
DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
ANNUAL SACRE REPORT – ACADEMIC YEARS 2011/12, 2012/13, 2013/14 ,
2014/15 AND 2015/16

Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)

Legal Requirement for Religious Education

1. 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includes provision for RE for all registered pupils at the school (including those in the sixth form), except for those withdrawn by their parents (or withdrawing themselves if they are aged 18 or over) in accordance with Schedule 19 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.
2. The key document in determining the teaching of RE is the locally agreed syllabus within the Local Authority (LA), although schools designated as having a religious character are free to make their own decisions in preparing their syllabuses

The Duties of SACRE

3. There is a legal requirement on all Local Authorities to establish a 'Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education' (SACRE). A SACRE's main duty is to advise the Local Authority on matters connected with the teaching of Religious Education and Collective Worship.
4. SACRE can advise the Authority to review its Agreed Syllabus and can recommend that particular teaching methods, materials and resources are considered for use in Religious Education.
5. A SACRE may also consider any application from Head Teachers that the requirement for Christian collective worship should not apply to a particular school or class of pupils within that school.

Membership of SACRE

6. The membership of SACRE consists of four representative groups (or committees) and co-opted members. The membership below is at the start of the Academic Year 2011/12 and any subsequent changes have been highlighted:

Representing Darlington Borough Council

- Councillor Cyndi Hughes, Cabinet Member with Children and Young People Portfolio
- Councillor C Taylor, Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
- Councillor I Galletley, Opposition Member
- Councillor Curry, Liberal Democrat Member

Representing Church of England

- Reverend P. Baker
- Martin Stand
- Beth Miller

Representing Other Faith Groups

- Chief Inspector C Reeves, Grange Road Baptist Church
- Miss. C. O'Neill, Roman Catholic Church
- Morvyn Sanders, Methodist Church
- Reverend D. Gibson, Assemblies of God Pentecostal Church
- Naomi Shaw, Hebrew Congregation
- Dr. M.A. Quader, Muslim Community/Islamic Society of Darlington
- Dr. N. Thakur, Hindu Community
- Kelsang Dragden, The Atisha Kadampa Buddhist Centre
- Mrs. M. Calderon, Religious Society of Friends
- Salvation Army (current vacancy)
- United Reformed Church (current vacancy)
- Cloud Singh, North East Sikh Service

Representing Teaching Associations

- Mrs. F. Rankin, National Union of Teachers
- Nick Blackburn, National Association of Head Teachers
- Association of School and College Lecturers (current vacancy)
- Ms. J. Uzzell, National Association of School Teachers/Union of Women Teachers
- Mike Shorton, Association of School and college Leaders)

Co-opted Members

- Ms. J. Cossins
- Mr. M. Fryer
- Mr. P. Andre

Meetings of SACRE

7. SACRE Members have met during the Academic Years on the 19th October, 2011; 8th February, 2012; 26th June, 2012; 20th March, 2013; and 10th October 2013. Unfortunately the meetings held on 19th October, 2011 and 20th March, 2013 were inquorate so an informal meeting of SACRE took place and an informal record of the meeting was taken. The SACRE was guided and advised by a George McQueen, Lead Officer from Children's Services until his move from the authority in October, 2011. David Chambers provided support between February and June 2012. Continued support also provided by Allison Hill, Democratic Officer. Rachel Kershaw, Head of School and Pupil Support Services has provided officer support from September 2015 to May 2016.
8. More recent meetings were held on 10 October 2016 and 13 March 2017.

Chair of SACRE

9. Peter King, Chair of SACRE retired in June 2012. Peter was a long standing Member of SACRE and had been Chair since January, 2004.
10. Unfortunately since Peter's retirement it has proved difficult to fill the position of Chair permanently and several suggestions were considered including seeking a Chair from an inquorate Group, asking people if they wished to be nominated and a small Working Group was subsequently appointed, comprising representatives from Groups A, B and C to find a suitable Chair and Vice-Chair. Unfortunately this situation remains unresolved and a Chair is appointed for the purpose of each meeting.
11. At the meeting held on 13 March 2017 Jenny Uzzell , National Association of School Teacher/Union of Women Teachers was appointed as Chair and Martin Stand, Church of England was appointed Vice-Chair for a period of three years from the date of appointment.

Synopsis of Meeting Content and Events:

12. **Input from Religious Education/Subject Leaders:** Members of this SACRE have had many discussions on how to gain input from religious education/subject leaders at meetings and to share how religious education is delivered throughout the Borough. On 19th October 2011 the meeting of SACRE was held at the Darlington College and the Head Teacher gave a presentation on the teaching of RE and other spiritual matters at the College.
13. **Communicating with Schools** – Mr. Lakhwinder Singh, a Tutor at Darlington College gave a presentation to demonstrate the work that had been undertaken by one of his students in developing a website for Darlington SACRE. Members of SACRE welcomed the development of the website and thought it would be a useful tool for RE teaching.
14. **SACRE Working Group** – We regularly receive updates on the work of the Working Group and have considered future projects to include re-drafting the

Constitution, content of the SACRE Newsletter, setting up training for RE Subject Leaders and a review of the Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education.

15. **GCSE Results** – Members considered trend analysis at Key Stage 4 in Darlington schools between 2002–2008/09 and there was a steady stream of KS4 students being entered into Religious Studies examinations of 66-70 per cent; between 2010 and 2011 that figure dipped to around 40 per cent. In relation to the pass results it was noted that in 2002, 2.7 per cent of student entered for examinations achieved a grade of A* and in 2011 the percentage had risen to 3.3 per cent, equating that although less students are being entered for the examinations, those entered are achieving higher grades.
16. **Holocaust Memorial Ceremonies:** 27th January 2012 at the Arts Centre, Vane Terrace, Darlington, the theme 'Speak Up, Speak Out'; 28th January 2013 held at the Dolphin Centre and the theme 'Building Bridges'; 27th January 2014 held at the Dolphin Centre and the theme was 'Journeys'; 27th January 2015 held at the Dolphin Centre and the theme was 'Keeping the Memory Alive'; and 27th January 2016 held at the Dolphin Centre and the theme was 'Don't Stand By'.
17. **Equalities Act 2010 – Implications for SACRE** – The Strategy and Performance Advisor outlined the requirements of the Equalities Act 2010 which was being introduced between October 2010 and April 2012 and the two specific duties which schools would need to undertake ie to publish information which shows they have due regard for equalities as defined by the Act and to publish at least one equality objective by 6th April, 2012.
18. **English Baccalaureate – Discussion Paper 'Losing Our Religion – could RE teaching die out?'** – We have had lengthy discussions on how the English Baccalaureate will affect secondary schools and Members felt RE was most at threat in the academies and free schools of which this authority had a number with more conversions expected. Reverend Dobson gave his views on the links between various schools and his Church and at the time of discussion he had not experienced any adverse effects of the English Baccalaureate. A representative from the Teaching Associations Group advised Members that in her opinion she could not see her school would be changing the way it approaches religious education and she also anticipated that other RE co-ordinators would have the same opinion. Councillor Hughes advised Members that she felt that in Darlington figures would say robust in religious education compared to other local authorities and the Chair confirmed that there were still very strong links between Northwood School and Northlands Methodist Church.
19. **Revision of the Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education in Darlington** - Members were advised that every Local Authority has a statutory duty to establish a SACRE and that it was also the responsibility of the Local Authority to produce an Agreed Syllabus. It was agreed that the Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education be reviewed and that an Agreed Syllabus Conference be convened. Ms Isobel Short was appointed as the Religious Education Adviser for the process. Ms Short outlined the process and background to preparation of

an Agreed Syllabus and a draft timeline of the stages in the process, prior to the planned launch to schools in March 2014.

20. **Consultation with Schools** – Consultation Events were held with schools on 19th November, 2013 for the primary schools and 25th November, 2014 for the secondary schools. Questionnaires were also circulated to all schools and the comments contained in the completed questionnaires were used in the preparation of the draft revision of the Agreed Syllabus.

Agreed Syllabus Conference

21. Every Local Authority is required to establish and support an occasional body called an Agreed Syllabus Conference.
22. An Agreed Syllabus Conference must produce and recommend to the Local Authority an agreed syllabus for religious education which is educationally sound and meets legal requirements; meet in public with any sub-committee it may appoint; unanimously recommend a syllabus for adoption by the Local Authority (each Committee having a single vote); and include on any sub-committee at least one member of each of its constituent committees.
23. The Agreed Syllabus Conference met on 17th March, 2014 but this meeting was inquorate by the omission of representation from the Church of England Group and the Teaching Associations Group. However, those that attended discussed the consultation exercise and received an overview of the proposed Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education in Darlington 2014 which was based on adopting and adapting Durham Agreed Syllabus 2012. The basis of the current Darlington Agreed Syllabus (Concepts, Skills and Attitudes) was proposed to remain along with several other features of the existing Syllabus to remain.
24. Ms. Isobel Short, RE Advisor, advised Members that the revision process will also take account of recent national documentation in particular and incorporate, where appropriate Realising the Potential: Ofsted Long report on RE 2013; a Review of Religious Education in England: Religious Education Council of England and Wales; and the recent APPG Report.
25. Members also gave consideration to the legal requirements for religious education; the three elements of religious education (knowledge and understanding of religion, critical thinking, personal reflection); concepts in religious education; the key focus of learning; and concepts in Christianity.
26. The Conference discussed the various options open for the adoption of an Agreed Syllabus which was primarily to adopt the newly revised Durham Agreed Syllabus; adopting the Agreed Syllabus from another Local Authority; or writing an Agreed Syllabus to suit the needs of Darlington.
27. Discussion ensued where the teaching of Islam appears in the curriculum and whether this should be moved from Key Stage 3, where it currently sits as a core

religion, to Key Stage 2 as a core subject to meet the particular needs of Darlington communities. The Conference also considered the implication on resources for schools by making changes to the curriculum with regard to the teaching of Islam.

28. Members agreed that an Agreed Syllabus to suit the need of Darlington, based on the newly revised Durham Agreed Syllabus be compiled and that the Agreed Syllabus include a proposal to introduce Islam earlier in the curriculum.
29. The Agreed Syllabus Conference met again on 22nd April, 2014 and this meeting was quorate with all Groups represented. All Groups gave consideration to the approval of the draft Agreed Syllabus for the teaching of Religious Education in Darlington Schools which was required to be implemented by September, 2014.
30. Ms. Short outlined the amendments made to the draft Agreed Syllabus as a result of consultation at the Agreed Syllabus Conference held on 17th March, 2014 for Islam to be moved from Key Stage 3, where it currently sits as a core religion, to Key Stage 2 as a core subject to meet the particular needs of Darlington communities.
31. Members discussed the various religions and where they sit in the Key Stages and particular discussion was with regard to Judaism and where it features in the Syllabus and whether Judaism should be moved from Key Stage 3, where it currently sits, to earlier in the curriculum. There was also some discussion on whether Hinduism is best placed at Key Stage 1 where it currently sits.
32. Members also discussed Special Schools; the layout of the Syllabus and the three elements of RE where the elements of Knowledge and Understanding and Religion and Critical Thinking is assessed but Personal Reflection is not.
33. Unfortunately at this meeting a unanimous vote could not be made.
34. The Agreed Syllabus Conference met a final time on 26th February, 2015 for further consideration of the draft Agreed Syllabus following further amendment including comments received from Dr. Quader with regard to the Concepts in Islam; confirmation of Christianity as the principle religion and core religion at every key stages; and the removal of the levels of attainment against the three elements.
35. The Chair asked for a unanimous vote from each of the representative Groups on the approval of the draft Agreed Syllabus as presented and this was gained.
36. The Council's Cabinet met on 7th April, 2015 gave its approval to the Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education in Darlington and this was launched at a Training session for teachers on 8th December, 2015.

Pupils and Students Withdrawn from RE and Complaints about RE

37. Parents can withdraw their children from RE and students aged over 18 can exercise the same right to withdrawn from the subject. Due to the fact that only four out of the 48 schools are now maintained no central record is available as to the number of pupils who have been withdrawn from religious education.

Contribution of the SACRE to the wider Local Authority agenda

38. The SACRE contributes to the wider local authority agenda by giving expression to equality, diversity, inclusion and community cohesion; helping to raise standards in schools e.g. the Agreed Syllabus, the support that SACRE Members provide to schools and the annual monitoring of exam results; contributing to the annual Holocaust Memorial Day Event held annually in Darlington; and providing knowledge, understanding and skills necessary for teachers to provide high quality RE.

SACRE Moving Forward

39. SACRE met on 10 October 2016 with all Groups represented and a new Lead Officer, Paul Richardson, Head of 16-19 Learning and Skills and discussed the Secretary of State for Education's White Paper which sets out the government's plans for education for the next five years which aims to set high expectations for every child, ensuring that there are not forgotten groups or areas.
40. We discussed in particular the continuing trend for all schools to become academies or to operate under the governance of multi-academy trusts and how this will affect the teaching of religious education within these schools and ultimately the role of SACRE.
41. In Darlington there only remains seven maintained schools out of 42 with the majority having already converted to academies. The maintained schools consist of two nursery schools, four primaries and the pupil referral unit.
42. We have also examined religious studies exam take up and results for 2015 and 2016 in Darlington and it was reported that take up had been around 45-50 per cent of the total cohort for the last three years and take up varied across the schools with denominational schools having the highest take up which was not surprising.
43. The Democratic Officer has been recruiting Members to the vacant positions on this SACRE and most religious denominations within the town are now being represented.
44. We have also discussed the Casey Review by Dame Louise Casey which examines opportunity and integrations and calls for schools in some areas to become more diverse and that multi-academy trusts be encouraged to have a

'diverse range of provision'. Once the government's response to the review is received we will look at this further.

Special Thanks

45. In presenting this report Darlington Borough Council, local School Teachers and Members of Faith Groups be warmly thanked for their collective and individual contributions.
46. Special thanks to Peter King for all his hard work and commitment during his time with this SACRE and well wishes are sent for a long and healthy retirement.
47. Special thanks also go to Isobel Short for her hard work on the Revised Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education in Darlington and her training delivered to teachers in Darlington.
48. Further thanks go to Councillor Cyndi Hughes who has acted as Chair for the purpose of individual meetings and the Agreed Syllabus Conference since the retirement of Peter King and Paul Richardson as the new Lead Officer.

Members of Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

