

North Yorkshire Council

North Yorkshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 10th September, 2024 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 (Humanism)*, Sarah Beveridge (Society of Friends), Hayden Cohen (Judaism), Tom Clayton (Methodism), Abhijeet Kulkarni (Hinduism), Mohinder Singh Chana (Sikhism).

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

Group C: Teachers' Associations: Tara Askew, Jo Colledge, Sarah Hodgson.

Group D: North Yorkshire Council: Cllr Alyson Baker (Chair), Cllr Janet Jefferson, Cllr Simon Myers, Cllr Annabel Wilkinson.

Apologies: Cllr Robert Heseltine, Chris Devanny, David Haddock and Nasr Moussa Emam, and Heather Russel (Senior Education Advisor).

** denotes in person attendance.*

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

59 Election of Chair and Vice Chair for the 2024-25 Academic Year

The Clerk introduced the election of the Chair and Vice-Chair for the 2024-25 academic year. Members were advised that only nominations received were for the incumbents, Cllr Alyson Baker as Chair, and Sarah Beveridge as Vice Chair.

With the assent of the meeting, Cllr Baker and Sarah Beveridge accepted the nominations.

Cllr Alyson Baker in the chair

60 Welcome and Announcements

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting. Members were thanked for their recent efforts in completing the School Website Audit, and asked those who had not yet done so to complete and submit their responses. The Chair reported that she had recently delivered a talk at Northallerton Methodist Church, which had been received positively and proved a useful opportunity to inform communities of the work of the SACRE. The current vacancies on the SACRE were highlighted, and it was agreed that further work would be undertaken to attempt to fill these.

61 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Nasr Moussa Emam and Chris Devanny (Group A), Cllr Robert Heseltine (Group D), and Heather Russell (Senior Education Advisor).

62 Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 April 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 April 2024 were agreed as an accurate record.

63 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

64 Public Participation

There were no public questions or statements.

65 Member Presentation by Abhijeet Kulkarni

As Nasr Moussa Emam had given his apologies, Abhijeet Kulkarni delivered a presentation on Hinduism instead of the planned presentation on the agenda.

The presentation set out the history of Hinduism and its main tenets, focussing on the underlying principles while also setting out the lived experience of its members. The *Vedas* was highlighted as the Sanskrit texts which form the oldest body of writings upon which Hinduism is based. The presentation also outlined the four *Puruṣārthas*, or aims for living, and outlined the Hindu belief that the combination of all consciousnesses made up a supreme divine consciousness, and the division of society into different roles based on the needs of society and people's ability to contribute. The division of life into four *Āśramas* or life stages was summarised, with people moving from student, to householder, to retired, and finally to renunciation. In some ways there were parallels between the Hindu religion and the British constitution, since rather than an authoritative, explicit written statement of belief, Hinduism was founded on a range of texts and teachings from different sources which had accumulated over time, and were interpreted and added to by custom. It was particularly highlighted that the principles of Hinduism was that if everyone contributed to society and carried out their duties, society would function better for everyone.

The Chair thanked Abhijeet Kulkarni for an interesting and informative presentation, particularly at such short notice. It was agreed that Nasr Moussa Emam would deliver his presentation at the next meeting, and the Clerk would liaise with volunteers to arrange presentations at future meetings.

Agreed: That the presentation be noted, and Abhijeet Kulkarni be thanked for his time in preparing and delivering it.

66 Update by the Professional Religious Education Adviser

The Professional RE Advisor presented the report. It was noted that following the Agreed Syllabus Launch in June 2024, there was an increased attendance at training sessions by schools. Recent sessions had focussed on implementation of the Agreed Syllabus, with a workbook and suggested questions provided for learners. The training package for the autumn term was to focus on visits, with updated visits guidance included in the new Agreed Syllabus. Other workshops on RE curriculum and RE leadership, and the offering for schools was under continual review.

Nationally, exam data were not yet available for North Yorkshire schools, but the papers included press releases on GCSE and A-level data from the subject association. A-level entries were in decline, but the support for training was under continual review to help support new entrants. Data from the recent workforce survey was also not yet available, but it was anticipated that an update on this would be brought to the December 2024 meeting.

In response to questions from the SACRE:

- a) it was highlighted that the training was virtual, and available for SACRE members to attend,
- b) the supplementary documents section of the Agreed Syllabus included information on the use of appropriate artifacts which had been prepared by the RE Council,
- c) there were no data currently available on Higher Level Teaching Assistants using PPA time to teach RE, but that this would be asked in this year's annual schools questionnaire,
- d) the Ofsted report was concerning, showing shortfalls in the curriculum, its delivery, and the timescales. The National Content Standard for RE for England set out a national framework for standards, but would have particular significance given the Curriculum and Assessment Review announced by the government in July 2024.

Agreed: That the report be noted.

67 Update by the Local Authority

The Principal Education Advisor, Monitoring presented the report. The positive SACRE attendance at the Agreed Syllabus Launch event was highlighted, with ten members taking part. The Local Authority was continuing to provide resources to support the SACRE.

It was requested that the comments relating to RE and collective worship from recent Ofsted reports should include context on whether the comments were drawn from a short (1 day) or graded (2 days) inspection. It was agreed that this would be included in future updates. Members highlighted the fact that there was little information in the comments about the statutory obligation on collective Christian worship given its status as a legal requirement.

Agreed: That the report be noted.

68 Draft SACRE Annual Report - 2023-2024

The Principal Advisor, Monitoring presented the current draft annual report. Progress was ongoing, with further information and updates expected before returning to the December 2024 meeting for approval. Members discussed the progress on it, and the current vacancies were highlighted; it was agreed that an update on work to fill these would be included in the final version of the report.

Agreed: That the draft annual report be noted.

69 Proposed Amendments to the SACRE Constitution

The Clerk presented the report, highlighting the proposed changes to the constitution, which included an explicit statement of members' right to attend and participate virtually.

In response to questions from the committee, it was agreed that a reference to the updated virtual voting rights during meetings (at 8.2), be included in the section on voting (at 9.2) for clarity. It was agreed that where a formal vote was taking place in the future, such as the approval of the annual report, members should have their cameras on and be given the opportunity to indicate their vote clearly and visibly.

Agreed: That, subject to the amendments agreed during the debate, the new SACRE Constitution be approved.

70 Work Programme

The Clerk presented the updated work programme, highlighting ongoing work on the NASACRE Self-Assessment Toolkit and the School Website Audit. The proposed dates of the meetings on Tuesday 9 September and Tuesday 9 December 2025 were approved, but an alternative date would be sought for the meeting proposed for Tuesday 8 April 2025, as it fell during the school holiday.

Agreed: That the updated work programme be noted.

71 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting, on Tuesday 10 December at 16:00, was noted.