

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION & AGREED SYLLABUS CONFERENCE CONSTITUTION

Glossary:

Act	Education Act 1996
Agreed Syllabus	The agreed syllabus for RE adopted by the Local Authority Agreed Syllabus Conference
Clerk	The person appointed in accordance with the Act.
Committee A, B, C or D	Shall mean the respective committees as described in the Act.0
Local Authority Officer	The person designated by the Local Authority Officer to attend meetings
NASACRE	National Association of Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education
SACRE Adviser	The person contracted by the Local Authority to provide advice to SACRE on RE teaching and related matters.
RE	Religious Education
SACRE	The Northamptonshire Standing Advisory Council on
Representative Members	The individuals appointed to the SACRE Committee or ASC as the context requires
SACRE Committees	A,B,C,D to represent relevant groups
Local Authorities	North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council

THE CONSTITUTION

The Local Authorities have a duty to establish a permanent body known as the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education for Northamptonshire (“SACRE”) in accordance with the 1996 Education Act.

The Local Authorities have a duty to establish an occasional body known as an Agreed Syllabus Conference (“ASC”) to review an Agreed Syllabus in accordance with the Act. This document sets out how the SACRE and the ASC will operate, their membership and composition, the procedures both bodies will follow and their decision-making structures. The aim is to ensure that both SACRE and the ASC operate efficiently, transparently and are fully accountable to the public.

The aims and objectives of SACRE

The broad role of the SACRE is to support the effective provision of RE and collective worship in schools in Northamptonshire and to enrich the experience of RE and collective worship for all pupils. North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council and the SACRE Committee recognise the changing landscape of our schools and the diversity of the type of schools. SACRE will endeavour to work with all schools within our County whatever their designation for the benefit of our children and young people and the local community within which they reside.

Approved: Feb 2021

The SACRE must comply with its statutory obligations as set out in the Act and shall advise the Local Authority on matters connected with:

- RE to be given in accordance with the Agreed Syllabus; and
- Religious worship in community schools or in foundation schools which do not have a religious character
- Following a referral from the Local Authority for such advice or otherwise as the SACRE sees fit;
- Monitor the provision and quality of RE taught according to the Agreed Syllabus together with the overall effectiveness of the syllabus;
- Provide advice and support on the effective teaching of RE, the choice of teaching materials for RE and the provision of teacher training;
- Upon receipt of an application from a Head teacher of a community, foundation or controlled school, the SACRE shall determine whether the requirement for Christian collective worship should apply to that school or any class or description of pupils at that school
- Review any determinations made by SACRE on receipt of an application for such a review.

1. SACRE

1.1 MEMBERSHIP & COMPOSITION OF SACRE

The SACRE shall consist of groups of persons appointed by the Local Authority to the following representative committees:-

Committee 'A' : shall comprise such Christian denominations (other than the Church of England) and other religious denominations, and worldviews as, in the opinion of the Local Authority will appropriately reflect the principal belief systems in the county of Northamptonshire.

The number of representatives appointed to Committee A shall, so far as consistent with the efficient discharge of the Committee A's functions, broadly reflect the Faiths and worldviews in Northamptonshire, including a representative from but not necessarily restricted to:

Baha'i
Buddhism
Christian non-conformism
Christian Orthodox
Church of the Latter Day Saints
Hinduism
Islam
Judaism
Non-Faith World View
Roman Catholicism
Religious Society of Friends
Sikhism

Other faith groups can apply in writing to the Chief Executive of the Local Authority to be considered for membership and endorsed at the next SACRE Meeting.

Committee 'B' : The Church of England
The Diocesan Boards of Education for Peterborough Diocese should nominate these representatives. A maximum of Four (4) representatives.

Committee 'C' : Such associations representing teachers, Teaching Assistants (TA's) and Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTA's) as, in the opinion of the Local Authority, ought, having regard to the circumstances of the county of Northamptonshire, to be represented.

Committee 'D' : The Local Authority (those appointed should represent the political balance of the Local Authority). The Local Authority should nominate its representatives using its established procedures for appointments. Councillors only

A maximum of Four (4) representatives reflecting the political balance of elected members of the Local Authority

And together the committees shall be known as "the SACRE Committees".

The membership of the SACRE shall be reviewed annually by the Local Authority.

Approved: Feb 2021

The Representative Members to be appointed by the Local Authority to each SACRE Committee shall be nominated in accordance with Appendix A.

2. TERMS OF OFFICE OF REPRESENTATIVE MEMBERS OF SACRE

Member behaviour and expectations: Representative Members are expected to act and behave in accordance with the principles and spirit of the Local Authority's Code of Conduct for elected members. A Representative acts as conduit of information/messages from SACRE to their group as well as bringing messages/questions to the SACRE which would be reflected in the minutes.

A Representative Member appointed by the Local Authority to a SACRE Committee may be removed from membership by the Local Authority if:

- in the opinion of the Local Authority, the Representative Member ceases to be representative of the religion, denomination or associates which he/she was appointed to represent in relation to Committees A to C or ceases to be representative of the Local Authority in relation to Committee D; or
- the Local Authority may remove any Representative Member or co-opted member who fails to act and behave according to the principles and spirit of the Local Authority's Code of Conduct for elected members. This can be found on the [Councillors and Committees web pages](#)

Length of office: A Representative Member shall hold office until they resign or they are removed from his/her appointment. A Representative Member may resign at any time.

Dealing with vacancies: Where (for any reason) there is a vacancy for a Representative Member on a SACRE Committee the Local Authority shall ensure a replacement Representative Member is appointed to the relevant Committee as soon as possible.

Declaring an interest: When appointed Representative Members must declare any interests at each meeting, whether personal or prejudicial. It is their responsibility to update the record as necessary.

Where a Representative Member has a prejudicial interest, that interest must be declared at the start of any meeting where a relevant matter falls to be considered by the SACRE and the Representative Member must withdraw from that meeting prior to any discussion of the relevant item on the agenda and take no part in any vote on that agenda item.

Failure to attend: Representative Members or co-opted members who fail to attend three consecutive meetings of SACRE without a satisfactory explanation may be removed from a SACRE Committee by the Local Authority in consultation with SACRE.

3. SACRE COMMITTEES (A, B, C, D)

SACRE committee members of each A – D are representative of the group faith not acting as an individual.

Where SACRE Committees hold other meetings they will ensure that:

- Prior to any vote being cast by the SACRE Committee on an issue to be decided by SACRE, the SACRE Committee shall meet to appoint a Chair for that item and discuss that issue, unless members agree to waive this on a specific occasion.

Voting: Any decisions of the SACRE Committee shall be determined by a simple majority vote in which each Representative Member of the Committee has one vote.

[Each SACRE Committee may make provision for the appointment of substitute members provided that any such substitute members are approved by the Local Authority]

4. CO-OPTED MEMBERS OF SACRE

Other persons may be appointed to SACRE by the Local Authority as non-voting co-opted members for such purposes and such length of time as SACRE shall decide. Co-opted members may resign at any time or may be removed at any time by the SACRE or the Local Authority.

5. CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

A Chair and Vice-Chair of the SACRE shall be elected annually by the Representative Members of the SACRE at the first meeting to be held at AGM, normally September, each Representative Member having one vote. Nominations for chair and vice chair will be proposed and seconded within the SACRE meeting.

The Chair and Vice Chair will be appointed from Representative Members of the SACRE Committees. If there is more than one candidate, the Chair and Vice Chair shall be elected following a simple majority vote for each role. In the case of a tied vote, the previous Chair shall have a casting vote. Nominations will be proposed and seconded at the meeting.

Persons continuing to be members of the SACRE are eligible for re-appointment to the position of Chair or Vice Chair

In the absence of any nominations for the Chair, an executive group of substantive members or a rotating chair may be elected to lead SACRE.

6. SUB-GROUPS AND WORKING PARTIES

SACRE may establish task and finish working parties to consider specific issues relating to RE. Such working parties shall have an advisory capacity only and shall not be authorised to make decisions on behalf of SACRE. The terms of reference for any working party shall be prepared by SACRE.

SACRE shall appoint representatives to a working party and they may also appoint co-opted members or non-members with relevant expertise to such working parties.

Committees A, B or C may at any time require a review of any Agreed Syllabus for the time being adopted by the Local Authority. Each of the Committees concerned shall then have a single vote on the question of whether to require such a review.

7. REPORTING

The SACRE shall publish an Annual Report on the work and actions taken by SACRE in the preceding year. The annual report shall:

Approved: Feb 2021

- Specify any matters on which it has advised the Local Authority and shall include details of the nature of the advice given
- Where the SACRE has offered advice to the Local Authority on a matter without the Local Authority referring that matter to the SACRE, give the SACRE's reasons for offering advice on that matter
- Be made available to every school and NASACRE.
- Be agreed by the SACRE at a meeting at the first opportunity in the new academic year prior to publication

8. ADVANCED NOTICE OF ABSENCE

Any representative who is not able to attend must notify the Clerk/Chair of their absence in advance and name an alternative representative. Advance notice of absence should be given to the chair and clerk.

The Committee will accept an alternative named representative in their absence as an attendee for that meeting if notification is given in writing to the clerk in advance of the meeting.

9. MEETINGS

The SACRE shall meet at least once per academic term and such meetings shall be open to the public unless, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, confidential information or information exempt from public disclosure would be disclosed.

Whether information is confidential or exempt shall be determined in accordance with the Local Authority's Constitution for the time being in force.

One of the meetings convened shall be the annual general meeting (usually in September. The annual report will be presented and discussed in the spring term (to allow for GCSE data to be commented upon).

9.1 Notice of meetings

The Clerk to SACRE shall:

- Give written notice of the time and place of any meeting to the Representative Members at least five clear days before a meeting.
- Ensure at least five clear days' notice of a meeting is given to the public by publishing details on its webpage: [The Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education \(SACRE\)](#)

9.2 Agenda

The agenda for SACRE meetings, (with the exception of the first meeting of a newly constituted SACRE), will be determined by the Chair and the SACRE Adviser.

All members can request for an item to be on the agenda through the clerk. Matters for the agenda of any meeting shall be sent to the Clerk at least 10 days in advance of the meeting and the clerk will agree the agenda items with the Chair.

The Clerk will:

- Send the agenda, the draft minutes of the previous meeting and any associated reports to Representative Members 7 working days before the meeting.

- Arrange for the agenda, the draft minutes of the previous meeting (if not already available) and any associated reports to be published on SACRE's webpage and made available for inspection at the Local Authority's office at County Hall, Northampton at least five clear days before the meetings.

9.3 Quorum

Meetings of the SACRE shall be quorate if one representative from each Committee (A-D) is in attendance.

9.4 Voting Procedures in SACRE

Except as provided for the election of the Chair and Vice Chair, only the four SACRE Committees shall be entitled to a vote and each SACRE Committee shall have a single vote. Individual Representative Members cannot vote separately and co-opted members are not entitled to vote.

Issues shall be decided by a simple majority vote. In the event of a tie the Chair has the casting vote.

9.5 Minutes

Following a meeting of SACRE, draft minutes will be circulated by the Clerk to Representative Members within four weeks of the date of the meeting.

The Chair will sign the minutes of the proceedings at the next suitable meeting. The Chair will move that the minutes of the previous meeting be signed as a correct record. The only part of the minutes that can be discussed is their accuracy.

9.6 Conduct at Meetings

When a Representative Member speaks at a meeting of the SACRE s/he must address the meeting through the Chair.

If a Representative Member persistently disregards the ruling of the Chair by behaving improperly or offensively or deliberately obstructs business, the Chair may move that the Representative Member be not heard further. If seconded, the motion will be voted on without discussion.

If the Representative Member continues to behave improperly after a motion is carried, the Chair may move that either the Representative Member leaves the meeting or that the meeting is adjourned for a specified period. If seconded, the motion will be voted on without discussion.

If there is a general disturbance making orderly business impossible, the Chair may adjourn the meeting for as long as he/she thinks necessary.

If a member of the public wishes to speak at a meeting, they must contact the Chair before the start of the meeting and indicate the item they wish to speak on. The Chair may decide to ask for further information and to postpone the item until a future meeting. The Chair will determine whether and for how long the member of the public will be allowed to speak.

Approved: Feb 2021

If a member of the public interrupts proceedings, the Chair will warn the person concerned. If he/she continues to interrupt, the Chair will order his/her removal from the meeting room.

If there is a general disturbance in any part of the meeting room open to the public, the Chair may call for that part to be cleared.

Appendix B details the Northamptonshire Code of Conduct.

9.6 Validity of Proceedings

The validity of any proceedings of the SACRE or of any SACRE Committee shall not be affected by either:

- Any vacancy amongst Representative Members; and/or
- Any assertion that a Representative Member does not at the time represent the denomination or associations which he/she was appointed to represent

10. ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

The Local Authority shall provide a person to act as Clerk to the SACRE and accommodation for the meetings of the SACRE.

A local authority officer shall be entitled to be present throughout the proceedings of the SACRE and shall be entitled to give advice as s/he thinks appropriate.

11. DISPUTES AND COMPLAINTS

The SACRE is intended to be a collaborative, co-operative body and needs to ensure that no particular sector or member is unduly favoured. Problems and issues should normally be debated and resolved at the SACRE meetings. However, if parties feel that these have not been resolved, the following process should be followed to resolve disputes and minutes taken:

Stage 1: The parties who are in dispute meet with the Chair of the SACRE and the LA Officer who will assist in finding or recommending a solution.

Stage 2: A special meeting of the SACRE is convened, with papers prepared by the parties representing different views. The Chair and the LA Officer also prepare a paper offering possible options for resolution. If the problem is not resolved, the dispute is referred to Stage 3.

Stage 3: If the issue is not resolved then guidance or clarification will be sought from the relevant government department.

Complaints from members of the public will be handled by through the Local Authority's complaints procedure.

AGREED SYLLABUS CONFERENCE (ASC)

ROLE AND DUTIES OF THE ASC

The purpose of the ASC is to refresh and consider the Syllabus.

The Local Authority must convene an ASC:

- Where the SACRE Committees A, B or C have required a review of the Agreed Syllabus of the SACRE Constitution; or
- At least every five years.

MEMBERSHIP AND COMPOSITION OF ASC

The composition and membership of the ASC reflects the SACRE committee structure by seeking a representative from each SACRE committee (A-D) to join ASC.

- Christian denominations, other religions and world views (other than the Church of England) (Committee A). This group should reflect the variety of belief systems in Northamptonshire.
- Church of England (Committee B)
- Teachers, Teaching Assistants (TA's) and Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTA's) representatives from professional associations (Committee C)
- The Local Authority. (Committee D)

The ASC shall not formally appoint co-opted members to the ASC but may seek advice from external advisers who may attend any meetings of the ASC or the ASC Committees to include diversity of schools in Northamptonshire.

Representatives should be nominated by the appropriate local faith or belief group. In circumstances where this is not possible, representatives should be nominated by the appropriate national organisations, district, town or city committees, or by a senior member of a local faith community.

In some circumstances it may be appropriate to consult with more than one committee in order to receive a nomination (e.g. where there are no countywide committees)

In circumstances where faith or belief groups have countywide education committees, they should be the nominating group for SACRE/ASC members.

CHAIR

A Chair and Vice Chair will be elected for the life period of the ASC by the ASC Representative Members (from committees A-D) at the first meeting to be held, each Representative Member having one vote.

If there is more than one candidate, the Chair shall be elected following a simple majority vote for each role. In the case of a tied vote, the previous Chair shall have a casting vote.

ASC SUB-COMMITTEES

The ASC may establish sub-committee or 'task and finish' groups to consider specific issues relating to the Agreed Syllabus. Such sub-committees shall have an advisory capacity only and shall not be

authorised to make decisions on behalf of the ASC. The terms of reference for each sub-committee shall be prepared by the ASC.

Any sub-committees appointed by the ASC shall each include at least one member of each of the SACRE (A-D) Committees. The ASC may also appoint non-members in an advisory capacity to such sub-committees or task and finish groups.

FUNCTIONS OF THE ASC

The broad role of the ASC is to produce and recommend an Agreed Syllabus for RE which meets legal requirements and is educationally sound.

The ASC must comply with its statutory obligations.

The ASC shall consider or reconsider any Agreed Syllabus and may recommend to the Local Authority that the existing syllabus should be continued or can recommend that a new syllabus is adopted.

The ASC may specify what must be taught through the locally agreed syllabus and may give an indication of how much time their syllabus would require to help schools plan a teaching timetable.

MEETINGS

The ASC shall meet as required and such meetings shall be open to the public unless, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, confidential information or information exempt from public disclosure would be disclosed.

Whether information is confidential or exempt shall be determined in accordance with the Local Authority's Constitution.

VOTING PROCEDURES IN THE ASC

Only the four ASC Committees shall be entitled to a vote and each ASC Committee shall have a single vote. Individual ASC Representative Members cannot vote separately.

Any recommendation put forward by the ASC must be unanimous for the recommendation to be adopted by the Local Authority.

ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

Clerking will be provided by the Local Authority.

DISPUTES AND COMPLAINTS

The SACRE Constitution shall apply to the ASC save for any reference to the 'SACRE' shall be construed as a reference to the 'ASC'.

ALTERATIONS TO THE SACRE & ASC CONSTITUTION

Any proposal to alter the Constitution of the SACRE or the ASC shall be made at a meeting of the SACRE or the ASC (as the context requires) and shall be approved only by a unanimous vote at the meeting. The proposal will be considered for adoption by the Local Authority.

Appendix A

PRINCIPLES OF REPRESENTATION ON NORTHAMPTONSHIRE SACRE

The SACRE comprises four groups of representative members. These are:

- Christian denominations, other religions and world views (other than the Church of England) (Committee A)
- Church of England (Committee B)
- Teachers, Teaching Assistants (TA's) and Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTA's) representatives from professional associations (Committee C)
- The Local Authority. (Committee D)

The following principles of representation shall be applied to the following groups:

Committee A - Christian denominations, other religions and world views (other than the Church of England)

This group should reflect the variety of belief systems in Northamptonshire. Representatives should have the support of their particular community in Northamptonshire.

Committee B - Church of England

The Diocesan Boards of Education for Peterborough Diocese should nominate these representatives.

Committee C - Teacher Representatives

Such associations representing teachers, TA's and HLTA's as, in the opinion of the Local Authority, ought, having regard to the circumstances of the county of Northamptonshire, to be represented.

Committee D - The Local Authority

The Local Authority should nominate its representatives using its established procedures for appointments.

Nomination Process:

The representatives should, as far as possible, be nominated by the appropriate local faith or belief group. In circumstances where this is not possible, representatives should be nominated by the appropriate national organisations, district, town or city committees, or by a senior member of a local faith community.

In some circumstances it may be appropriate to consult with more than one committee in order to receive a nomination (eg. where there are no countywide committees)

In circumstances where faith or belief groups have countywide education committees, they should be the nominating group for SACRE members.

Individuals to be nominated as Representative Members for each SACRE Committee shall meet the following requirements:

The individual should email or write to the Clerk, expressing their interest and outlining their reasons for wanting to join SACRE.

New members will not require references but their letter of nomination would require their organisation to state they know of nothing to prejudice his/her position as a potential member of SACRE (i.e. criminal record).

New members should give a short presentation to SACRE about their reasons and motivation for joining SACRE. At this time they will be asked, so that it can be minuted, whether they agree and support the statutory duties of SACRE as set out in the Education Act 1996 and in the constitution.

Next Steps

Following the presentation by a new member to SACRE as to his/her reasons for joining SACRE, SACRE will approve or refuse the application. The Clerk or the SACRE Adviser will inform the Local Authority of SACRE's recommendation for ratification by the Local Authority.

Following ratification of SACRE's recommendation, the individual will either be appointed to the relevant SACRE Committee or be denied membership to SACRE by the Local Authority.