

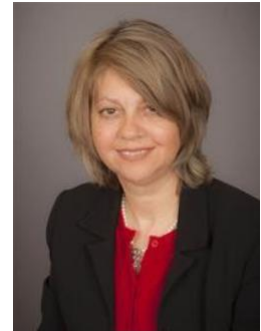
**Northumberland Standing Advisory Council
on Religious Education (SACRE)**

Annual Report: Academic Year 2024 - 2025

Table of contents	
Page	
2	An introduction from the Chair of SACRE
3	SACRE meetings
3	Northumberland Agreed Syllabus Conference
3	The local agreed syllabus and RE in schools
4	Standards and monitoring of RE
4	Teacher training and advice for schools
6	Withdrawals and complaints
6	Standards and monitoring of collective worship
6	Determinations
7	Teacher training provided
7	Links with other bodies
8	SACRE's own arrangements
10	Circulation details for this annual report
10	Appendix A: SACRE Membership as of September 2024

An introduction from the Chair of SACRE

2024-25 was a year of consolidation for Northumberland SACRE. We have continued to support schools with the Agreed Syllabus, to ensure implementation was successful and impact visible. We have also spent time working on an updated constitution to ensure we are fit for purpose as we go forward. I would like to thank all those members of SACRE who have given so generously of their time and expertise to enable this. I am also very grateful for the support of our officers, Dave Cookson and Rebecca Little, as well as to Caroline Weir, our RE Consultant, who has challenged and supported us professionally. Her deep understanding of all aspects of RE is highly appreciated.



Most importantly, I need to thank teachers and senior leaders in schools for their ongoing commitment to religious education and their engagement with SACRE.

A number of changes to the membership took place:

Committee A:

- Stewart Dearlove stepped down as the Humanist Representative.

Committee D:

Following Local Elections, there were several changes to the membership of Committee D. Councillors Bowman, Morphet and Seymour stepped down from their roles within SACRE and Council appointed Councillors Dodd, FitzGerald and Hill to work alongside Councillor Thorne as Committee D members.

Resources to support the work of the SACRE continue to be ring-fenced with a specific financial contribution from Northumberland County Council, and the commitment of all SACRE's members continues to be priceless. We depend on the goodwill of the very small central team who have an impact way beyond their number.

It was a privilege to serve as the Chair of the SACRE between September 2023 and May 2025 and to work with a group of dedicated, enthusiastic, and knowledgeable members. I would also like to thank my vice chair Deanna Van Der Velde for her support. I look forward to hearing about the continued growth and success of Northumberland SACRE.

Councillor Catherine Seymour (Former Chair of the Northumberland SACRE)

SACRE meetings

SACRE met twice at County Hall, Morpeth during the academic year 2024 -2025:

- 13 November 2024 - [minutes](#)
- 5 February 2024 - [minutes](#)

The June meeting was postponed due to its proximity to the local council elections. All committee meetings were postponed during this period as the council inducted new councillors.

At the November meeting responses from the Department for Education to the workforce data presented at the November meeting were discussed, as well as GCSE and A level outcomes for 2024. Members were also updated on the progress of the SACRE constitution working group.

At the February meeting further responses from the Department for Education and queries relating to the GCSE/A level outcomes were discussed. Members were also updated on the progress of the SACRE constitution working group.

The action plan covering the academic year is available [here](#). A new action plan is being drawn up to commence from September 2025.

Northumberland Agreed Syllabus Conference

The Northumberland Agreed Syllabus 2022-2027 was launched in June 2022. Accordingly there is no ASC in progress.

Although not part of its statutory role, Northumberland SACRE seeks to serve and support all schools and academies within the county and makes its agreed RE syllabus available to all.

The local agreed syllabus and RE in schools

The locally agreed syllabus is now embedded in the majority of schools it applies to. A number of academies have requested copies since the launch in 2022; whether they are using the syllabus wholesale or in part is unclear. Training on aspects of the agreed syllabus is provided (see teacher training section).

Once the curriculum review has published its outcomes in 2025 an Agreed Syllabus review will be considered as appropriate.

Standards and monitoring of RE

Dave Cookson (Lead Officer for SACRE) met with the headteachers of the three local authority maintained secondary/high schools in the county to continue discussing the provision of RE at each. Those conversations will continue during 2025 - 2026.

Public examination data has been requested from secondary/high schools.

SACRE is not aware of any schools applying for REQM status. There are no schools in Northumberland who currently hold the REQM.

SACRE monitors the Ofsted reports to note progress and excellence in SMSC and RE delivery, as well as issues requiring support. No schools received a deep dive into RE during graded inspections by Ofsted. Three schools had received deep dives in the two academic years previously. No other reports mentioned RE explicitly.

Teacher training and advice for schools

A programme of training and support was planned for schools to help colleagues with continued embedding of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Colleagues requested support with teaching different types of knowledge in RE, particularly disciplinary knowledge, in response to network sessions last year on the Ofsted 'Deep and Meaningful?' report.

Termly network sessions were focused on exploring the three types of knowledge identified in the Ofsted report (substantive, disciplinary and personal), with a particular focus on disciplinary knowledge or 'ways of knowing'. Throughout the year, network sessions covered the disciplines of theology, philosophy, and human & social sciences.

Also, following the success of last year's subject knowledge sessions covering a range of religions and worldviews, RE leads asked if these could be repeated so that other colleagues in their schools who teach RE could attend too. In order to make these sessions accessible to as many colleagues as possible, pre-recorded training was

produced. Schools could access these 'on demand' to use as best suited their context e.g. during an individual's PPA time or for teachers to watch together in directed time.

The following subject knowledge sessions were available 'on demand':

- Understanding Christianity refresher (for schools already using the resource)
 - 6 schools accessed
- Jewish worldviews across the Syllabus (EYFS - KS3)
 - 9 schools accessed
- Hindu worldviews across the Syllabus (EYFS - KS3)
 - 6 schools accessed
- Muslim worldviews across the Syllabus (EYFS - KS3)
 - 12 schools accessed
- Sikh worldviews across the Syllabus (EYFS - KS3)
 - 2 schools accessed

Termly RE Network meetings (cross phase):

- Autumn - Types of knowledge, introducing Ways of Knowing in RE (18.11.25)
 - 16 attendees
- Spring - Ways of Knowing: Human & Social Sciences focus, teacher speaker sharing best practice (13.3.25)
 - 18 attendees
- Summer - Ways of Knowing: Philosophy focus, sharing resources for teaching disciplinary knowledge (23.6.25)
 - 12 attendees

In addition to the central training offer above, the RE consultant provided specialist and bespoke support for individual schools with curriculum planning - via email, zoom and school visits.

Withdrawals and complaints

There were no withdrawals (from both RE lessons and collective worship) brought to the attention of Northumberland SACRE in 2024 - 2025.

Information on withdrawals previously been circulated via the [SACRE newsletter](#), signposting schools to [this document](#).

Northumberland SACRE has a role in investigating complaints against schools in relation to RE and Collective Worship. In 2024 - 2025 there were no such formal complaints to deal with.

Standards and monitoring of collective worship

In September 2021 Northumberland SACRE launched an updated [collective worship policy](#).

The legislation determining the nature of collective worship in community schools has not altered since the Education Reform Act 1988, with the corresponding guidance offered in Circular 1/94. However, understanding of how to make the legislation meaningful in increasingly multifaith but predominantly secular school communities has changed considerably. There is now far greater agreement among teachers, educationalists, and others about what constitutes good practice in relation to collective worship.

Determinations

The Education Reform Act of 1988 (sections 6, 7, 9, and 12) entitles schools to apply to the SACRE for a 'Determination'. This allows the school to adjust the legal requirements to enable collective worship of a different character to take place for some or all pupils in the school. Determinations are made where a school, on behalf of a group of parents, requests Collective Worship other than that set down by statute. There were no determinations in 2024 - 2025 for Northumberland SACRE to consider.

Teacher training provided

Northumberland SACRE commissioned training on governor responsibilities in relation to collective worship and RE which was made available to governors and headteachers in July 2025. A copy can be viewed [here](#).

SACRE members continue to generously offer schools their time and expertise. Religion and Worldview representatives offer to deliver assemblies, support curriculum planning, and provide guidance to individual teachers.

Links with other bodies

Attendance at the NASACRE Conference is offered each year - Caroline Weir attended. Joyce Miller presented a keynote speech entitled *Identity, Community and Commonality: what can Religion and Worldviews offer schools and society?*

Members of SACRE were also signposted to the NASACRE training events as access to all events was purchased.

AREIAC (Association of RE Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants): Caroline Weir and Joyce Miller are AREIAC members. The 3 regional meetings a year provide an excellent network of RE leads and the sharing of best practice and ideas.

NATRE (National Association of Teachers of Religious Education): Northumberland SACRE promotes the resources and CPD provided to NATRE through the SACRE newsletter.

Caroline Weir is a member of NATRE and attended NATRE's Strictly RE Conference on 25 January 2025.

The Northumberland SACRE maintains excellent relationships with the dioceses. The Directors of Education meet regularly to see how all parties can support each other.

Northumberland SACRE are in regular communication with Karenza Passmore, the North East RE Hub Lead and promote their work to schools via the [SACRE webpage](#).

The Chair of SACRE met with the Executive Director of Children's Services and the Head of School Improvement in October 2024 to ensure that the work of SACRE was well understood by senior managers within the council.

SACRE's own arrangements

Northumberland SACRE is supported by Dave Cookson, Head of School Improvement and Caroline Weir, part-time RE Consultant. SACRE feels well supported by the team.

The Head of School Improvement acts as the conduit between the LA and SACRE on issues such as finance, data, and councillor representation.

Democratic Services appoint a clerk to attend each SACRE meeting. Rebecca Little continues in this role.

The LA supports the funding of the RE Consultant time for around 25 days a year.

The RE Consultant provides specialist RE advice and governance support, facilitates the collaborative network meetings attends AREIAC/ NASACRE/NATRE meetings or conferences and deals with day-to-day matters.

To raise the profile of SACRE, and raise school awareness of the role and support that SACRE can provide, a page on the [Northumberland Education](#) website acts as a central point for resources.

The SACRE action plan completed its third cycle in 2024 - 2025. The 2024 - 2025 action plan is available [here](#).

Joyce Miller led a working group on the constitution. The working group was established at a meeting of the SACRE held in July 2023. Its overarching aim was to carry out Section 16 of 2022 - 2023 SACRE action plan with regard to its relationship to the Local Authority and to examine the constitution to see if changes were necessary to improve SACRE's effectiveness.

Following the three reports from the sub-committee, a re-drafted constitution was created which incorporated all the recommendations. The draft is awaiting approval by Cabinet before adoption. Progress has been slowed by the local elections which took place in May 2025.

The RE Consultant and Head of School Improvement work in partnership with the chair and members of the SACRE to identify gaps with representation of the local faith communities and wider group membership. This is an ongoing process.

A full membership list as of September 2025 is available as appendix A. Vacancies are being addressed as they arise.

All SACRE members are access to NASACRE training. That offer was taken up by the following:

Funding for SACREs to work with pupils in RE - applying for a Westhill/NASACRE award - 3 October 2024

- Catherine Seymour

How Can SACREs make strategic use to the Deep & Meaningful Ofsted RE Report (May 2024) in their work? - 15 October 2024

- Dave Cookson
- Joyce Miller
- Caroline Weir

In Conversation with NASACRE - 21 November 2024

- Dave Cookson
- Caroline Weir

How to be an effective member of your SACRE? - 21 Jan 2025

- Claire Dixon
Nick Morphet

In Conversation with North East SACREs - 20 March 2025

- Caroline Weir

Joyce Miller also attended the Autumn meeting of the North East Association of RE Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants as well as presented a paper at a conference for RE teachers in the South West on "Skilled inter-cultural navigators and shared space."

Caroline Weir also attended the following AREIAC webinar sessions:

- MAT to the Future -19 November 2024
- HMI Hazel Henson - 1 April 2025 (run jointly with RE Hubs)

Three members (Paul Rusby, Joyce Miller, and Sohail Arshad) are accredited with the Regional Hubs Kitemark.

In 2024 - 2025 School's Forum provided £7000 which equated to 0.32% of the Dedicated School's Grant. Whilst the figure of £7000 has remained static it has grown as a proportion of the DSG over time, from 0.26% in 2020 - 2021.

The majority of the funding pays for the time of the RE Consultant. The remainder is used for room hire/refreshments for training events.

Northumberland County Council provide a clerk and back-office functions at no cost to SACRE.

Circulation details for this annual report

The report was accepted by Northumberland SACRE in November 2025. The report will be made available to Headteachers and teachers through the ecourier. The report will also be added to the [SACRE page](#) of the Northumberland County Council website. The report will be shared with Northumberland County Council.

The SACRE clerk will send a copy of the SACRE report to the Department for Education: via ministers@education.gov.uk

The report will also be emailed to NASACRE for publication on its website: SACRE reports via admin@nasacre.org.uk

Appendix A: SACRE Membership as of September 2024

		Appointment date	Resignation date
Committee A: Other Faiths			
Sohail Arshad	Islam	November 2023	
Stuart Dearlove	Humanism	February 2022	December 2024
Claire Dixon	Roman Catholic	July 2022	
Joyce Miller	Buddhism	November 2020	
Jean Simpson	Baptist	February 2023	
Deanna Van Der Velde	Judaism	January 2005	
Pandit Nayankumar Vyas	Hinduism	March 2023	
Vacancy	Assembly of God		
Vacancy	Salvation Army		
Vacancy	Society of Friends		
Vacancy	Jehovah's Witness		
Vacancy	Sikhism		

Committee B: Church of England			
Rosalynd Cant		March 2024	
Paul Rusby		November 2001	
Vacancy			
Vacancy			

Committee C: Teaching Associations/Unions			
Andrew Duffield	NASUWT	October 2015	
Tony Nicholls	NEU	September 2013	
Vacancy	ASCL		
Vacancy	NAHT		

Committee D: Local Authority			
Councillor Les Bowman		July 2021	May 2025
Councillor Richard Dodd		May 2025	
Councillor David FitzGerald		May 2025	
Councillor Georgina Hill		May 2025	
Councillor Nick Morphet		July 2021	May 2025
Councillor Catherine Seymour		June 2021	May 2025
Councillor Trevor Thorne		June 2017	

Observers			
Claire Curtis	Mowbray Primary School	February 2022	

Local Authority Officers in Attendance			
Caroline Weir	RE Consultant	November 2020	
Dave Cookson	Head of School Improvement	January 2017	
Rebecca Little	Clerk to SACRE	July 2021	