

Sefton Council



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

Annual Report 2023 - 2024

Table of contents

Section One: Introduction and the Work of SACRE

- Words from the Chair
- Overview
- Dates and content of meetings
- Priorities and Actions for 2023-24
- Self-evaluation
- Priorities for 2024-25
- Dates for 2024-25

Section Two: Statutory Responsibilities: Religious Education

- Local agreed syllabus
- Standards and monitoring
- Professional development and support
- Other information

Section Three: Statutory Responsibilities: Collective Worship

- Standards and monitoring
- Complaints and determinations
- Professional development and support
- Other information

Section Four: Links with other organisations

Section Five: Other areas of SACRE involvement

Section Six: Sefton SACRE arrangements

Section Seven: Advice to the Local Authority

Section One: Introduction and the Work of SACRE

Words from the Chair

I have great pleasure in presenting the Annual Report of the Sefton SACRE for 2023-24. We have continued our efforts to support schools and RE teachers throughout our borough to ensure that Sefton children receive a high-quality religious education.

This year, we remain steadfast in our commitment to fostering community cohesion through Religious Education. We believe that a well-structured RE syllabus, delivered by skilled and supported teachers, plays a vital role in helping children and young people work together for peace and harmony in an increasingly complex and diverse world.

We are delighted to have welcomed new members to our SACRE, increasing our diversity and representation. We look forward to expanding our membership further in 2024, ensuring that Sefton SACRE reflects the rich variety of perspectives within our community.

Our SACRE continues to emphasize the transformative outcomes of a high-quality Religious Education syllabus. These include:

- Developing critical thinking skills by encouraging students to think independently,
- Fostering understanding, empathy, and the ability to appreciate different perspectives,
- Guiding children to reflect on profound questions such as the meaning of life,
- Empowering pupils to articulate their personal beliefs and values while respecting others' rights to differ,
- Providing pupils with a broad understanding of a range of religions and worldviews, enabling them to develop their ideas, values, and identities.

In these challenging and turbulent times, fostering empathy, understanding, tolerance, and the ability to make sense of the world is more crucial than ever. These skills equip young people to navigate and thrive in our global community.

This year SACRE has increased its offer for CPD for teachers including a subject leader course and teaching and learning courses for teachers at Primary level. We continue to support the growing NATRE affiliated teacher network and have utilised the expertise of our members in developing subject knowledge for all.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all the Council Members, our dedicated staff, and our adviser Ian Ross. With their continued support, I am confident that Sefton SACRE will maintain its support and guidance to schools across the borough. Together, we will advance our shared mission of nurturing respectful, thoughtful, and well-rounded young citizens.

Diane Roscoe
Chair of Sefton SACRE 2023-2024

Overview

This annual report is prepared by Sefton SACRE. SACRE as a body is required to advise the Local Authority on matters relating to Religious Education and Collective Worship. This report provides a picture of the support given for Religious Education and Collective Worship during 2023-2024. The report is a public document which is also sent to the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE) and the Department for Education.

For further information on the report or on RE and Collective Worship in Sefton, contact Ian Ross at ian@penninelearning.com

For information on SACRE please contact the clerk, Jane McNeice at Jane.McNeice@sefton.gov.uk

Dates and content of meetings

There were four meetings of Sefton SACRE during the year 2023-24 held at the Professional Development Centre, Formby on 28th September 2023, 30th November 2023, 13th March 2024 and 27th June 2024. Meetings are open to the public and minutes are also available on-line.

Diane Roscoe was appointed chair of SACRE in June 2023 and was ably supported by Natalie Ford as Vice Chair. As SACRE has been reconstituted, we have looked carefully at membership of different groups, and we are conscious that diversity in representation is needed including the range of faiths and beliefs in the area as well as working with Multi Academy Trusts.

As well as considering the general position of RE and collective worship in the borough, SACRE discussed the following issues at its meeting during the year:

- The Local Agreed syllabus and CPD implications for subject leaders and non-specialist teachers.
- Clarification of funding for Sefton SACRE responsibilities and activities.
- Review of provision for RE, including time allocation in all schools in the borough.
- Improving representation on SACRE from those groups currently under-represented.
- Completion of SACRE self-evaluation.
- Reviewing collective worship guidance for all schools in the borough.
- National Association of SACREs (NASACRE) – items of interest or action, including information from NASACRE conference and training for SACRE members.

SACRE Priorities and actions for 2023-24

Monitor the provision of RE and Collective Worship in all schools and identify priorities for support.

SACRE have made a start on this action, and it will need continue to be a priority to find the best models to work with in Sefton. A new working party will be set up in September 24 with the brief of analysing GCSE results, researching provision from school websites, reading and commenting on Ofsted reports and analysing the results of the workforce census data from the DfE. This will build a more comprehensive understanding of the needs of schools in the borough.

Provide effective support for coordinators and subject leaders through primary and secondary RE networks. Identification of training needs will take place through the annual survey and discussions at networks/ CPD events.

Primary and Secondary RE Networks have been set up and are linked to NATRE. We have also provided 3 one day courses for RE teachers at KS1, LKS2 and UKS2 including subject knowledge and teaching and learning strategies with models of how RE can be planned across a unit. This priority needs to continue including how we raise the profile of RE with senior leaders in both primary and secondary. The professional advisor is available for schools to contact for advice and support and there is some time available for face-to-face support.

Provide CPD for schools through middle leaders training (New Coordinator Course) and for teachers to develop subject knowledge and consistent planning of units of work.

A one-day course for coordinators in primary schools was successfully delivered in February 2024. This enabled coordinators who attended the course to design their RE curriculum and consider mapping of subject knowledge and concepts across year groups.

Develop a database of quality assured places to visit and visitors to enable schools to enhance the understanding of the lived experience of people of faith and no faith.

Work has begun on this list, though SACRE is conscious of ensuring high quality experiences and suggests schools access the information on visits and visitors through the RE Hubs Website, <https://www.re-hubs.uk> as named individuals/ organisations have been quality assured through this.

Continue collaborating with the national RE Hub and local NNWHub of SACREs.

The advisor and at least one member of SACRE regularly attend the NNWHub. Discussions at the hub meeting have ranged from working with the National RE Hubs and also syllabus provision.

Self-evaluation

During the year, Sefton SACRE completed a process of self-evaluation based on the NASACRE template. Arising from this the following areas future development were identified and will be built into the development plan for the next two years.

Section 1: Management of the SACRE and partnership with the LA and other key stakeholders

- Ensure SACRE plans are linked to other local work and projects and ensure these are costed on the development plan.
- Hold meetings in a variety of different places including schools and places of worship to raise the profile of SACRE.
- Continue to widen the diversity of SACRE membership.
- Consider how we tap into national projects and priorities and include these in our development plan.
- Continue data analysis to inform good practice and raise awareness of this in the council.
- Develop links with interfaith organisations and also with school councils to gain the views of stakeholders.
- Actively seek Roman Catholic representation.

Section 2. Standards and quality of provision of Religious Education

- Develop communications with all stakeholders to support people entitlement.
- Continue to analyse data and present this in the annual report.
- Investigate how SACRE can evaluate quality of teaching or learning and share this good practice.
- Continue developing communication strategies including newsletter.
- Continue developing good relationships with academies and local trusts.

Section 3: The effectiveness of the locally agreed syllabus

- To recommend to the LA that the syllabus is extended for a further year in order to evaluate its effectiveness and what needs changing

Section 4. Collective Worship

- Continue good communication of collective worship to schools.
- Provide advice and support for collective worship coordinators through newsletter and CPD opportunities.
- Provide training for SACRE members on determinations.

Section 5: Contribution of SACRE to promoting cohesion across the community

- Seek further representation on SACRE of different faith groups.
- Be better informed of the faith makeup of the local authority especially ward level information.
- Develop close working links with communities department and actively take part in community cohesion events.

Further details of the self-evaluation or the development plan can be obtained via the clerk to SACRE.

Meetings for 2024-25

Meetings for the 2024 – 2025 academic year have been provisionally set for 26th September 2024, 4th December 2024, 17th March 2025 and 24th June 2025. Themes for these meetings have been agreed as part of the SACRE Work Plan. For more information contact the clerk, Jane McNeice at Jane.McNeice@sefton.gov.uk

Priorities for 2024 - 25

Monitor the provision of RE and Collective Worship in all schools and identify priorities for support through data analysis of Ofsted reports, Workforce census data from the DfE and from GCSE results.

Provide effective support for coordinators and subject leaders through primary and secondary RE networks. Identification of need to be requested at meetings of Primary Headteachers and Secondary Headteachers.

Provide CPD for schools through middle leaders training (New Coordinator Course) and for teachers to develop subject knowledge and consistent planning of units of work.

Develop close working links with the communities department and actively take part in community cohesion events.

Section Two: Statutory Responsibilities: Religious Education

The Local Agreed Syllabus

The Local Agreed Syllabus is the statutory curriculum for all maintained schools in the borough. This syllabus has been produced by RE Today Services and follows RE Council guidance laid out in 2013 as well as the Commission on RE Report 2018, the Ofsted Inspection Handbook 2019 and Ofsted Research Review. Other academies and free schools must teach RE according to the requirements of their trust deed or funding agreement. Although SACREs and local authorities do not have any responsibility or authority for their curriculum, it welcomes use of these resources by all local schools. A recent survey of the schools demonstrates that most schools and academies without a faith background have adopted the Sefton Agreed Syllabus.

Standards and Monitoring

Ofsted Reports Round Up

An analysis of Ofsted reports in the borough was carried during the period of this report. A search was included for any reference to RE/ SMSC and understanding faiths and beliefs. Schools that may require some support for RE and SMSC have been identified. There were many positive comments made in the reports:

- Pupils also have ample opportunities to learn about different cultures and religions. They visit local places of worship, attend festivals and enjoy learning about the culture, religion, food, music, geography and history of different countries.
- Pupils show tolerance and respect for people's different backgrounds.
- The school places a high priority on pupils' wider development. Pupils benefit from the support and encouragement that they receive to broaden their horizons. They learn about the wider world and how it may differ from the school's local community. For example, pupils learn about different faiths and customs. They are respectful to those who may be different to themselves. However, some pupils have developed misconceptions about some of the religious beliefs and traditions that they have learned about. The school has recently introduced a new aspect of its curriculum to improve pupils' understanding in this area. Despite this, these misunderstandings have not been spotted or corrected well enough by their teachers. This means that pupils do not know all that they should about different cultures and religions in society.

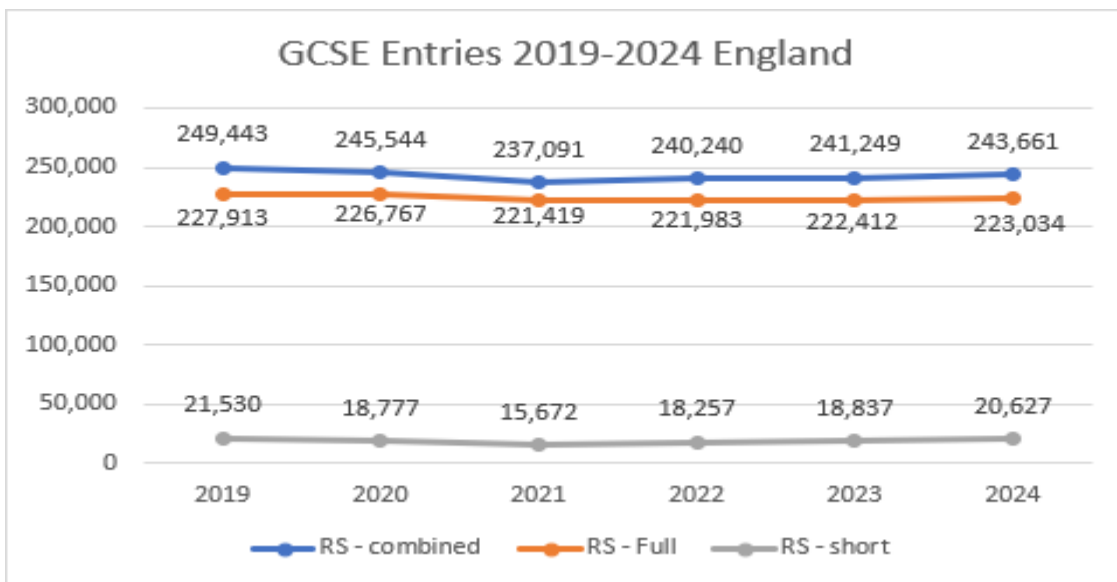
- Pupils embrace difference. They enjoy celebrating the increasingly wide range of cultures represented in the school. They learn to put themselves in the shoes of those less fortunate than themselves. They support global and local charities. They are very aware of the responsibilities that come with 'living sustainably and in solidarity with the poor'.
- Pupils grow into well-rounded youngsters due to the exemplary provision that is on offer to support their personal development. They learn how to stay safe, and they appreciate the differences that exist between other faiths and cultures.
- Pupils learn about cultures and religions that are different to their own and understand the importance of tolerance and respect.
- Through the stories and celebrations that staff carefully share, children learn to respect the differences between people and communities.
- The wider curriculum is exceptionally well-thought-out and considered. It supports pupils to develop their character, interests and talents to an impressive level. Pupils are extremely knowledgeable about fundamental British values. They talk in depth about how these impact on life in school and society. Visits and visitors are arranged to support pupils' understanding of different faiths and cultures. As a result, pupils are highly considerate of the views and beliefs of different groups of people.
- Pupils behave impeccably. They live and breathe the school's values in all that they say and do. Pupils are exceptionally respectful and tolerant of people from other faiths and cultures. They show a deep understanding of what it means to be active and responsible citizens in modern Britain.
- The school is committed to broadening pupils' horizons. It promotes pupils' personal development well. Pupils learn about different faiths and beliefs. They understand fundamental British values and they know to be tolerant and respectful.
- The curriculum to support pupils' personal development is highly aspirational and extremely well thought through. Pupils show a deep understanding of fundamental British values. For example, they spoke in great depth about how such values impact upon life in modern Britain. Pupils are extremely considerate of the views and beliefs of others. They celebrate differences and understand that everyone should be treated with respect.
- Pupils benefit from a wealth of carefully considered experiences which enhance their personal development. These opportunities prepare them exceptionally well for life in modern Britain. For example, pupils discuss and consider topical issues with deep understanding and empathy for others... Pupils fully respect the many differences that exist between themselves and others.
- The school places a strong focus on supporting pupils' emotional health and well-being. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their independence and resilience. They find out about different faiths and beliefs. They learn about democracy and what is right and wrong. They enjoy contributing to the wider community, including by raising money for charities.

- Pupils understand that everyone is unique. They learn that people have different families, backgrounds, cultures, and beliefs. Pupils are able to speak confidently and maturely about the importance of treating everyone equally. They benefit from being taught the skills of debate to support them to understand and respect other people’s viewpoints.

Examination results

GCSE and A Level results for 2024 were not available again at a local level when this report was published. This has meant that SACRE could not fulfil one of its core duties to monitor the effectiveness of RE in the borough.

National figures for GCSE entry remain steady, with a slight increase in both full course and short course uptake. When data has been released by the DfE we will be analysing this to inform our work in schools.



Analysis of school website research

Our analysis of secondary school website research overall shows a positive experience at KS3 with schools using and adapting from the local agreed syllabus. It appears however that some schools do not offer a comprehensive programme of Religious Education at KS4 for those students who do not take an examined route. Some schools combine core RE with other subjects such as citizenship and PSHE. This means that students are not receiving their full entitlement to the RE curriculum. As a SACRE we will be writing to all schools to remind them of the statutory nature of RE from age 5 to 18 and also of the benefits of a deep and meaningful RE to other aspects of personal development.

RE Quality Mark

Sefton SACRE encourages all schools to apply for the REQM mark. We will do this through courses, networks and newsletters. Additionally, Sefton schools are offered the opportunity for a review of their Religious Education with criteria based on the bronze REQM. It is hoped this can be a gateway to entry to the national quality mark.

Professional development and support for schools

General support

During the year the professional support services of Pennine Learning were commissioned. Pennine Learning is a small company specialising in RE and community cohesion. The team at Pennine Learning will provide 15 days support per year in total, though this is arranged as flexibly as possible to facilitate effective working with schools and others. They also support SACREs and RE in West Yorkshire and Greater Manchester, enabling appropriate collaboration and partnership.

Through the RE consultants, support will be available to schools, and used by teachers, in a number of ways, including:

- Maintenance of the syllabus and its schemes of work, including prompt response to queries or difficulties.
- Consultancy over specific or general RE issues, including advice about withdrawal from RE.
- Availability by phone, email or virtual meetings.
- Support for schools wishing to develop and improve RE following Ofsted inspections.

Training

The teachers' group on SACRE have set up network meeting for teachers of RE to meet and share good practice. These networks are affiliated to NATRE and are posted on the RE Hubs website. This will ensure that RE leaders are kept up to date with developments in RE nationally. The RE Consultant will also support these networks in advising what might be included e.g. work on subject knowledge provision mapping.

SACRE will in their work plan decide on other training and support for schools and this will be planned for and costed accordingly.



RE Reviews and SACRE RE Award

The review and award will be made available on line and face to face to as many schools as possible in the time available. A 'Deep Dive' in Religious Education is also offered to schools. This half-day session focuses on a review of curriculum provision, looking at its scope, rigour and sequencing. These opportunities will be promoted via RE networks and newsletters.

Other information

A range of guidance is available for all schools on a wide range of related areas, including:

- RE Policy
- Withdrawal from RE
- Collective Worship
- Celebrating Diversity
- Engaging with faith communities
- Sensitivity to Faith in Schools (Sharing the Journey)

Section Three: Statutory Responsibilities: Collective Worship

Standards and Monitoring of Collective Worship

Guidance is offered to schools and Ofsted reports are scrutinised to keep up to date with current issues and concerns. It has been difficult for schools to maintain an effective programme of collective worship since the pandemic and one of SACRE's key priorities in the coming year will be to remind, facilitate and support schools. This will include offering light-touch review conversations with practical suggestions of themes and thoughts for the week.

Complaints and determinations

There were no complaints made during the year to SACRE about Collective Worship. There is no determination to vary statutory requirements in a maintained school in Sefton. The process for applying for a determination has been agreed in the period of this report. Responsibility for determinations in English academies and free schools rest with the Schools Funding Agency.

Professional development and support for schools

Through the consultant, SACRE is always ready to advise or support schools on request. It has been noted that some SACRE members are well-placed to support collective worship in schools and opportunities for discussion about this will be included on the agenda in 2024-25. A half-day course on planning for collective worship/ inclusive assemblies may be offered in spring 25 to aid schools in developing an effective and inspiring programme. It is hoped that SACRE members will become more involved in practical support and monitoring. These questions may be helpful to SACRE members in reflecting on the value and effectiveness of collective worship in school:

1. Collective: How does the assembly celebrate and promote a sense of community within the whole school (or group)?
2. Educational: Is there a clear aim and focus, with appropriate learning? Does it engage and interest pupils and staff?
3. Spiritual: How does the assembly nurture pupils' awareness of their beliefs and values - and those of others (including non-religious beliefs)? How does it develop a sense of the meaning, purpose and value in their lives?
4. Reflective: Is there space and opportunity for thoughtful reflection, in the assembly or as a follow up? If prayers are used do these allow for different approaches and responses?
5. Inclusive: How does the assembly programme develop understanding of different perspectives and cultures? How does it promote values of tolerance, diversity and equality?
6. Responsive: How did pupils respond and participate?

Other information

Parents have a statutory right to withdraw their children from collective worship. Guidance on good practice and protocols for withdrawal is available to schools; consultants are available if further support is needed. SACRE recognises parents' legal rights but hopes all children will be enabled to receive stimulating and balanced RE as part of their entitlement to a broad curriculum. Guidance is also provided to schools in fulfilling statutory obligations over collective worship and promoting good SMSC development.

This year SACRE has also produced suggested themes, thoughts for the week and a calendar of festivals for schools in order to help them plan for inclusive collective worship throughout the year.

Section Four: Links with other organisations

SACRE has developed active links with the following organisations:

- National Association of SACREs (NASACRE)
- The Association of RE Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants (AREIAC)
- Local faith organisations and interfaith groups
- Sefton School Improvement Service
- RE Today Services and NATRE
- The North West Hub of SACREs
- National RE Hubs

Section Five: Other areas of involvement

In October 2023 SACRE working with the Board of Deputies hosted the Jewish Living Experience exhibition. This is an educational experience on understanding Judaism, featuring interactive exhibits and meeting people from the Jewish community.

The exhibition was held at the Professional Development Centre and was well attended by schools across the borough. A teacher training event was supported by Anna Silver from the Board of Deputies, and this was well attended with about 30 teachers and senior leaders present.

Section Six: Sefton SACRE arrangements

Sefton MBC funds the operation of SACRE by contracting its consultants, providing a clerk and supporting its work through links with senior education officers.

SACRE membership includes representatives from all four constituent committees.

Group A	Faith and belief communities except for the Church of England
Group B	Anglican representatives
Group C	Teachers and schools
Group D	Sefton MBC

Membership and attendance for 2023-24 was as follows:

		Attendance
Buddhist	Vacancy	0
Hindu	Bina Shukla	1
Jewish	Gillian Moonman	4
Muslim	Vacancy	0
Sikh	Vacancy	0
Humanist	Nick Senior	4
<i>Bah'ai</i>	Vacancy	0
Christian denominations (Methodist)	Vacancy	0
Christian denominations (Orthodox)	Vacancy	0
Christian denominations (RC)	Vacancy	0
Christian denominations (Pentecostal)	Vacancy	0
Christian denominations (Quaker)	Vacancy	0
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints	Vacancy	0
Christian denominations (Baptist)	Daniel Parkes	2
Christian denominations	Vacancy	0
Church of England	Sue Sullivan (Left July 2024)	4
Church of England	Andrew Norcross	4
Church of England	Vacancy	0
Church of England	Vacancy	0
Church of England	Vacancy	0
Teachers associations	Lauren Wood	2
Teachers associations	Natalie Ford (Vice Chair) Left June 2024	2
Teachers associations	Sefiah Crato	2
Teachers associations	Kate McCann	1

Headteacher Primary	Ruth Baldwin (co-opted)	0
Headteacher Primary	Paul Swift	0
Headteacher Primary Academy	Sarah Knipe	3
Headteacher Secondary Academy CEO	Ian Raikes	0
Headteacher Secondary Academy	Kate Campbell	1
Lydiate Learning Trust	Wendy Jack	1
Edge Hill University	Rebecca Johnson (Left July 2024)	1
Local authority	Diane Roscoe (Chair)	4
Local authority	Janet Grace	2
Local authority	Jacqui Patterson	3
Local authority	Veronica Webster	0
Local Authority	Carla Thomas	0
Local Authority	James Hansen (Vice Chair from September 2024)	0
Local Authority	Carol Richards	0
Local Authority	Gareth Lloyd-Johnson	0
Local Authority	Dominic McNabb	0

SACRE needs to ensure there continues to be consistent attendance and needs more teacher representatives. Contacts with partners, such as HE providers and the Diocese of Liverpool should be developed.

Training is provided by NASACRE and offered to SACRE members both locally and through the NASACRE webinars.

Section Seven: Advice to the Local authority

The following advice is given by SACRE to the local authority:

1. To review the funding of SACRE to ensure it is in line with national recommendations and good practice.
2. To review the membership of SACRE to ensure it reflects the breadth and diversity of the borough in terms of faiths and beliefs and school structures.
3. To investigate the provision of quality teaching of RE at Key Stage Four for the non-examined students.
4. To provide opportunities for SACRE to work with other key areas of the Local Authority including the Communities team in order to support community cohesion.

No appendices are attached to this report; all the relevant information is contained within the main body. However, any further information can be requested via the clerk, Jane McNeice at Jane.McNeice@sefton.gov.uk