

North Yorkshire Council

North Yorkshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 9 December 2025 commencing at 4.00 pm.

Group A: Christian Denominations and such other religious denominations as, in the Authority's opinion, will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area: Professor John Adams (Humanists)*, Sarah Beveridge (Society of Friends), Nasr Moussa Emam (Islam), Mayan Leadley-Yoward (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints).

Group B: Church of England: Lee Talbot, Revd Claire Soderman.

Group C: Teachers' Associations: Mary Lou Byrne.

Group D: North Yorkshire Council: Councillors Alyson Baker (Chair)*, Janet Jefferson, and Annabel Wilkinson.

Officers present: Stuart Anslow (Senior Education Adviser Monitoring), Edward Maxwell (Clerk to SACRE), Julie Pattison (Principal Education Adviser Monitoring), Olivia Seymour (Principal RE Adviser).

* denotes in person attendance

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

116 Welcome and Announcements

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting, and acknowledged important faith observances taking place recently or in the near future, including Christmas, Hanukkah, and Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadar. The SACRE wished Tom Clayton well, as he had resigned since the last SACRE meeting.

117 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Hayden Cohen, Abhijeet Kulkarni, and Mohinder Singh Chana (Group A), Sarah Hodgson (Group C), and Councillors Robert Heseltine and Councillor Simon Myers (Group D).

118 Minutes of the Meeting held on 30 September 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2025 were agreed as an accurate record.

119 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

120 Public Participation

There were no public questions or statements.

121 Member Training - NASACRE Handbook

The Professional RE Adviser delivered a training session for SACRE members, focusing on the updated NASACRE Handbook (July 2025) and supporting new member inductions. The presentation outlined SACRE's statutory role as the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education, a legal body advising the Local Authority on RE and collective worship in schools. Members were reminded of SACRE's legal duties, including publishing an annual report, advising on RE matters, and considering determinations from schools, alongside best practice such as monitoring provision, co-opting members, and reviewing the agreed syllabus outside the five-year cycle.

Examples of SACRE's wider impact were highlighted, including the agreed syllabus launch, RE networks, and newsletters. Clarification was given that Local Authority representatives (Group D) do not vote on syllabus reviews to avoid conflicts of interest. The handbook also sets out SACRE's role in supporting RE, collective worship, and SMSC, achieved through officer reports, school questionnaires, and inspection findings.

The composition of SACRE was explained, with four groups (A: faith and belief communities, B: Church of England, C: teachers, D: Local Authority), as determined by the local Constitution. The Local Authority's responsibilities include ensuring SACRE's existence, establishing an Agreed Syllabus Conference, reviewing the syllabus every five years, providing funds, and responding to SACRE's advice. The Clerk outlined the role of Democratic Services in supporting SACRE's operations and communications.

Members reflected on the importance of listening to all perspectives, working collaboratively, and keeping the focus on pupil outcomes. Concerns were raised about the potential impact of political changes on SACRE's support for RE, with reassurance given that NASACRE ensures statutory requirements are upheld regardless of political context. Responsibilities across different school types were also discussed: SACRE has full responsibility for maintained community and voluntary controlled schools, while voluntary aided schools' RE curriculum is overseen by their faith body. Academies must be provided with an agreed syllabus but retain freedom to adopt or design their own provision.

Agreed: That the training be noted, and that the Professional RE Adviser be thanked for an informative and engaging session.

122 Update from Professional RE Adviser - Curriculum and Assessment Review

The Professional RE Adviser provided an update on the final report of the national Curriculum and Assessment Review Panel and the government's response, published in November. The report recommends that Religious Education (RE) be incorporated into the National Curriculum, with the RE Council of England and Wales tasked with drafting proposals within six months. Dr Vanessa Ogden is leading an expert advisory group, supported by reference groups representing religion and belief communities, RE teachers, legal experts, school leaders, and young ambassadors.

It was noted that SACRE's role will remain valued, though its legal function in curriculum determination may be amended if RE becomes a National Curriculum subject. SACRE's local responsibilities for communication, representation, and monitoring will continue to be important.

In discussion, Members acknowledged the early stages the review was at, and the uncertainty about how significant it might prove, but welcomed the potential elevation of RE's status. Challenges in achieving consensus among belief groups were highlighted, along with the possible removal of RE from sixth forms, the review of non-statutory guidance, and the requirement for parliamentary approval for legal changes. Officers responded that consensus is emerging, supported by the existing National Content

Standard, and clarified that legislative changes may be achieved through amendments to clauses rather than primary legislation. Members also asked about SACRE's role in promoting community cohesion, and examples including syllabus launches, school speakers, and engagement with interfaith week were highlighted.

The Professional RE Adviser undertook to continue to keep SACRE informed, both through formal updates in meetings and informally passing information through the Clerk to Members between meetings.

Agreed: That the report be noted.

123 SACRE Annual Report

The SACRE considered the draft 2024/25 Annual Report, which was presented by the Principal Education Adviser. It was reported that since it had first been considered by SACRE at the 30 September 2025 meeting, an image had been removed from the Collective Worship section as it did not relate to Collective Worship. There were no other corrections or amendments suggested. The Clerk reiterated the procedure for voting.

Agreed (unanimously): That the SACRE 2024/25 Annual Report be approved.

124 Update by the Local Authority

The Principal Education Adviser (Monitoring) presented their report, noting a quiet period due to Ofsted's pause on most inspection activity. Seven inspection reports from before the summer holidays, which were published after the collation of the deadline for inclusion in the September report, were shared, with feedback generally positive.

The renewed Ofsted framework is being reviewed for references to collective worship and RE, which are expected to be captured within the personal development and behaviour sections. In discussion, the challenges of delivering RE in Pupil Referral Units was raised. It was confirmed that the LA works with such schools and adapts the curriculum to meet pupil needs within the legal framework.

Agreed: That the report be noted.

125 SACRE Development Plan 2024-26

Members considered the SACRE Development Plan, offering comments and feedback on future items of work which would contribute to its effective implementation. Updates included ongoing work to hold a meeting at an outside venue in June 2026.

Agreed: That the development plan be noted.

126 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting, on Tuesday 21 April at 16:00, was noted.