

Westminster Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Annual Report 2023-2024

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Introduction from the Chair of Westminster SACRE

I am honoured to be able to introduce the Annual Report of the Westminster SACRE for 2023-24. It has been a very thoughtful year not least due to the report on RE from Ofsted and the NASACRE Conference on how to be an active SACRE. Both these themes will be on the agendas of our meetings in the next academic year. The NASACRE toolkit on assessing our areas for development has been extremely helpful: two themes – the improvement of links both with academies and with Councillors – are due to be addressed in depth from October 2024.

We are pleased to announce that the Westminster Agreed Syllabus Conference, consisting of the SACRE members, voted to adopt the London version of Hampshire's *Living Difference IV* for our schools; the curriculum has been tailored specifically for Westminster, and the package included two vital training sessions for teachers.

It was a great loss to our team that the RE Advisor Lesley Prior passed away in April, but Ian Nicholson from RE Today stepped in and has provided us with clear and knowledgeable help. We are glad that Ian can continue to be part of the Westminster SACRE in the next academic year. We are enormously grateful for the continual support with data, documents and minutes that we receive from Natalija Sorokina as our Clerk. Jackie Saddington has also provided valuable information as the LA Advisor on the committee.

I hope this report helps to give a clear picture of the work that the SACRE is committed to in support of our local schools.

Dr Linda Ulrich
Chair, Westminster SACRE

Background

This report summarises the activities of the Westminster Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) during the academic year 2023-24. The SACRE has a remit for monitoring Religious Education and Collective Worship in non-denominational schools. The relevant diocesan authorities monitor denominational schools. The Education Act 2002 requires that Religious Education (RE) must be provided as part of the basic curriculum in addition to the National Curriculum. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from all or part of RE and are not obliged to state their reasons for withdrawal.

This report is composed in the light of guidance from the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE) on the format of SACRE annual reports.

Details of the work of Westminster SACRE and associated papers can be found at: <http://services2schools.org.uk/Page/15387>.

1. SACRE Arrangements

The Westminster SACRE met on the following dates in 2023-24:

- 10 October 2023
- 6 February 2024
- 20 June 2024

SACRE meetings are usually hosted by the Local Authority or the SACRE members in venues across Westminster. All three meetings in 2023-24 were hybrid meetings allowing both in-person and virtual attendance. The venues for the three meetings included Westminster City Hall, St Barnabas Church and Edward Wilson Primary.

Out of the three 2023-24 SACRE meetings, only the autumn term meeting did not meet quorum.

Secretarial assistance and a budget for the discharge of the SACRE's duties are provided to the SACRE by Westminster City Council. The key areas of this support include the following:

- Provision of a Clerk
- Provision of a Local Authority Adviser
- Provision of a meeting room at Westminster City Hall
- Commissioning of an RE Consultant
- Funding of the NASACRE annual membership
- Funding of the NASACRE annual training offer
- Funding for two SACRE members to attend NASACRE's annual Conference and AGM
- Costs relating to establishing an Agreed Syllabus Conference and reviewing a Locally Agreed Syllabus
 - *Living Difference IV* Syllabus readoption licence from Hampshire County Council - £1500
 - Associated training by Justine Ball in July 2024 - £850

Professional support was provided by RE Consultant Ian Nicholson commissioned from RE Today on a consultancy basis.

1.1 Membership Updates

Autumn Term 2023

- Emma Larkin resigned from Committee C.
- Amina Mohammed, RE Teacher from Gateway Academy, was appointed to represent the National Education Union on Committee C.

Spring Term 2024

- Hannah Legg, RE Teacher from All Souls CE Primary, was appointed to represent London Diocesan Board for Schools on Committee B.

Summer Term 2024

- Donna McDowell resigned from Committee B.
- Myles Owen resigned from Committee B.
- Shirin Rose King resigned from Committee A.
- Chandni Vora was appointed to represent Hindu Education Board UK on Committee A.

1.2 Chair and Vice-Chair Elections

As specified in the Westminster SACRE Constitution revised in the autumn term 2020, Chair and Vice Chair elections need to take place on an annual basis in the autumn term.

In 2023-24, both Chair and Vice-Chair annual elections took place at the SACRE meeting in February 2024 with the following outcome: Linda Ulrich and John Pearson-Hicks (both Committee B) were re-elected as Chair and Vice-Chair respectively. The elections took place in the spring term because the autumn term meeting was not quorate.

2. Religious Education

2.1 Locally Agreed Syllabus

By statute, every local authority is required to adopt a Locally Agreed Syllabus (LAS) of religious education and to review it every five years. The Westminster LAS was adopted in Autumn 2017 from *Living Difference III*, the syllabus devised by Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and the Isle of Wight. At the time, Hampshire's parent syllabus *Living Difference III* was revised for the London context, and so it was the London version of *Living Difference III* that was adopted by Westminster.

Hampshire reviewed their parent syllabus *Living Difference III* in 2021, which resulted in the *Living Difference IV* edition coming out in November 2021.

Westminster's LAS was due for review in the academic year of 2022-23. Groups A, B and C voted for a recommendation to the Local Authority to establish an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) for the review of the syllabus at the SACRE's meeting in November 2022. As Group D is the Local Authority, it did not get a vote.

It was the wish of the Local Authority to appoint existing SACRE members to the ASC, and all SACRE members agreed with this. Nominations were then confirmed with the members' nominating bodies.

The first meeting of the ASC, following the Local Authority's agreement to convene it, took place in Spring 2023, and the ASC continued meeting in 2023/24 after each of the main SACRE meetings in October and February.

As part of their work, the ASC reviewed the changes implemented in the parent Hampshire syllabus *Living Difference IV* as compared to their *Living Difference III* version, as well as considered a number of other syllabi from London local authorities and other parts of the country. In order to ensure that the syllabus would be appropriate for teachers' current requirements and to inform their decision making, the ASC members sought feedback from local teachers through a number of avenues. This included conducting a questionnaire for teachers, approaching the local RE Good Practice Network forum and consulting with the school-based SACRE members. The feedback from teachers showed that they were very content with the *Living Difference III* syllabus and that implementing its revised *Living Difference IV* version would provide continuity and be easier for them as opposed to being introduced to a completely new syllabus. The latter would require a higher level of training for teachers and a significant change to their lesson planning, which would be a considerable challenge due to capacity and high levels of workload. As a result of this work, at their meeting on 6th February 2024, the ASC voted to adopt the London version of *Living Difference IV* from September 2024.

After the above-mentioned vote, Chair of the SACRE worked on a personalised Foreword section and local context wording for the Syllabus. The final Westminster version of *Living Difference IV* was put together and provided by Hampshire in early June (along with a couple of units on Humanism), after which it was submitted to Director of Education and Libraries for approval, which was the final stage of the adoption process. The approval of the Syllabus was received on 24th June 2024.

Two training sessions on the revised *Living Difference IV* syllabus were arranged for RE teachers and subject leads in Westminster. They took place on 9th and 16th July, and they were run by Justine Ball, County Inspector for History and RE from Hampshire.

The Westminster SACRE webpage was subsequently updated with the new *Living Difference IV* syllabus and Humanism units ahead of the new academic year 2024-25. The SACRE webpage also offers a number of useful links to materials/websites/films that the SACRE members had compiled together to help schools in teaching RE.

2.2 Standards in RE

SACRE members gave close consideration to the various national and local developments concerning the provision of RE. These discussions were prompted by the information provided to the SACRE through the regular updates from the RE Consultant on the SACRE and NASACRE Briefings. Some examples of national developments that were discussed included the following:

- RE in Ofsted Annual Report (November 2023)

- Parliamentary question on supporting and funding RE
- Launch of National Content Standard for RE by RE Council
- Challenges around recruitment and retention of RE teachers, especially in secondary schools
- NATRE analysis of GCSE and A Level Religious Studies data
- House of Lords debate around the quality of RE in schools
- *Deep and Meaningful?* report on RE by Ofsted (April 2024)
- Launch of new RE curriculum toolkit by RE Council (May 2024)
- 'REady for Work' campaign by Lord Bilimoria

2.3 Methods of Teaching, the Choice of Teaching Materials, Teacher Training

In 2023-24, the RE Good Practice Network, previously established for teachers in Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster, met on a termly basis in November, March and July. These meetings were hosted by Ian Nicholson, RE Consultant on the SACRE.

The RE Good Practice Network sessions are aimed at serving as an opportunity for RE teachers and coordinators to discuss any challenges they face and to receive relevant support, for example, around Ofsted's deep dives in RE, assessment and attainment in RE, measuring and recording outcomes in RE, etc.

2.4 Matters Discussed During 2023-24

Key matters included the following:

- Review of the Locally Agreed Syllabus (please see Section 2.1 above for more details)
- Progress updates on the review of *Things of the Spirit*, Westminster's guidance for Collective Worship
- Ramadan guidance for schools
 - A guidance document was written by Ian Nicholson, RE Consultant on the SACRE, which was then shared with schools and uploaded to the SACRE's webpage.
- SACRE self-evaluation using NASACRE's self-evaluation tool
 - Discussions continued around the areas of the self-evaluation report identified as needing further action. As a result of these discussions, plans were made for SACRE members to visit two schools, whose staff are SACRE members, to observe an RE lesson over 2024-25. The SACRE also discussed establishing a working group in 2024-25 to look at developing links with schools, including academies, and the LA.
- RE Adviser arrangements for 2023-24 and 2024-25
 - The SACRE had commissioned RE Today for 2023-2024, following illness to their long-standing RE Adviser, Lesley Prior. Sadly, Lesley Prior passed away on 20 April 2024, and the SACRE sent their condolences. Subsequently, the SACRE agreed to continue with the support from Ian Nicholson from RE Today.

In setting up agendas for the termly SACRE meetings in 2023-24, consideration was given to NASACRE's recommendations for agenda items as suggested in NASACRE's regular briefings.

Further information on what the SACRE discussed in 2023-24 can be found in the minutes of the three meetings held in 2023-24. All approved minutes of the SACRE meetings are kept on the Westminster SACRE [webpage](#).

2.5 Complaints Concerning RE

No complaints about the RE curriculum or collective worship in community schools were received by the SACRE in 2023-24.

3. Collective Worship

3.1 Advice on Collective Worship and Determinations

The advice for schools on Collective Worship, including the process of applying for a Determination (and/or a renewal of it) is published online and can be accessed via the following web link: <http://services2schools.org.uk/Page/16173>. The guidance for Collective Worship produced by the Westminster SACRE is called **Things of the Spirit**. It can be accessed via the link above or directly [here](#). It can also be found attached in Appendix 5.2 of this document.

Any school applying for or renewing a Determination should receive a visit from the SACRE members prior to the application being discussed at a meeting.

3.2 Determinations

There were no new applications for a Determination in 2023-24.

There is currently one school with a Determination in Westminster:

School Name	Date determination granted
Hallfield Primary School	28/03/2023

Determinations are for a period of five years. The Determination granted to Hallfield Primary will therefore be lapsing in Spring 2028.

3.3 Complaints Concerning Collective Worship

No complaints were received by the Westminster SACRE in 2023-24.

4. Links with Other Bodies

The Westminster SACRE is affiliated to The National Association of SACREs (NASACRE).

The annual NASACRE Conference 2024 was held on Monday 20 May 2024 at Hilton York Hotel, York. Linda Ulrich and Amina Mohammed attended the Conference to represent the Westminster SACRE and fed back to the SACRE at their summer term meeting. As a result, one of the papers presented at the Conference - on 35 things that a SACRE can do

to be an active SACRE – will be looked into in more detail by the SACRE in 2024-25 with a view to implementing some of those ideas.

Full details and copies of the relevant paperwork from the 2024 Conference can be found via <https://nasacre.org.uk/conference-and-agm/2024-how-can-sacres-support-high-quality-re-collective-worship/>.

5. Appendices

5.1 Westminster SACRE Membership – 2023-24

Committee A – Faiths and Denominations

Naif Sheikh	Discover Islam	
Patricia Rogers	Humanists UK	
Mary Wilson	The Diocese of Westminster	
Daniel Hirschfield	Board of Deputies of British Jews	
Mariano Marcigaglia	Network of Buddhist Organisations	
Chandri Vora	Hindu Education Board UK	Appointed in Summer 2024
Shirin Rose King	Baha'i Local Spiritual Assembly of Westminster	Resigned in Summer 2024

Committee B – Church of England

John Pearson-Hicks

Linda Ulrich

Hannah Legg (appointed in Spring 2024)

Myles Owen (resigned in Summer 2024)

Donna McDowell (resigned in Summer 2024)

Committee C – Teachers

Darren Guttridge, Headteacher, Edward Wilson Primary (NAHT)

Amina Mohammed, Gateway Academy (NEU) (appointed in Autumn 2023)

Emma Larkin, Teacher, Gateway Academy (NEU) (resigned in Autumn 2023)

Committee D – The Local Education Authority

Cllr Karen Scarborough

Cllr Angela Piddock

Cllr Jason Williams

Servicing Officers

Jackie Saddington, Local Authority Adviser

Ian Nicholson, RE Adviser from RE Today

Natalija Sorokina, Clerk

5.2 Westminster SACRE Guidance on Collective Worship



Westminster SACRE
Guidance on Collective Worship

More can be found on the Westminster SACRE webpage [here](#).

5.3 KS4 and KS5 RE Results 2023-24

KS4 - GCSE 2024 Religious Studies

GCSE Religious Studies														
LA	Sch type	School name	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	U	Entry	No entry
WCC	Secondary	Grey Coat Hospital	23.8%	22.5%	18.1%	15.6%	6.9%	5.0%	3.8%	0.6%	1.3%	0.6%	98.1%	1.9%
		Harris Academy St John's Wood	2.1%	2.1%	2.1%	2.6%	1.1%	2.6%	1.1%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	14.3%	85.7%
		King Solomon Academy	19.1%	12.4%	14.6%	24.7%	9.0%	6.7%	3.4%	5.6%	1.1%	1.1%	97.8%	2.2%
		Marylebone Boys' School	0.9%	1.7%	3.4%	3.4%	2.6%	1.7%	0.0%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%	15.5%	84.5%
		Paddington Academy	14.8%	18.0%	12.6%	23.5%	14.2%	4.9%	8.2%	2.7%	0.5%	0.0%	99.5%	0.5%
		Pimlico Academy	0.5%	4.3%	2.7%	7.0%	1.6%	3.2%	2.7%	3.2%	1.1%	0.0%	26.5%	73.5%
		St Augustine's High	4.9%	10.4%	9.8%	12.2%	16.5%	15.2%	14.6%	9.1%	5.5%	0.6%	98.8%	1.2%
		St George's RC	13.0%	14.1%	18.8%	17.7%	15.1%	7.3%	7.3%	3.1%	2.6%	0.5%	99.5%	0.5%
		St Marylebone	21.1%	19.9%	10.8%	10.2%	16.9%	9.6%	6.0%	2.4%	0.0%	0.6%	97.6%	2.4%
		Westminster Academy	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	2.0%	1.5%	2.5%	0.0%	2.0%	0.0%	0.5%	10.0%	90.0%
		Westminster City	5.3%	7.9%	13.2%	24.6%	14.0%	11.4%	13.2%	7.0%	1.8%	1.8%	100.0%	0.0%
	Secondary Total		9.3%	10.3%	9.3%	12.2%	8.9%	6.2%	5.3%	3.2%	1.3%	0.5%	66.5%	33.5%
	Special	College Park School												100%
		Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee												100%
		St Marylebone Bridge Academy												100%
	Special Total		100%											
WCC Total			9.1%	10.1%	9.2%	12.1%	8.7%	6.1%	5.3%	3.2%	1.2%	0.4%	65.5%	34.5%

KS5 – A Levels 2024 Religious Studies

A Level Religious Studies											
LA	Sch type	Sch name	A*	A	B	C	D	E	U	Total RS entries	Total KS5 pupils
WCC	Secondary	Grey Coat Hospital		2	7	7	2			149	167
		St Augustine's High	1		2	7	4	1		57	72
		St George's RC		3	3	1	1			102	110
		St Marylebone	2	4	6					174	186
		Westminster City		3	5	3				134	145
Secondary Total			3	12	23	18	7	1		1263	1327
WCC Total			3	12	23	18	7	1		1263	1327