



City of  
Doncaster  
Council

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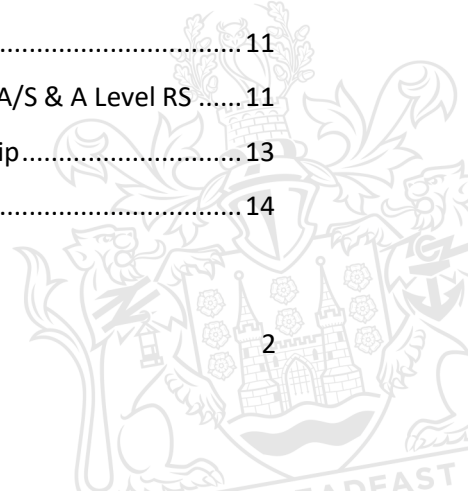
# Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Annual Report 2024/2025



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## **SECTION 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Words on behalf of the Chair of SACRE**

Over the past year, Doncaster SACRE has continued to evolve in its role supporting high-quality Religious Education across Doncaster. While the journey included moments of pause and reflection, it also brought renewed clarity, direction and collaboration. This year has seen focus to the adoption of the new Locally Agreed RE Syllabus for 2025–2030, members demonstrated a shared commitment to progress and inclusion.

The meetings held throughout the year reflected a broad spectrum of priorities including curriculum development, national trends in RE, teacher recruitment, and the importance of diverse representation. The appointment of new members, a SACRE Chair and the planning of the syllabus launch event at Eco Power Stadium signal a growing momentum to connect more deeply with Doncaster schools and communities.

As SACRE looks ahead, the focus remains on collaboration, relevance, and ensuring that Religious Education continues to reflect the richness of belief and worldviews present in our society.

**Niyi Olusola**  
**SACRE Chair**



## 1.2 SACRE Overview

This report outlines the work of Doncaster Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) during the academic year 2024–2025. It highlights key developments, priorities, and the impact of SACRE in supporting Religious Education (RE) and collective worship across schools in Doncaster.

Throughout the year, members demonstrated a shared commitment to maintaining and improving the quality of RE and collective worship. SACRE worked collaboratively with local schools, advisers, and partners to support high-quality provision across Doncaster.

### **Key Priority: New Locally Agreed Syllabus**

The primary focus in the year was the development and adoption of the new Locally Agreed RE Syllabus (2025–2030). SACRE worked closely with RE advisers and stakeholders to ensure that the syllabus is:

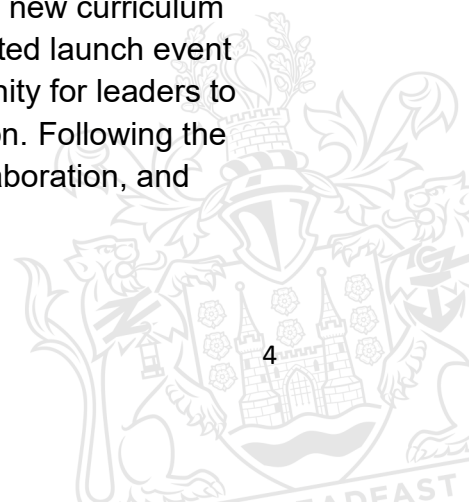
- Ambitious and inclusive
- Reflective of local and national contexts
- Supportive of high-quality teaching and learning

The syllabus was formally adopted in November 2024 with SACRE’s priority focus to secure full implementation in schools from September 2025.

Doncaster SACRE met four times during the 2024–2025 academic year, with all meetings delivered in a hybrid format to promote transparency, accessibility, and wider participation. The year was shaped by significant developments in governance, syllabus implementation, and strengthened engagement with both national RE bodies and local schools.

- 14 November 2024 – Inquorate
- 28 November 2024 – Quorate
- 6 March 2025 – Quorate
- 31 July 2025 – Inquorate

A major focus of the year was the adoption and rollout of the new Locally Agreed RE Syllabus (2025–2030). Although early progress was slowed by an inquorate meeting in November 2024, the syllabus was formally approved on 28 November 2024, alongside agreement to extend the existing syllabus (2019–2024) to 31 August 2025. Pennine Learning was commissioned to support the launch of the new curriculum with schools and implementation from September 2025. A dedicated launch event for schools took place on 9 May 2025, providing an early opportunity for leaders to engage with the new expectations and begin planning for transition. Following the launch, an RE Leads Network was established to strengthen collaboration, and support the sharing of effective practice across schools.



SACRE also reviewed national RE updates, welcomed new representation, and continued to strengthen inclusivity. At the meeting on 6 March 2025, Niyi Olusola was formally welcomed as the Christian Denomination representative. Members also approved the delayed 2023–2024 Annual Report and agreed to remove the outdated REsource Directory, replacing it with updated materials from the RE Hub.

## Key Decisions and Governance Outcomes

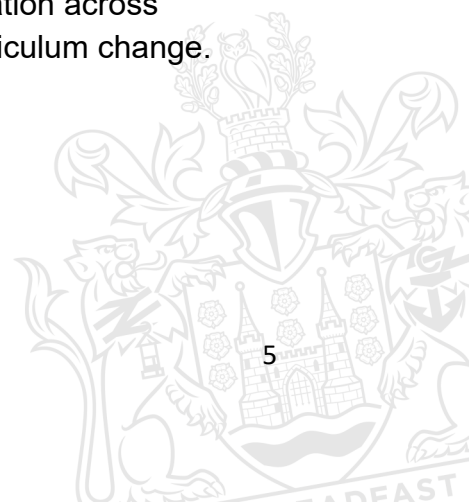
- Extension of the 2019–2024 RE syllabus to 31 August 2025 to support the transition to the new syllabus.
- Formal commissioning of Pennine Learning to deliver training and support for syllabus implementation.
- Welcoming of Niyi Olusola as the Christian Denomination representative.
- Agreement to remove the outdated REsource Directory and adopt RE Hub materials.
- Introduction of a proposal to use a 10% rebate from syllabus resource purchases to establish an RE subject leaders' network.
- Plans to monitor GCSE RE results more closely following low uptake and mixed 2024 outcomes.
- Deferral of Chair and Vice-chair appointments at the 31 July 2025 meeting due to inquoracy.

## Achievement

GCSE Religious Studies results for 2025 highlight lower than average uptake of the formal qualification, with attainment at grades 9–4 broadly matching national averages. A & AS Religious Studies show an increasing trend over time that is closer to the national average indicating an improving trend in participation.

These findings reinforced SACRE's commitment to strengthening school engagement in RE, improving participation, and more robustly monitoring outcomes.

Overall, despite challenges linked to meeting quoracy and leadership transitions, SACRE made tangible progress in strengthening Religious Education across Doncaster and supporting schools in preparing for significant curriculum change.



## **SECTION 2: RE (statutory responsibilities)**

### **2.1 The locally agreed syllabus and RE in schools**

The Locally Agreed Syllabus, produced with RE Today Services and introduced in 2019, has provided a rigorous and plural framework for RE across 4–19 education and has been available for use by schools supported by purchasable schemes of work and regular discussion at primary network meetings. During 2024/25 SACRE has worked with a newly commissioned provider, Pennine Learning, to progress the development of a new locally agreed syllabus. On 14 November 2024, SACRE agreed to extend the 2019 syllabus to the end of the 2024/25 academic year and introduce the new syllabus from September 2025. At its meeting on 14 November 2024, SACRE recommended the new Locally Agreed Syllabus to the Local Authority and the launch of Doncaster's new Locally Agreed RE Syllabus with all schools in the Spring Term of 2025.

SACRE seeks to monitor standards in RE through a range of mechanisms, including:

- Engagement with the local school network.
- Feedback from teacher meetings and training sessions.
- Analysis of available attainment and participation data.
- Local intelligence from school visits and professional dialogue.

During 2024–2025, SACRE strengthened its engagement with schools through the development of RE network meetings and professional development opportunities.

Feedback from network meetings and engagement with schools suggests variability in RE provision, including differences in curriculum time allocation and teacher confidence, particularly in smaller primary settings.

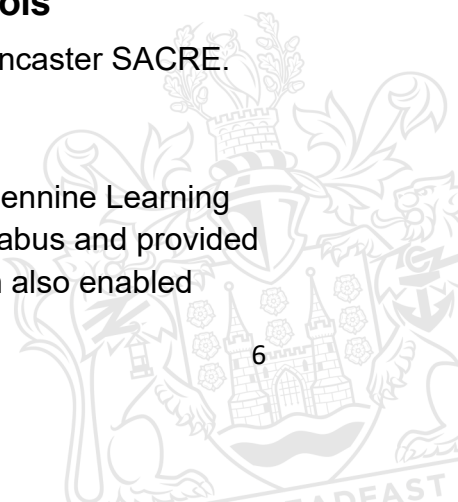
SACRE recognises that its current understanding of RE provision across all schools requires strengthening and has prioritised the development of a more systematic approach to monitoring and evaluation.

### **2.2 Teacher training and materials and advice for schools**

Training and networking opportunities for teachers provided by Doncaster SACRE.

#### **Teacher network meetings:**

To support the transition to the new Locally Agreed RE syllabus, Pennine Learning delivered a launch event and two webinars that introduced the syllabus and provided practical guidance for subject leads and headteachers. The launch also enabled



valuable networking and collaboration across schools. Through targeted training and engagement, Pennine Learning ensured leaders were well-supported in understanding and implementing the changes with confidence.

The Launch event was well-attended by stakeholders and feedback from school representatives and SACRE members was extremely positive.

Overall, the impact of SACRE's work has contributed to:

- Increased teacher engagement through the launch event and network meetings
- Improved awareness and preparedness for the new syllabus
- Strengthened collaboration between schools and RE professionals

Feedback from teachers indicates that training and networking opportunities are supporting curriculum planning and subject confidence.

## **2.3 Other information**

The SACRE is not aware of any complaints regarding RE in the Local Authority's schools.

## **2.4 Advice to the Local Authority**

SACRE has influenced the Local Authority's priorities through ensuring the development and promotion of the new Locally Agreed Syllabus.

SACRE has provided specific advice to schools in the local authority and to academies in Doncaster about the new Locally Agreed Syllabus.

# **SECTION 3: Collective Worship (statutory responsibilities)**

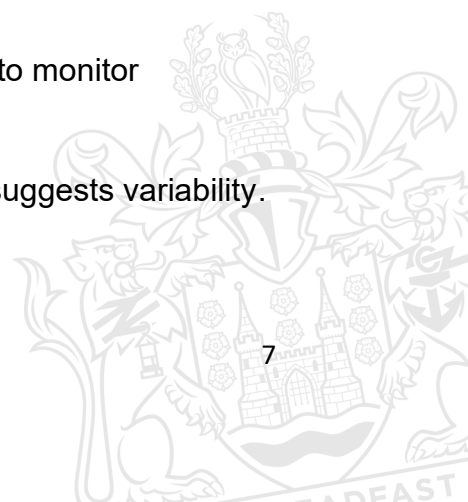
## **3.1 Standards and monitoring of Collective Worship**

SACRE has a statutory duty to monitor collective worship in schools.

During this reporting period no formal complaints were received concerning collective worship.

SACRE engages with schools via surveys and networked events to monitor collective worship.

Feedback from network meetings and engagement with schools suggests variability.



SACRE recognises that its current understanding of collective worship practice across all schools requires strengthening and has prioritised the development of a more systematic approach to monitoring and evaluation.

SACRE continues to promote good practice through guidance and professional discussion.

### **3.2 Determinations**

Doncaster SACRE has not received any applications for determinations.

### **3.3 Teacher training provided (locally, or national training circulated to schools)**

SACRE has supported teachers through a programme of professional development, including:

- Regular RE network meetings
- Training linked to the new syllabus
- Opportunities for collaboration and sharing best practice

These activities have been well attended and positively received, contributing to increased teacher confidence and improved curriculum planning.

### **3.4 Materials and advice for schools**

The SACRE has distributed all relevant information relating to supporting collective worship in schools via termly network meetings and updates in the Local Authority's newsletter.

### **3.5 Other information**

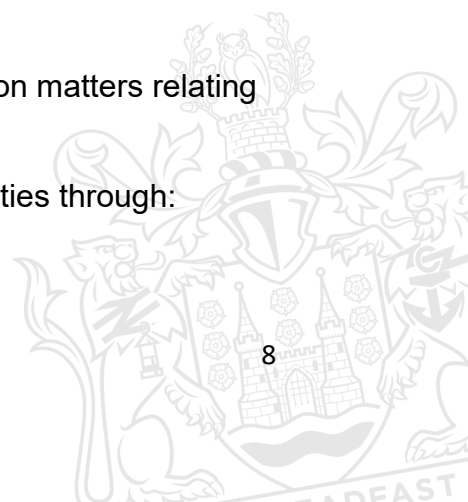
The SACRE is not aware of any complaints regarding collective worship in the Local Authority's schools.

### **3.6 Advice to the Local Authority**

SACRE has a statutory role to offer advice to the Local Authority on matters relating to RE and collective worship.

During this period, SACRE has contributed to local authority priorities through:

- Development and adoption of the new RE syllabus
- Ongoing professional dialogue with schools



- Support for RE subject leadership through networks and training

While no formal written advice was issued, SACRE has provided ongoing guidance through its work programme and engagement with stakeholders

SACRE recognises that its current understanding of RE provision across all schools, including differences in curriculum time allocation and teacher confidence, particularly in smaller primary settings, needs strengthening. The development of a systematic overview is planned to support with monitoring, evaluation and support for schools.

## **SECTION 4: Links with other bodies**

### **4.1 National bodies**

Doncaster SACRE is an active member of NASACRE and funds members' attendance at its annual conference and promotes its online training. It also works closely with RE specialists to provide a teacher training and encourages schools to join NATRE to further strengthen RE practice.

### **4.2 Local bodies**

The Doncaster SACRE seeks continually to foster and develop active links with local communities and schools and has promoted these links via the REsources directory and more recently the RE Hub.

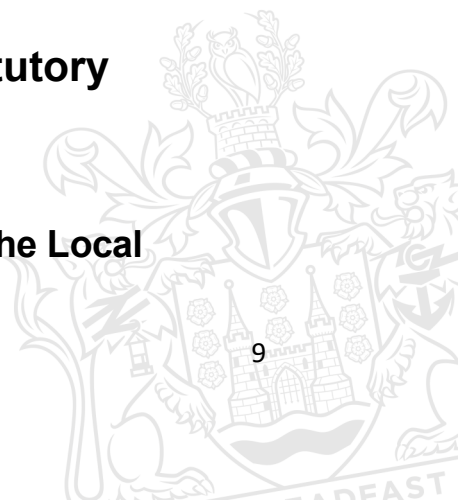
The above links support the sharing of best practice and ensure alignment with national developments in RE.

## **SECTION 5: Other areas of SACRE involvement locally**

A key area of amplifying SACRE's local involvement has been to strengthen its continued engagement with the RE Hub. The Hub is now largely taking over the role previously fulfilled by our own REsources directory, providing updated materials, wider professional networks, and consistent support for local RE development. This collaboration reflects SACRE's ongoing commitment to strengthening RE provision across the local area.

## **SECTION 6: SACRE's own arrangements (statutory responsibilities)**

### **6.1 Professional and administrative support and how the Local**



## **Authority supports the SACRE**

The Local Authority provides SACRE with an annual budget to support its statutory work, including training and network meetings, and supplies clerking and meeting support through Democratic Services. Elected councillors and senior education staff actively participate in and fully support SACRE's work.

## **6.2 Membership, representation & recruitment**

SACRE membership represents a range of faith and belief groups, teachers, and elected members.

The SACRE is active in recruiting members to ensure full and balanced representation across all the representative groups. It also considers co-opting those with skills, knowledge and experience who can help to develop its work.

Membership vacancies are discussed at meetings and recruitment of new members keen to get involved is promoted.

## **6.3 Training for SACRE (and ASC) members**

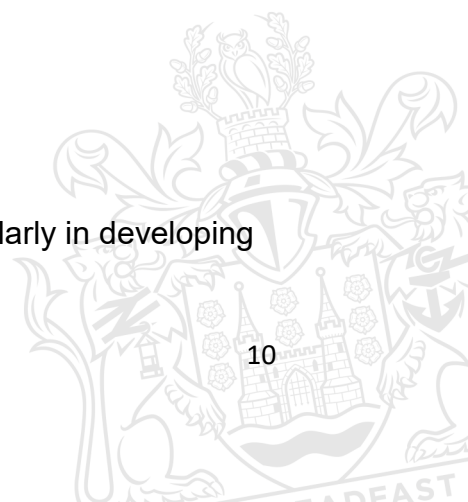
New SACRE members receive a guide outlining their responsibilities and are supported by the Clerk, LA Officer, and RE Advisor. Members are invited to school-based training, offered funded places at the NASACRE Conference and AGM, and encouraged to attend NASACRE's online training. SACRE meetings also occasionally include presentations from the advisor on key topics.

## **6.4 Finance given to SACRE for its work**

The Local Authority establishes an annual budget provision to SACRE's work and priorities. This is calculated based on periodic demand activity such as the Syllabus review every 5 years as well as operational costs associated with SACRE and the in-year priorities. The budget allocation is informed by comparison with the recommended 2% of the Local Authority's central schools' services budget.

## **SECTION 7: Key Priorities for 2025–2026**

SACRE has made significant progress during 2024–2025, particularly in developing the new Locally Agreed Syllabus.



SACRE remains committed to supporting high-quality Religious Education and collective worship across Doncaster and will continue to strengthen its role and impact across the following priorities:

- Support implementation of the new Locally Agreed Syllabus (2025–2030)
- Work with schools and partners to understand barriers to uptake and promote the value of Religious Studies within the curriculum.
- Strengthen monitoring and support for collective worship.

## SECTION 8: Appendices

### 8.1 Results of External Religious Studies examinations: short and full GCSE, A/S & A Level RS

The Local Authority has provided the published datasets from the DfE for GCSE Religious Studies as set out below.

#### Entry rate:

GCSE (RS)	2024/25	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
England	32%	33%	35%	35%
Stat neighbours	23%	23%	27%	26%
Doncaster	10%	12%	16%	18%



**'Subject pupil level local authority data' for 9 to 4, GCSE, Religious Studies and Total pupil entries in Doncaster and England between 2021/22 and 2024/25**

				GCSE				
				2024/25	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	
Religious Studies	England	Total pupil entries	Percentage of pupils achieving the grade	z	z	z	z	
			Number of pupils achieving the grade	204,914	210,776	210,323	207,491	
		9 to 4	Percentage of pupils achieving the grade	71%	71%	71%	69%	
			Number of pupils achieving the grade	145,735	148,987	148,986	142,772	
	Yorkshire and The Humber	Doncaster	Total pupil entries	Percentage of pupils achieving the grade	z	z	z	z
				Number of pupils achieving the grade	335	407	526	578
		9 to 4	Percentage of pupils achieving the grade	72%	64%	66%	62%	
			Number of pupils achieving the grade	241	259	346	361	

The GCSE Religious Studies published data identifies the following:

- In 2025, approximately 10% of pupils in Doncaster were entered for GCSE Religious Studies, compared to a national average of 32%.
- This represents a continued decline from 12% in 2024 and down from 18% in 2022, indicating a continuing trend in participation.
- Attainment outcomes at grades 4+ were 72%, 1 percentage point above the national figure of 71%. This was an improvement in 2024 where Doncaster achieved 64%, 7 percentage points below the national average of 71%.
- Outcomes vary significantly between schools, with some achieving strong results while others report lower attainment.

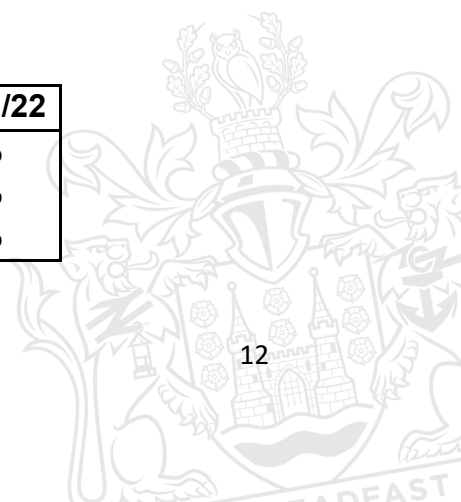
The trend in lower-than-average entry rates is concerning for SACRE and will form a key priority to develop engagement with secondary schools.

SACRE will work with schools and partners to better understand barriers to uptake and promote the value of Religious Studies within the curriculum.

### A and AS Religious Studies

#### Entry Rate:

A level (RS)	2024/25	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
England	2.0%	2.1%	2.2%	2.3%
Stat neighbours	1.1%	1.2%	1.2%	1.3%
Doncaster	0.9%	0.7%	0.6%	1.1%



NB, entry rate for A level is based on total 16–18 cohort, not just those taking A levels.

		2025		2024		2023		2022	
		A	AS	A	AS	A	AS	A	AS
Doncaster	Entries	39	5	19	5	18	2	31	1
	A* – E	38 (97%)	5 (100%)	16 (84%)	5 (100%)	17 (94%)	2 (100%)	29 (94%)	1 (100%)
	A* – B	15 (38%)	3 (60%)	5 (26%)	2 (40%)	8 (44%)	1 (50%)	16 (52%)	0 (0%)
National	Entries	14170	1890	14530	2150	14700	2070	15220	1070
	A* – E	98%	91%	97%	89%	97%	92%	99%	93%
	A* – B	57%	44%	55%	43%	55%	48%	68%	51%

A and AS Religious Studies published data identifies the following:

- In 2025, approximately 1.6% of the A/AS cohort in Doncaster were entered for A & AS Religious Studies, compared to a national average of 2.0% of entries.
- This represents an increasing trend over time with entries for A level in 2025 being the highest number in any of the last 4 years. Indicating an improving trend in participation.
- Attainment outcomes for AS generally compare positively to national averages. Whereas attainment for A level remains consistently below the national averages at the higher grades (A\* -B).

SACRE will work with schools and partners to better understand barriers to uptake and promote the value of Religious Studies within the curriculum.

## 8.2 Local Authority/SACRE policy statements on Religious Education or Collective Worship

SACRE has a statutory duty to monitor collective worship in schools.

During this reporting period:

- No formal complaints were received concerning collective worship.



### **8.3 Circulation details for this Annual Report**

Copies will be sent electronically to the relevant bodies. This report will be available on the Doncaster Local Authority and NASACRE websites for interested parties to download.

- Director of Children's Services, Doncaster Borough Council.
- Lead member for Children's Services, Doncaster Borough Council.
- The Department for Education (Central Government).
- NASACRE (National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education).
- Headteachers and Governing Bodies of all Doncaster Schools.
- All members of Doncaster SACRE.

