the Review should build on the constructive and collaborative work they have been doing through the course of the Review. DfE should invite the sector to form a task and finish group, convened and led by an expert Chair who is independent of any particular secular or faith group interest or representation. The review recommends that, given her leadership of this strand of the Review's work (based on her expertise), Dr Vanessa Ogden CBE should undertake this role, ensuring momentum in the successful convening she has established. This group should liaise with relevant external parties and, building on the existing National Content Standard for RE in England, engage with faith and non-faith schools, as well as RE organisations and faith communities, to co-create a draft RE curriculum.

Whilst this work should be sector-led, the DfE should welcome efforts the sector makes to reach a consensus and support and facilitate this group where necessary.

Alongside this, the DfE should consider the legislative framework for RE, including, for example, what any changes to its status in the curriculum would mean for functions such as SACREs. A long-term plan for implementing potential changes to legislation should be drafted.

As part of this review, the DfE should consider removing the statutory requirement for learners in school sixth forms to study RE.

In parallel, the DfE should review the non-statutory guidance for RE, which has not been updated since 2010, to establish whether beneficial changes to subject content could be made in the short term that do not pre-empt the wider work the Review is recommending.

Stage 2:
If consensus on a draft RE curriculum can be reached, the DfE should conduct a formal consultation on the detailed content.

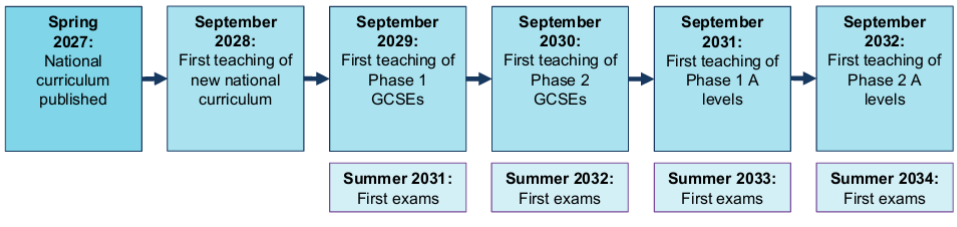
Alongside this, the DfE should consult on proposed changes to the legislative framework, including any proposal to repeal the requirement to teach RE in school sixth forms.

The **Government's response to the curriculum review** was as follows

RE - Government response to the Curriculum and Assessment Review

'We welcome the Review's work on RE and the careful consideration that the Panel has given, both to how better to support the teaching of the subject, and its potential inclusion in the national curriculum. We will be shaped and guided by the sector on this important issue and, to take further steps on moving forward, there will need to be a clear shared position from the sector on the future of RE. Sector consensus should include views from faith, non-faith and wider school stakeholders on an RE curriculum that could be deliverable within all schools as part of a well-sequenced and structured national curriculum. ***If the sector reaches a consensus on whether this is achievable, we will consult on the content of a draft RE curriculum and on proposed changes to the legislative framework within which RE sits.*** *As part of this we would seek to ensure that sector consensus should underpin future updates to any new RE curriculum.'*

Figure 3: Implementation timelines



NASACRE response

NASACRE-chairs-Statement-on-CaAR-11.25.pdf

Going forward in the sector, ***NASACRE looks forward to fully engaging with this process which will create a curriculum written by RE experts, whilst maintaining the voice of religion and belief communities.*** *We look forward to seeing how the legislation is framed to limit potential future outside influence on the RE curriculum. It is important that there are significant opportunities for local RE to continue and for RE to include the lived experience of members of religion and belief communities. The report celebrates both of these aspects of RE. We are encouraged that the report suggests a way forward for RE that will prepare pupils for life in a multi-faith, multi-secular, local, national and global society. We hope that the government and the RE community will respond to these proposals positively for the benefit of pupils, teachers, schools and society as a whole.*

White Paper 2026

The governments release of the white paper in February 2026 **'Every Child Achieving and Thriving'** Every Child Achieving and Thriving committed to the following;

'Delivering a curriculum that is knowledge-rich and broad, inclusive and innovative – ***taking forward the recommendations of our independent Curriculum and Assessment Review*** *and building on them to ensure all children are supported and stretched.*

We will equip staff across education with the knowledge and skills needed to deliver excellence*. We will require* ***collaboration between schools and wider public services*** *to work together for children's outcomes whilst ensuring the freedom for this to be driven locally. We will create space for genuine innovation in a self-improving system with the ability to test, learn and grow.*

Carefully sequencing and phasing major reforms. ***Implementation will come in three phases*** *that overlap: aligning to best practice from academic year 2025/26, preparing for SEND and curriculum reforms from 2026/27, and full implementation from 2028/29.*

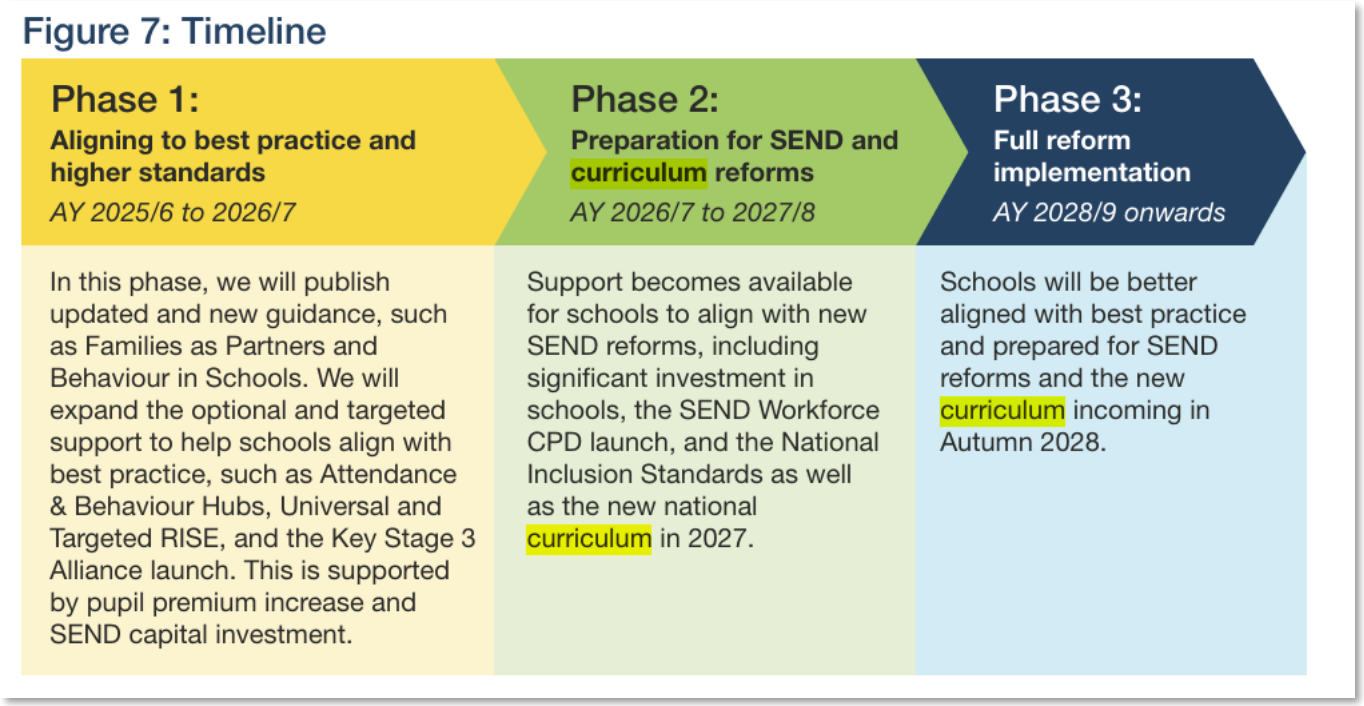
Through this white paper, we set out the steps we will take to harness and spread existing best practice, as well as empowering everyone across the system to innovate together to improve outcomes. This is our open invitation: ***we want government, schools, families, and everyone with a stake in our children's future working in genuine partnership*** *– both at national level and in every community around the country. Together, with collaboration and determination, we can enable every child to achieve and thrive.'*

The Curriculum and Assessment Review

We have responded to the Curriculum and Assessment Review, committing to take forward its recommendations, including:

• ***Refreshing the programmes of study in line with the Review's recommendations for first teaching from 2028****. We will also update GCSEs for first teaching from 2029 onwards. In doing so we will follow the curriculum principles of knowledge-rich, coherence, subject mastery, specificity and depth – making sure that programmes of study and subject content are grounded in relevant and important knowledge and disciplinary skills.'*

Figure 7: Timeline



As a SACRE we are committed to engaging with any local and national consultations and changes that will develop over the next few years. An awareness of, and an ability to engage with, national and local developments will be a priority for the Solihull SACRE.

Solihull SACRE's mission is to ensure that all schools in the borough are compliant with their statutory duties relating to pupil entitlement to Religious Education. We recognise how RE helps pupils to respect others and gain a broader understanding of views and beliefs, whilst contributing to a more cohesive community. Our priorities continue to be sharply focused on making a difference to the RE learning that children and young people experience in classrooms, enabled by confident and knowledgeable teachers who enhance pupils' academic and personal development whilst preparing them well for a life well-lived in modern Britain.

Claire Potts

Chair of Solihull SACRE

Meetings

The SACRE has had four scheduled meetings during 2025-2026.

Wednesday 15 October 2025	**TEAMs** Priorities for the academic year 2025 – 2026
Wednesday 14 January 2026	**TEAMs** Development of local RE Hub Links with Faith forum to advise on places of worship to enhance children's experiences of Religious education. Development of SACRE advice guides to support schools. Right to withdraw advice.
Wednesday 22 April 2026	**TEAMs** SACRE Annual Report National Updates and next Steps
Wednesday 8 July 2026	In person meeting. To be held at St Mary and St Margarets C of E School St Mary & St Margaret's Church of England Aided Primary School - Home Review of the year and planned priorities for 2026 - 2027

Section 2: RE (statutory responsibilities)

In 2023, Solihull SACRE developed an online survey for all schools in Solihull to complete and return. The purpose was to enable SACRE, and therefore the local authority, to have greater strategic oversight of RE and collective worship in our family of schools. The level of responses was disappointing at just below 25% of schools. This did not provide sufficient information to provide a complete picture across our schools. However, the responses provided insight into RE and collective worship in twenty schools: eight maintained schools and twelve academies.

The SACRE continues to have significant gaps in its knowledge about RE leadership and provision across our family of schools. Recent consultation with RE subject leaders has again yielded disappointingly few responses.

We know that some schools are not meeting their statutory duties in relation to the RE entitlement for all pupils, with the exception of those who have been withdrawn. The SACRE will arrange to have an open conversation with leaders at these schools, offering SACRE support.

Standards and the monitoring of RE

This is currently a significant priority for the Solihull SACRE. The RE and collective worship survey has provided some assurance, but this is insufficient due to low numbers of responses. SACRE needs to optimise opportunities to gather information both formally and informally to gain an accurate, composite picture.

SACRE has advised the Local Authority as to its statutory duties including adequately funding the work of SACRE in carrying out its functions.

Compliance

LA statutory responsibilities:

The LA must:

Ensure there is a SACRE	In place
Ensure all four groups are represented on the SACRE	In place
Establish an occasional body called an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) and appoint members to it	In place and process ongoing
Ensure there is an Agreed Syllabus, reviewed every five years	In place from September 2025
Ensure funds and support are in place to enable SACRE to fulfil its duties	Access to funds where needed
Take note of and respond to advice from the SACRE	In place

It is the LA's responsibility to appoint members of the SACRE and the ASC.

The LA should:

Seek nominations from the organisations to be represented	In place
Ensure those appointed are representative of the religion, worldview, denomination or sponsoring group in question	In place
It is good practice for the SACRE to review its constitution periodically to ensure membership is appropriately representative and to advise the LA of any necessary amendments	In place 2025

SACRE statutory responsibilities

A SACRE must:

Advise the local authority (LA) on matters related to agreed syllabus religion education (RE) and Collective worship (CW) either in response to a referral from the LA or as it sees fit.	In place September 2025

Publish an Annual Report on its work and on actions taken by its representative groups	2025-25 Annual Report

Email a copy of the Annual Report to the Secretary of State.	2024 -25 Annual Report submitted
Meet in public, unless confidential information is to be disclosed	Meetings are hybrid. The public can attend.
Make minutes of its meetings available for inspection at LA offices	Website launched September 2025
Consider appeals from schools wishing to modify the legal requirement for most acts of collective worship to be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character; this procedure is called a 'determination' as SACRE determines whether to agree the appeal.	No recent determinations, but SACRE is equipped for this

An effective SACRE <u>should</u>:

Monitor the provision and quality of agreed syllabus RE and of Collective Worship to provide targeted advice and support on teaching RE in accordance with the new agreed syllabus	Review needed Autumn term 2026
Advise the LA on the provision of training of teachers	Not yet in place. Potential partnering with RE Today.
Consider complaints about RE and CW referred to them by their LA	No recent complaints, but SACRE is equipped to respond Right to withdraw advice shared spring 2026
Consider whether changes need to be made to the agreed syllabus, in partnership with the LA	In place, current ASC
Offer advice to the LA in respect of the agreed syllabus and its implementation	In place, current ASC

A SACRE <u>may</u>:

Require the LA to review its Agreed Syllabus	Launch April 2025. Schools launch September 2025
Decide to advise the LA on matters to do with RE and CW	In place, SACRE advise as required.
Co-opt individuals who are not members of any of the groups, for example to provide educational expertise, the views of young people and children, or religious and non-religious views that reflect a diverse multi-cultural society.	No current co-opted members

SACRE self-evaluation

Key focus area	Evaluation
Management of the SACRE and partnership with the LA and other key stakeholders	Developing
Standards and quality of provision of Religious Education	Established
The effectiveness of the locally agreed syllabus	Established

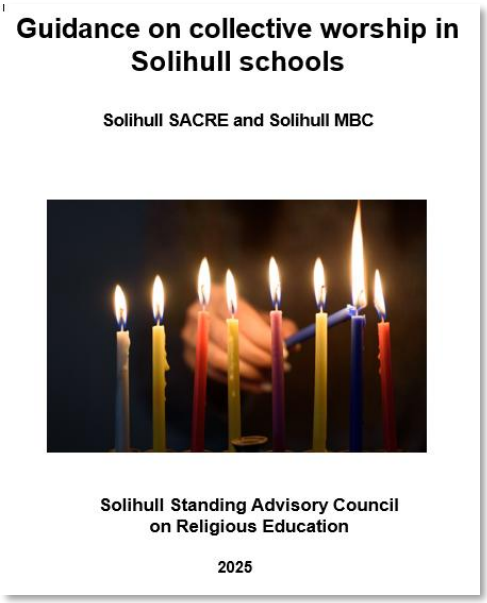
Collective Worship	Established – Sept 2025
Contribution of SACRE to promoting cohesion across the community	Established

Collective Worship (statutory responsibilities):

Processes are being designed to enable appropriate monitoring of collective worship in schools. This is likely to include monitoring through scrutiny of Ofsted reports (which rarely yield relevant information), conversations with schools, teacher groups, website trawls, presentations from teachers. The guidance was shared with schools in the autumn term 2025. The intention will be to review the impact of this guidance in the autumn term 2026.

Defining Collective Worship:

- It is mandatory for all pupils in all maintained schools and should take place daily;
- It comprises pupils who are part of the same educational community; they may possess diverse religious, agnostic and non-religious life stances (NB called 'corporate worship' if all share the same religious beliefs);
- It may take many forms but always presents pupils with specific concepts, themes and thoughts;
- It can use structures of religious worship but does not require actual worship;
- It allows deep thinking and individual spiritual responses to the concepts explored;
- It is not corporate worship!



The Solihull Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education

Solihull partnered with expert colleagues at RE Today to work with on Solihull's new 2025 to 2030 agreed syllabus. A soft online launch in April 2025 with all schools invited regardless of their maintained, academy or independent status. Five-year licences were purchased for our maintained schools who are required to teach RE in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus. Other schools are strongly encouraged to buy into the new syllabus. We believe that the new syllabus is a step

change. It is unapologetically ambitious for all pupils, including those with additional needs. There is a stronger emphasis on worldviews.

The agreed syllabus is expected to be taught in all schools from September 2025. Reviews and scrutiny are planned for the autumn term 2026 to review the implementation and impact of the new agreed syllabus.



What religions are to be taught?

This agreed syllabus requires that all pupils develop understanding of Christianity in each key stage. In addition, across the age range, pupils will develop understanding of the principal religions represented in the UK, in line with the law. These are Islam, Hindu Dharma, Sikhi, Buddhism and Judaism. Furthermore, children from families where non-religious worldviews are held are represented in almost all of our classrooms. These worldviews, including for example Humanism, will also be the focus for study in thematic units.

Pupils are to study in depth the religious traditions of the following:

4–5s Reception	Children will encounter Christianity and other faiths, as part of their growing sense of self, their own community and their place within it.	Consideration of other religions and non-religious worldviews can occur at any key stage, as appropriate to the school context.
5–7s Key Stage 1	Christians, Jews and Muslims.	
7–11s Key Stage 2	Christians, Muslims, Hindus and Jews.	
11–14s Key Stage 3	Christians, Muslims, Sikhs and Buddhists.	
14–16s Key Stage 4	Two religions are required, usually including Christianity. This will be through a course in Religious Studies or Religious Education leading to a qualification approved under Section 96.[10]	
16–19s RE for all	Religions and worldviews to be selected by schools and colleges as appropriate.	

Important notes:

This is the **minimum requirement**. Many schools may wish to go beyond the minimum.

- **The range of religious groups in the UK.** Groups such as Quakers, the Bahá'í faith, Jehovah's Witnesses, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or the Jains are not excluded from study in this scheme for RE. Schools are always advised to make space for the worldviews of the local community, which is why the table above expresses minimum requirements.
- **Notice the language.** 'Christians' rather than 'Christianity', 'Hindus' rather than 'Hinduism'. This is to reflect the fact that RE starts with encounters with living faiths rather than the history and belief structures of traditions. This also recognises the diversity within and between people of the same and different religions.
- **Non-religious worldviews.** Good practice in RE, as well as European and domestic legislation, has established the principle that RE should be inclusive of both religious and non-religious worldviews. Schools should ensure that the content and delivery of the RE curriculum are inclusive in this respect.
- This syllabus requires that, in addition to the religions required for study at each key stage, non-religious worldviews should also be explored in such a way as to ensure that pupils develop mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. This is enabled through the following units: F4, 1.9, 1.10, L2.11, L2.12, U2.10, U2.11, U2.12, 3.13, 3.14, 3.15, 3.16 and 3.17.
- **Depth rather than breadth.** Learning from four religions across a key stage is demanding: the syllabus does not recommend tackling six religions in a key stage. Depth is more important than overstretched breadth.
- **Flexible thematic units.** The thematic units offered in this syllabus allow for schools to draw in different traditions, where they fit the theme and question, and where there are representatives of those traditions in the school and local community.

Section 3: other information

Determinations for collective worship

No schools have requested determinations in recent years.

In January 1994, the Department for Education released Circular 1/94, which states that all maintained schools must provide 'daily collective worship for all registered pupils' and that this 'must be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character'. Circular 1/94

It is acknowledged that this may not be appropriate for all pupils in all schools. The determination lifts or modifies this requirement for some or all pupils, while safeguarding the interests of children from Christian families. Maintained schools under the control of their local authority may, therefore, apply to the local SACRE for a 'determination'. Academies should apply for a 'determination' directly to the Department for Education.

Teacher training and resources

The Solihull SACRE is currently exploring a partnership with RE Today and/or other organisations that provide RE expertise. The SACRE does not benefit from having an RE adviser supporting its work, despite it being a statutory responsibility of the local authority to ensure funds and support are in place to enable SACRE to fulfil its duties.

Opportunities for schools to access high-quality resources and continuing professional development are promoted through our communication to all schools. This includes promoting the RE Hubs, NATRE, RE Today, Culham St Gabriel's - who champion religion and worldviews education, plus other RE associated networks. Information about RE and schools' legal duties have been shared with Governing Bodies on Governor Hub. Specific training for Governors on the legal responsibilities on schools in relation to RE and collective worship are part of Solihull's 2026-27 Governor training package. The training will be led by the SACRE Chair.

Links with other bodies

Solihull SACRE is a full, subscribing member of NASACRE; the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education. The membership allows SACRE members to take part in useful training and enables the Chair and clerk to circulate materials to support the work of the SACRE. The membership is invaluable to the work of SACRE.

The Chair is involved in annual arrangements for Holocaust Memorial Day. A member of the SACRE is part of the local inter-faith network. The forum exists to bring together faith groups who are interested in fostering greater mutual understanding and friendship.

SACRE's own arrangements (statutory responsibilities):

The LA supports the SACRE by providing professional and administrative support from an experienced clerk. This arrangement has been in place for several years. There is currently no RE adviser attached to the SACRE, but this expertise is being sought. Increased membership for the SACRE is ensuring quoracy and adding to the dynamic of the SACRE, particularly with the more recently joined teachers in Group C.

Priorities for the Solihull SACRE for 2026 / 2027

- Review of the implementation and impact of the agreed syllabus
- Review of the implementation and impact of the collective worship guidance
- Support the development of a local RE hub
- Support the development of places of worship guidance (links with Solihull faith forum)
- Monitor the national development of the RE curriculum in line with the national curriculum review and advise Solihull schools accordingly.

Circulation details for this Annual Report:

- All members of Solihull SACRE
- All schools in Solihull
- Director and Assistant Director of Children's Services and Skills
- NASACRE
- Department for Education
- To be shared on the Council's website page

Appendix 1: 2026 GCSE and A-level outcomes

GCSE

Solihull

Year: **2026**
Subject: **Religious studies**
Age group: **Aged 16**

Total number of results in the above selection: **900**

Percentage of results at grade **4 and above**:
In Solihull (unitary authority): **72.0%**
In West Midlands (region): **69.9%**
In England: **73.2%**

Solihull

Year: **2026**
Subject: **Religious studies**
Age group: **Aged 16**

Total number of results in the above selection: **900**

Percentage of results at grade **5 and above**:
In Solihull (unitary authority): **60.4%**
In West Midlands (region): **58.5%**
In England: **62.4%**

A-Level

Solihull

Year: **2026**
Subject: **Religious studies**
Age group: **Aged 18**

Total number of results in the above selection: **75**

Percentage of results at grade **C and above**:
In Solihull (unitary authority): **78.4%**
In West Midlands (region): **77.6%**
In England: **81.6%**