



BOROUGH OF POOLE STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

In a highly effective SACRE, “members will have a shared vision and understanding of their aims and purpose, and will seek to sustain their positive work in the light of changing needs and priorities. Meetings will be purposeful and focused on the major priorities for improvement in schools.

There will be a very effective partnership with the LA, and SACREs will be well supported by subject specialist advice, training and funding. They will be well informed about the quality and provision for RE in schools, and about wider LA and national priorities and developments. The process of reviewing, revising, implementing and evaluating the Locally Agreed Syllabus will be robust, ensuring that schools are well supported in their work.”

(SACREs and Self-evaluation – a guide, Ofsted, May 2005, HMI 2467)

1. THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK, RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1.1 Legal basis of Religious Education and Collective Worship in maintained schools

Every maintained school in England must provide a basic curriculum (RE, Sex Education and the National Curriculum). This includes provision for RE for all registered pupils at the school (including those in the sixth form), except those withdrawn by their parents (or withdrawing themselves if they are aged 18 or over) in accordance with Schedule 19 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

Every maintained school in England must also provide a daily act of Collective Worship for all pupils. This must be of a broadly Christian character. It is the responsibility of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) to ensure that schools meet their statutory duty in this area.

The key document in determining the teaching of RE is the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Schools designated as having a religious character are free to make their own decisions in preparing their syllabus. Local Authorities must ensure that the Agreed Syllabus for their area is consistent with Section 375 of the Education Act 1996, which requires the Syllabus to reflect that the religious traditions of Great Britain are in the main Christian, whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain.

1.2 The Agreed Syllabus

The locally Agreed Syllabus is a statutory syllabus of RE prepared under Schedule 31 to the Education Act 1996 and adopted by the LA under that schedule. It must be followed in maintained schools without a designated denomination. Once adopted by the LA, the Agreed Syllabus sets out what pupils should be taught and can include the expected standards of pupils' performance at different stages. Every locally Agreed Syllabus must reflect that the religious traditions of Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain.

The law does not define what the principal religions represented in Great Britain are. Agreed Syllabus Conferences (ASC) can decide which are the principal religions represented in Great Britain, other than Christianity, to be included in their Agreed Syllabus.

Agreed Syllabuses in any community school and any foundation, voluntary-aided or voluntary-controlled school without a religious character cannot require RE to be provided by means of any catechism or formulary which is distinctive of a particular religious denomination.

This prohibition does not extend to the study of catechisms and formularies.

(Schools are not obliged to provide RE to pupils who are under compulsory school age (section 80(2)(a) of the Education Act 2002), although there are many instances of good practice where RE is taught to these pupils. Separate legislative provision on RE is made for maintained special schools. Regulations covering maintained special schools require them to ensure that, as far as practicable, every pupil receives RE).

2. THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE LA

2.1 Each LA must:

- establish a permanent body called a Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE). LAs must appoint representatives to each of four committees, representing respectively:
 - Group A:** Christian denominations and such other religions and religious denominations as, in the authority's opinion, will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area and the religions taught in the current RE syllabus
 - Group B:** the Church of England
 - Group C:** teacher associations
 - Group D:** the LA
- establish an occasional body called an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) to review the Agreed Syllabus for RE adopted by the LA. This may have common membership with the SACRE but is a separate entity and must therefore be separately convened
- fund and support a SACRE and an ASC in line with its statutory duty to constitute or convene each of these bodies and to enable them to carry out their statutory duties effectively
- institute a review of its Locally Agreed Syllabus within five years of the last review, and subsequently every five years after the completion of each further review
- appoint members of the committees represented on the ASC

- ensure that the composition of Group A on a SACRE and Committee A on an ASC is broadly representative of the proportionate strengths of the denominations and religions in the area. The statutory provisions recognise that there will be occasions when the interest of efficiency overrides the requirements for directly proportionate representation
- take all reasonable steps when appointing a person to be a member of a group on a SACRE or a committee of an ASC to represent any religion, denomination or association, to ensure the person appointed is representative of the religion, denomination or associations in question or that they support the main beliefs of that religion

To ensure that people being considered for appointment to SACREs and ASCs are representative, it is normal for LAs to seek nominations from the organisations that have a right of representation on each of the groups or committees. While LAs should seek nominations separately for membership of SACREs and ASCs, as these are separate organisations with different functions, they may request that consideration be given by nominating bodies to nominating the same individuals for membership of both the SACRE and the ASC. There is nothing restricting membership of the LA group (SACRE) or committee (ASC) to elected members. LAs are free to include senior LA officers or others whom they consider can appropriately represent the authority.

2.2 An LA may also:

- decide on matters to refer to its SACRE, including in particular methods of teaching, choice of teaching material and provision of teacher training.

3. POOLE SACRE

Poole SACRE will ensure that its membership is as inclusive as possible reflecting the priorities for RE and Collective Worship and for education more widely in the twenty-first century. Poole SACRE will ensure that the religions and beliefs of the local area are represented. Where no firm community exists for a said religion or belief then members appointed will be expected to support the main beliefs of that religion.

Poole SACRE may also include co-opted members who are not members of any of the four groups. Members of a group may well wish to take into consideration the views of co-opted members before taking a vote.

Poole SACRE will make sure that its membership reflects, where possible, the breadth of study of religions and beliefs referred to in the non-statutory National Framework for Religious Education (the Framework) thus embodying a commitment to RE which is inclusive, broad and balanced. Poole SACRE has a commitment to inter-religious dialogue and community cohesion.

The meetings of SACRE shall be open to members of the public including duly accredited representatives of news media. SACRE shall not be authorised or required to disclose to the public confidential information as defined by paragraph 9 of the Religious Education (Meetings of Local Conferences and Councils) Regulations 1994.

3.1 The Role and responsibility of Poole SACRE

The broad role of a SACRE is to support the effective provision of RE and Collective Worship in schools in order to enrich the experience of RE and Worship for all pupils.

SACRE is responsible for the provision of advice to help the LA and governance boards to ensure that:

- all pupils in attendance at a state funded school shall receive their statutory entitlement to Religious Education
- all pupils in attendance at a state funded school shall receive their statutory entitlement to Collective Worship. This shall be in accordance with the law and shall be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character
- every state funded school provides a basic curriculum which includes provision for Religious Education for all registered pupils at the school alongside the National Curriculum
- Religious Education is taught in accordance with the Agreed Syllabus and that the Agreed Syllabus reflects the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain. VA schools follow Diocesan guidelines for Religious Education

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE

4.1 To meet its statutory responsibilities in full Poole SACRE must:

- consider whether any changes need to be made in the Agreed Syllabus or in the support offered to schools in implementation, to improve the quality of the RE and the learning of pupils
- offer advice concerning how an existing Agreed Syllabus can be interpreted so as to fit in with changes in wider education
- provide advice and support on the effective teaching of RE in accordance with the Locally Agreed Syllabus;
- advise the LA on standards in Religious Education in Poole schools in accordance with an Agreed Syllabus and on matters related to its functions as it may see fit
- provide advice on methods of teaching, the choice of teaching material and the provision of teacher training.
- provide advice on and monitor the quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education in Poole schools according to its Agreed Syllabus together with the overall effectiveness of the syllabus in state funded schools
- provide advice on and monitor the quality of Collective Worship in state funded schools within the Borough of Poole
- consider and decide on applications for determinations for RE and Collective Worship

The SACRE cannot do any of this unless there are clear arrangements to provide it with the information it needs concerning the up-to-date situation with regard to RE in the schools using the Agreed Syllabus. In Poole this will be done in partnership with its LA via the LA officer and with schools via Poole Schools Association.

It must also:

- publish an annual report on its work and on actions taken by its representative groups, specifying any matters on which it has advised the LA. It must broadly describe the nature of that advice, and set out reasons for offering advice on matters not referred to it by the LA
- send a copy of the report to the relevant body and meet in public unless confidential information would be disclosed
- advise the LA on its funding requirements to enable it to carry out its statutory duty effectively
- publish notice of the time and place of any meeting of SACRE shall be given by posting it at the offices of the LA 3 clear days at least before the meeting.
- prepare an agenda for each meeting.
- make copies of agendas and reports (if appropriate) of SACRE meetings available for inspection by members of the public at least 3 clear days before the meeting.
- make minutes of its meetings available for inspection at the LA's offices (so far as the minutes relate to the parts of meetings that were open to the public). There are also provisions about public access to the agenda and reports for meetings.

4.2 The Poole SACRE may also:

- require its LA to review the Agreed Syllabus. If after discussion a vote is to be taken on this matter the LA group is not entitled to cast a vote. A majority decision by the three other committees is sufficient
- decide to advise the LA on matters related to its functions and the LA can refer matters to its SACRE. These reciprocal powers emphasise the partnership
- have co-opted members who are not members of any of the four groups: such co-opted members may provide educational expertise, young people's views or religious and non-religious views that reflect a diverse multi-cultural society (*on any question to be decided by a SACRE, its constituent groups each have a single vote but co-opted members do not have a vote*)
- appoint members of the committees represented on SACRE to sit on the ASC
- ensure that the composition of group A on an ASC and committee A on a SACRE are representative of the principal religious traditions in the area and those taught in the current RE syllabus. The statutory provisions recognise that there will be occasions when the interest of efficiency overrides the requirement for directly proportionate representation.
- take all reasonable steps, when appointing a person to be a member of a committee on a SACRE or a group on an ASC, to ensure the person is representative of the religion, denomination or associations in question or that they support the main beliefs of that religion
- seek nominations separately for membership of SACRE and the ASC. SACRE can request that consideration be given to nominating the same individuals for membership of both the SACRE and the ASC. There is no statutory provision that limits membership of the LA group on (SACRE) or on an ASC committee. There is merit in considering including on SACRE, and an ASC, senior LA officers or others who may appropriately represent the LA and those who are responsible for funding
- invite people of expertise or special interests to attend on an occasional basis to add value to discussions and enrich the debates

5. THE COMPOSITION OF POOLE SACRE

SACRE shall consist of representative members, being 21 in total, appointed to the 4 committees A-D of the SACRE by Poole Borough Council as Local Authority (LA) for Poole as follows:

- In appointing representatives to SACRE the LA must take all reasonable steps to satisfy itself that the persons so appointed are true representatives of the denominations or associations as required.
- The LA shall ensure that all nominated places are filled.
- Where a member of SACRE cannot attend a meeting, temporary substitution is permitted but this must be a named person from a nominated list. These names must be notified to the Clerk to SACRE annually by the end of the academic year.
- These rules also apply to co-opted members who are not members of any committee.

5.1 Committee A (9 members in total)

The members of Committee A shall be representatives of such Christian and other religious denominations which reflect the principal traditions in the Borough of Poole not including the Church of England and shall consist of:

- one person of the Baha'i Faith
- one person of the Buddhist Faith
- one person of the Free Church Federal Council
- one person of the Hindu Faith
- one person of the Islamic Faith
- one person of the Jewish Faith
- one person of the Quaker Faith
- one person of the Roman Catholic Church
- one person of the Sikh Faith

5.2 Committee B (3 members in total)

The members of Committee B shall be representatives of the Church of England and shall consist of:

- 3 persons from the Salisbury Diocesan Board of Education

5.3 Committee C (6 members in total)

The members of Committee C shall be representatives of such Teachers' Associations as the LA think fit and shall consist of:

- at least one Headteacher from each of the primary and secondary phases nominated by Poole Headteachers via Poole Schools Association
- one teacher from Special Education

NB – In Poole the recognised teacher associations are NASUWT, NUT, ATL, ASCL, NAHT and VOICE.

5.4 Committee D (3 members in total)

The members of Committee D shall be representatives of the elected membership of the LA and shall consist of:

- 3 elected members appointed by the LA's nominated Committee

5.5 Co-opted Representatives

- SACRE shall have the power to co-opt up to 6 representatives to the Committees
- the term of office for co-opted members is usually 4 years
- SACRE must take reasonable steps to ensure that a co-opted member is a genuine representative of the organisation they pertain to represent.

5.6 Officer Representatives

- the LA's named officer and / or Religious Education Adviser shall attend SACRE meetings as observers or in an advisory capacity only and shall not vote or take part in the executive decision making of the SACRE
- the named officer and / or Religious Education Adviser shall be responsible for supporting the Chair in setting the Agenda for SACRE meetings in consultation with the Clerk to the SACRE
- a Clerk to the SACRE will be appointed by the LA's Legal and Democratic Service Unit and shall fulfil the duties as laid down in guidance issued by NASACRE

5.7 The Chair of SACRE

- the position of Chair of SACRE shall be held for a maximum term of up to three years.
- each Committee of the SACRE shall elect a Chair of that Committee on an annual or triennial basis depending upon circumstances.
- the Vice-Chair of SACRE shall be the Chair elect of SACRE for the term following expiry of the current Chairs term.

5.8 Term of Office

- the appointment of members of each committee will usually be for a period of one to four years when the authority may renew or discontinue the appointment.
- membership of each Committee will be reviewed every 4 years.

5.9 Frequency of Meetings

- SACRE meetings shall be held at least once a term at such time and place as SACRE shall determine and each meeting shall be of approximately 2 hours duration unless agreement is taken at the meeting to extend the meeting
- at one of the three meetings the annual report will be agreed
- the Committee A-D will meet as and when required but as necessary to discuss how the vote at the SACRE meeting of the Committee shall be cast
- any working group set up by SACRE shall meet as and when required

5.10 The Agenda

- the agenda of a meeting must give priority to items raised by the LA.
- the Poole SACRE Action Plan will be an agenda item for each meeting.
- members may, with three weeks notice, raise other matters within the terms of reference
- dates of meetings are set at least one year in advance
- SACRE can only advise the LA, it may not take independent action
- the annual report will cover a school year and will be agreed at an annual general meeting to be held in the Spring Term
- the annual report should then be distributed to all interested groups

5.11 Membership and Voting

- on any question of formal matters to be decided by the SACRE only the 4 representative groups on the SACRE shall be entitled to vote and each such group shall have a single vote
- committee D may not vote on a proposal to require the LA to review the Agreed Syllabus
- at least one member from each committee A,B,C and D must be present for a meeting to be quorate and decisions cannot be made unless there is at least one person present from each group to cast each group's single vote
- co opted members do not have a vote on issues requiring a formal vote, they are however, encouraged to take a full and active part in SACRE meetings
- decisions at each Committee meeting as to how to vote at a meeting of SACRE shall be determined by the majority of the meeting present and voting on the question provided that, in the case of equality of votes, the Chair of the meeting shall have a second or casting vote
- each Committee shall have one vote at a meeting of SACRE

5.12 Attendance at Meetings

- All members may claim travel expenses via the Clerk and agreed by the SACRE
- If members or co-opted members fail to attend meetings for a continuous period of twelve months SACRE may, at their discretion, follow this up and could recommend to the LA that these members are removed from office

5.13 Code of Conduct Guidelines for attendance at meetings

- respect the faith, belief and practice of those present.
listen to what other people have to say; everyone's contribution is relevant.
- comments should be addressed through the chair
- do not interrupt; wait for someone to finish speaking and give people a chance to respond
- be assertive and not aggressive
- accept differences of opinion and respect each other's views.
- do not use abusive or discriminatory language or say things that could hurt others
- try to encourage everyone in the group to participate fully by giving them a chance to speak and by making them feel comfortable and supported.
- maintain confidentiality when requested so that people may speak openly
- be clear when speaking, avoid using jargon and initials that make others feel excluded
- aim to have a discussion rather than an argument; share ideas, ask questions and follow on from what others are saying rather than making a speech.
- be aware of and be courteous to people around you
- keep mobile phones on silent unless in an emergency
- recognise that all present have a right to be respected for their individual beliefs
- those deliberately misrepresenting or disparaging other people's beliefs and practices will be asked to leave the meeting
- individual members not adhering to these guidelines may, at the discretion of the chair, be asked to leave the meeting

5.14 Removal of Representatives

- a member of SACRE may be removed from office if it is the opinion of SACRE that the member has persistently breached the guidance

- if it is in the collective opinion of SACRE that a committee member does not adhere to the guidance for meetings SACRE will inform the nominating body and has the right to request a replacement representative member
- a member of the SACRE who was appointed by the LA may be removed from membership if in the LA's opinion the member ceases to be representative of the religion, denomination or associations which he or she was appointed to represent or he or she ceases to be representative of the LA

6. Agreed Syllabus Conferences

6.1 Role and working of Agreed Syllabus Conferences

- every LA is required to establish and support an occasional body called an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC). Its role is to produce and recommend an Agreed Syllabus for RE which meets legal requirements and is educationally sound, and then review it every five years
- an ASC can specify what must be taught through the Locally Agreed Syllabus but it may not require schools to allocate particular time to RE in the curriculum. The guidance offered by the Framework provides a national benchmark for an ASC when revising its syllabus
- an ASC and any sub-committee it may appoint, must meet in public, subject to exceptions in relation to confidentiality. Each of the four committees of a conference must cast its single vote in favour of a recommendation that an Agreed Syllabus be adopted by the LA before the LA can adopt that syllabus.
- any sub-committee of an ASC must include at least one member of each of its constituent committees

6.2 Membership of an ASC

An ASC is required to be made up of four committees representing respectively:

- A Christian denominations and other religions and religious denominations
- B The Church of England
- C Teacher associations
- D The Local Authority

There is no provision for an ASC to include co-opted members, but this does not mean that advice cannot be sought beyond its membership. Some individuals may be invited to attend all meetings of the conference, and of committees of the conference, in order for their advice to be available to members of the ASC. For an ASC to work effectively and produce a syllabus, it is important that its membership is as inclusive as the law allows.

6.3 The nature of an Agreed Syllabus

The Locally Agreed Syllabus must meet statutory requirements and reflect a breadth and balance in RE, particularly in taking into account local characteristics and circumstances.

To ensure the effective promotion of high quality RE for pupils, it is recommended that an Agreed Syllabus should:

- provide a clear structure which users find easy to follow and which highlights the contribution of RE to the curriculum
- ensure that learning in RE has both continuity and progression.
- have clear statements about expected standards and assessment arrangements

- provide clear guidance about the process of learning which should underpin effective planning of pupils' learning in RE
- provide appropriate levels of challenge for pupils of differing ages and abilities; these should be progressive and demanding but realistic
- reflect curriculum developments nationally (such as the aims of the curriculum, the use of key concepts and ideas, the personal, learning and thinking skills) to ensure RE is part of a coherent curriculum for all pupils
- Syllabuses should enable schools to develop a balanced and inclusive approach to the organising of concepts, content, understanding, skills and attitudes

(The Non-Statutory Framework is currently the basis for the illustrative non-statutory programmes for RE set out by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) alongside the National Curriculum. Both the Framework and the programmes of study, provide guidance on designing a RE curriculum for the Agreed Syllabus and for programmes of RE in schools with a religious character. To ensure a consistent entitlement to breadth and richness in RE for all pupils, and adherence to a coherent national set of standards, it is recommended that ASCs should use the illustrative programmes of study published by the QCA, as the basis for their development of the local syllabus. The ASC can interpret those programmes of study in the light of local circumstances, and to select appropriate content and construct learning experiences.)

7. Working Groups

SACRE shall as and when required appoint Working Groups to advise and report back to SACRE on any issue within the Terms of Reference and shall meet as and when required.

8. Consultation Process

The Committees are required to consult with the groups that they represent on a regular basis. From time to time SACRE may, as and when appropriate, consult with parents and governance boards of state funded schools and shall make contact with the parents and governance boards via the school.

9. Alterations to the Constitution

Any proposal to alter the Constitution of SACRE shall be made at a meeting of SACRE and shall be approved only by a unanimous vote at the meeting. The proposal will be considered for adoption by the LA.

THIS CONSTITUTION was proposed to the LA for adoption as the Constitution of the Poole Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education at a meeting duly convened on

..... Chair signature