

# North Yorkshire Council

## North Yorkshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 30 September 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: Sarah Beveridge (Society of Friends), Hayden Cohen\* (Judaism), Abhijeet Kulkarni (Hinduism), Mohinder Singh Chana (Sikhism).

Group B: Church of England: Revd Claire Soderman.

Group C: Teachers' Associations: Mary Lou Byrne.

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

Apologies: Councillor Robert Heseltine, Simon Myers, Professor John Adams, Tara Askew, Tom Clayton, Chris Devanny, Sarah Hodgson, Nasr Moussa Emam and Lee Talbot.

*\*denotes in person attendance*

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### Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

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#### 103 Election of Chair and Vice Chair for the 2025-26 Academic Year

The Clerk introduced the election of the Chair and Vice-Chair for the 2025-26 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

#### 104 Welcome and Announcements

The Chair welcomed members to the first meeting of the academic year, expressing appreciation for their continued commitment to SACRE and its role in promoting leadership and understanding across diverse communities. Reference was made to the inclusion of the Constitution and Code of Conduct in the meeting papers, and to the new NASACRE Handbook. The Chair also acknowledged the significance of current religious observances in the Jewish calendar and recognised the longstanding contributions of Tara Askew (Group B) and Heather Russell (Senior Education Advisor) to SACRE, who had both left recently. The Chair expressed the thanks of SACRE for their work over the years.

#### 105 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Prof John Adams, Tom Clayton, and Chris Devanny (Group A); Lee Talbot (Group B); Councillor Robert Heseltine, and Councillor Simon Myers (Group D).

**106 Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 June 2025**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2025 were agreed as an accurate record.

**107 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**108 Public Participation**

There were no public questions or statements.

**109 Schools Presentation**

James Broxup delivered a presentation outlining the implementation of the updated RE syllabus at Escrick C of E Primary School, following the launch of the North Yorkshire Locally Agreed Syllabus in June 2024. He described a need for the school to strengthen disciplinary structure and personalisation. With support from colleagues and training, the school undertook a significant curriculum redesign.

The revised curriculum now incorporates “golden threads” across all year groups, with clearly defined themes such as practices and worship, festivals and celebrations, morality and values, community and belonging, and beliefs and sacred texts. Planning documents have been tailored to the school’s context, integrating substantive and disciplinary knowledge, progression mapping, and opportunities for personal knowledge.

The professional development gained through this process and the positive feedback received from staff, were highlighted. The early stages of the curriculum’s implementation were noted, with further work planned around spirituality and enrichment opportunities. Members expressed appreciation for the presentation and the collaborative approach taken, and welcomed future updates on its impact.

**Agreed:** That the presentation be noted, and James Broxup invited to attend the September 2026 meeting of SACRE to present an update reflecting on changes over the intervening year.

**110 Update by the Professional Religious Education Adviser**

The Professional RE Adviser presented a report summarising key developments in since the previous meeting. Information from the June 2025 meeting was carried forward to highlight ongoing training and support, including the continuation of RE Networks and the re-running of the Primary RE Leadership course, with a focus on curriculum development. The SACRE newsletter was noted, and members were invited to contribute. Commentary from RE organisations was included in the report, reflecting both concerns and celebrations within the sector. Recent updates to Ofsted toolkits were highlighted, including references to the statutory nature and quality of RE, as well as its contribution to wider personal development. These themes will be explored further in the autumn term RE Network.

Members raised concerns about the sustainability of specialist RE teaching, noting the cyclical impact of recruitment challenges and the closure of theology departments in higher education. It was confirmed that annual workforce data, once received, would support local monitoring of specialist and non-specialist provision, particularly in secondary schools. The importance of subject knowledge support and national lobbying was emphasised, with reference to the work of the RE Council and affiliated organisations in influencing curriculum policy and public understanding. Local initiatives, including teacher networks and leadership training, were highlighted as valuable support

mechanisms. Clarification was sought on the scope of lobbying activity and its alignment with the curriculum and assessment review.

**Agreed:** That the update be noted.

#### **111 Update by the Local Authority**

An update was provided by the Local Authority outlining key developments since the previous SACRE meeting. Members were informed of progress in communication and resourcing, including the publication of the SACRE newsletter and the drafting of the Annual SACRE Report. Updates were given on support for senior leaders and governors, with continued liaison through the School Improvement team. The Local Authority confirmed that the relevant pages on CYPS-info had undergone their annual review, and Ofsted inspection outcomes were summarised, with commentary on RE and collective worship provision across a range of school types. SACRE's remit in relation to curriculum and worship was clarified in the context of inspection findings.

Members noted the departure of Heather Russell and welcomed Stuart Anslow, a former SACRE member and headteacher, who will pick up the role of SACRE Support Officer. Inspection outcomes were discussed, with 26 additional reports received since the last meeting. The overall picture was described as positive, with only one school receiving a comment relating to weaknesses within pupils' recall of knowledge of other faiths and cultures. It was clarified that the school had received 'requires improvement' judgements applied across all categories, with RE not specifically singled out. Members welcomed the positive feedback and noted the importance of continued monitoring.

**Agreed:** That the report be noted.

#### **112 Draft SACRE Annual Report - 2024-25**

Members received the draft SACRE Annual Report for review, with final approval scheduled for the December meeting. It was noted that the report includes updated data from 2024, though Key Stage 4 and 5 data for 2025 may be unavailable due to anticipated delays. The inclusion of findings from the annual teacher survey and the repeat of the biennial 'Growing Up in North Yorkshire' 2024 survey data (which would be updated in the 2026-26 report) were highlighted. Members welcomed the addition of photographs, though a correction was noted regarding image placement under the collective worship section. The current Development Plan, included as an appendix, will be replaced in the next report cycle. Members discussed ongoing challenges with data availability, particularly from examination boards.

The Chair expressed thanks for the work of officers in the School Improvement and Design Teams for helping prepare the draft.

**Agreed:** That the draft report be noted, and a final version brought to the December meeting for approval.

#### **113 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.

The importance of developing a visits framework was discussed, with members wishing to work towards combining an in-person meeting with a visit to a school in June 2026. It was reported that, pending the approval of the dates of the 2025-2026 calendar of meetings, planning could begin for that visit in the next few weeks. The need to work closely with a host school to ensure the supportive and collaborative aims of any visit was also emphasised. It was agreed that the next Mid Cycle Briefing would discuss

specific arrangements for this visit. Members also noted a correction required to remove a reference to “NYCC”, to be changed to “NYC”.

**Agreed:** That the comments be noted.

**114 Dates of meetings for the 2025-26 Academic Year**

Members considered the proposed dates of meetings to be held, up to April 2027.

**Agreed:** That the dates be confirmed and calendar invites sent to members.

**114a SACRE Code of Conduct and Constitution**

The Chair drew SACRE’s attention to the Code of Conduct, Constitution, and new NASACRE handbook which had been circulated for information. It was confirmed that the next meeting would include a training session on the NASACRE handbook, and members were requested to review it in detail ahead of the next meeting.

**Agreed:** That the reports be noted.