



Standing Advisor Council on Religious Education

Annual Report 2024-2025

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CITY OF LONDON

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Chair's Foreword

As Chair of the City of London Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE), I am pleased to present this Annual Report for 2024–2025.

Although the City of London has a unique educational context, with only one maintained school and no schools routinely required to follow a locally agreed syllabus, the statutory responsibilities of SACRE remain important. Through its work, SACRE continues to ensure that the City of London meets its legal duties, remains informed about national developments in Religious Education, and is well placed to respond to future change.

During the year, SACRE met to consider national policy developments, inspection expectations, curriculum reform and workforce challenges, alongside hearing directly about Religious Education at The Aldgate School. I would like to thank all SACRE members for their thoughtful contributions, their commitment to inclusive representation, and their continued engagement with both religious and non-religious perspectives.

I am also grateful to the Local Authority Advisor and the Clerk for their expertise and support in preparing reports and ensuring that SACRE's work is properly recorded and reported. This annual report provides a clear account of SACRE's advisory role over the past year and reflects our ongoing commitment to high-quality Religious Education that supports understanding, respect and community cohesion.

Kirstie Hilton

Chair, City of London SACRE

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Introduction

Since 1988, it has been a statutory requirement for every local authority to establish a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE). SACREs are charged with advising the local authority on matters relating to Religious Education (RE) and collective worship, and with overseeing the effectiveness of local arrangements.

The City of London is a unique local authority. Its geographical area is small and it has only one maintained school, The Aldgate School, which is a voluntary aided school with a religious character. As a result, there is no school for which a locally agreed syllabus would normally apply. Religious Education at The Aldgate School is determined by the governors in accordance with its trust deed and is provided through the London Diocesan Board for Schools (LDBS).

Nevertheless, the City of London is legally required to maintain an Agreed Syllabus so that provision can be made available should a parent request RE in accordance with a locally agreed syllabus, as set out in statutory guidance. The role of SACRE in the City therefore focuses on ensuring that appropriate statutory arrangements are in place, monitoring developments at national level, and advising the local authority accordingly.

This annual report sets out the work of the City of London SACRE during the 2024–2025 academic year.

SACRE Meetings Held

During the reporting period, one meeting of the City of London SACRE was held: 21 November 2025 – held remotely via Microsoft Teams. The meeting was quorate, with all appointed members in attendance.

Membership and Attendance

SACRE membership continues to reflect a broad range of religious and non-religious perspectives, alongside professional representation from education and the local authority.

Committee A – Christian denominations and other religions and beliefs

Amanda Crowley – Diocese of Westminster Education Service (Catholic)

Leon Silver – Jewish community

Ruhela Begum – Muslim community

Philip Emery – Humanist community

Committee B – Church of England

Mary Thorne – London Diocesan Board for Schools

Committee C – Teachers’ Associations

Alex Allan – Headteacher, The Aldgate School

Committee D – Local Authority

Kirstie Hilton (Chair) – Head of Service, Education and Early Years, City of London Corporation

In Attendance

Deborah Weston OBE – Local Authority Advisor

Amrul Khan – SACRE / Agreed Syllabus Conference Clerk

The SACRE meeting was fully attended and quorate. SACRE noted positively the inclusion of a Humanist representative within Committee A, strengthening representation of non-religious worldviews.

Matters Considered by SACRE

SACRE considered a range of national and local matters relevant to its advisory role, including:

- National developments in Religious Education policy and practice
- Training and professional development opportunities for teachers of RE
- National data on GCSE and A level Religious Studies entries and outcomes
- Ongoing challenges in RE teacher recruitment and workforce capacity
- Ofsted expectations relating to RE, SMSC, inclusion and community cohesion
- The national Curriculum and Assessment Review and its implications for RE
- Developments in the teaching of religious and non-religious worldviews

National Developments in Religious Education

The Local Authority Advisor provided a detailed update on national developments affecting Religious Education. This included information about free and subsidised professional development opportunities for teachers, particularly those new to RE or teaching outside their main specialism.

SACRE noted continued public support for RE as a statutory subject, including evidence from national polling indicating that parents value pupils learning about both religious and non-religious worldviews as part of a broad and balanced curriculum.

National examination data was also considered. SACRE noted sustained uptake in GCSE Religious Studies, with outcomes remaining broadly stable, and steady entries at A level. At the same time, SACRE recognised ongoing national concerns about reduced curriculum time for RE in some schools and uneven compliance with statutory requirements, particularly at secondary level.

Religious Education at The Aldgate School

SACRE received a verbal report from the Headteacher of The Aldgate School on developments in RE over the past year.

The school continues to follow the London Diocesan Board for Schools curriculum for Religious Education. Over the last year, this curriculum has been further developed and extended, including provision for Nursery pupils, replacing a previous values-led approach.

Curriculum development has been supported by the LDBS, including advisory visits to support staff in ensuring that units are appropriate, engaging and well-sequenced. Teaching is increasingly structured through theological, philosophical and sociological lenses in order to deepen pupils' understanding and encourage critical thinking.

Pupil voice has been a particular focus, with evidence of increasingly thoughtful engagement and a clearer understanding among pupils of the purpose and value of Religious Education. No parental withdrawals from RE have been recorded, and families remain supportive of the subject. Pupils themselves have expressed that RE should not be reduced or removed, recognising its role in promoting respect and inclusivity.

SACRE discussed the teaching of non-religious worldviews at the school. While this is currently embedded implicitly within the curriculum, the school confirmed that from 2026 new thematic units will include more explicit content on non-religious worldviews, including humanist perspectives.

Matters discussed by SACRE

- **Ofsted and Inspection Context:** SACRE noted updates on Ofsted's current inspection focus, particularly in relation to personal development, SMSC, inclusion and community cohesion.
- **Curriculum and Assessment Review:** SACRE received a detailed briefing on the outcomes of the national Curriculum and Assessment Review.
- **Agreed Syllabus:** The City of London SACRE confirmed that the locally agreed syllabus remains in place following its most recent review.

Advice Offered to the City of London

During the reporting period, SACRE provided advice to the City of London Corporation that SACRE had discharged its statutory duties through focused and informed engagement with national developments, local provision and governance arrangements.