

**ROTHERHAM STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
(SACRE)
THURSDAY 19 MARCH 2026**

Present:-

Group 1

T. Griffin

D. Homer

Group 2

H. Lambert (Chair)

Group 3

S. Yasseen

Group 4

Councillor R. Ismail

N. Devlin

Also in attendance as Kristianne Thorogood – Governance Advisor

83. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following members: Councillor V. Cusworth; Councillor S. Alam; V. Gregory; E. Nicholls; L. Melvin; and F. Radford.

84. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

85. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no matters of business for which it was deemed necessary to exclude members of the public or press.

86. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes from the last meeting on 4 December 2025 were approved as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

87. CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

The Chair reported that they had recently delivered an online RE CPD

session jointly for Rotherham and Sheffield. This session looked at oracy in particular, and considered how oracy could be promoted within the RE curriculum and used as creative means to deliver lessons. Attendance at this session had been strong, with around 27 teachers from across the Rotherham and Sheffield areas attending.

In response to a question, the Chair explained that oracy encompassed how to teach and help children to speak well, and to match their speech to the formality of the situation. The Chair commented that there was currently a big push in education nationally on oracy, and that it featured on most schools' development plans.

88. DEVELOPMENT PLAN UPDATE

A written update on the SACRE development plan had been included in the Agenda Pack.

T. Griffin enquired whether there were any plans to re-run the "Ask me Anything" panel. The Chair confirmed that they had been asked to run the event again with a broader range of religious views on the panel. Councillor Ismail confirmed that they would be happy to participate in the event again and it was reported that A. Vishwanath had expressed interest in taking part. The Chair would check the date of the event and would share details with Members.

89. FEEDBACK FROM THE AGREED SYLLABUS CONFERENCE

The Chair provided a verbal update on the recent activities of the Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) following the meeting held on 2 March 2026.

The Chair explained that they had made a good start on making the amendments to the Agreed Syllabus agreed at the previous meeting. However, the Chair's capacity to complete this on her own, given that the RE Advisor had recently stepped down, was limited. As a result, the Chair informed Members that the Agreed Syllabus was unlikely to be finalised for approval in SACRE's meeting in June, for roll-out to schools in September 2026. However, the Chair was hopeful that the Agreed Syllabus could be finalised over the summer months and put forward to SACRE Members for approval in September 2026.

The Chair would look to arrange a separate sub-group meeting of secondary school staff members of SACRE ASC, as their input was required for the amendments to the "Program of Study" sections for Key Stages 3, 4 & 5.

The Chair informed Members of discussions that had taken place at the ASC meeting with Angela Duncan, SEND School Representative from The Willows School, regarding the production of further RE lesson plans for use by SEND specialist teachers. Whilst SEND teachers accessed the current Key Stage 1 units available, it was suggested that some of the

content from further up the curriculum could be incorporated to expand these units and make them suitable for SEND students for longer. The Chair would add this project to the SACRE development plan.

D. Homer commented that the needs of SEND students were so diverse that it was very important to equip SEND teachers with enough resource to be able to find appropriate materials that were relevant to their students. The Chair commented that a more sensory and visual approach would be required for SEND students.

N. Devlin, the Service Director for Education and Inclusion (Service Director) put forward a proposal to Members that the Chair's school should be recompensed for the increased amount of time that the Chair had spent in completing the review of the Agreed Syllabus. As the post of RE Advisor to Rotherham SACRE was now vacant and was likely to remain so for the rest of the academic year, the Service Director felt that it should be recognised by SACRE that the Chair had been taken away from their usual duties as Headteacher in carrying out this task, largely alone. The Service Director recommended that this be an ongoing arrangement until such time as the work on the Agreed Syllabus was complete.

The Service Director asked the Chair to provide an estimate of the number of hours they had spent to date on the review of the Agreed Syllabus and provide an invoice to the Council to enable their school to be reimbursed. The Service Director asked the Chair to provide an invoice before 31 March 2026 in order that this payment could be paid out of the 2025-2026 SACRE budget.

Members confirmed their agreement to this proposal on an ongoing basis, until such time as work on the Agreed Syllabus was completed.

Resolved:-

- That SACRE note and endorse the Chair's action plan with regard to completion of work on the Agreed Syllabus; and
- That SACRE agree to the proposed reimbursement of the Chair's school for the time the Chair had spent in undertaking the review of the Agreed Syllabus, and that this arrangement should continue until work on the Agreed Syllabus was complete.

90. MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

The Chair asked the Governance Advisor to update Members on the current membership of SACRE. The Governance Advisor confirmed that they had conducted a review of attendance at recent meetings. The SACRE Terms of Reference set out that if a member was absent for 3 or more consecutive meetings, they would be deemed to have vacated their place on SACRE. The Governance Advisor had identified the following

members who met this criteria:-

- **A. Shazad** – it had been identified that this member was no longer at the school that SACRE had an email address for.
- **S. Hopkin** – it had been identified that this member was on maternity leave and was no longer at the school that SACRE had an email address for.
- **N. Choudry**
- **M. Shah** – Councillor Ismail offered to contact this member to confirm if they still wished to be a Member of SACRE.

The Governance Advisor commented that it would be good to recruit more members to SACRE to ensure resilience and quoracy at meetings. In recent meetings, attendance by members of Group C (teachers) had been low and this could cause future issues with quoracy and decision making.

The Chair confirmed that the work of SACRE was often highlighted at Rotherham teacher CPD meetings but that no further members had been forthcoming. S. Yasseen confirmed that a member of staff at their school would like to become a Member and the Governance Advisor suggested that their contact details be provided so that they could be invited to the next meeting.

The Chair commented that V. Gregory had indicated that they would like to continue their involvement in SACRE as a Group C member, now that they were unable to continue as the RE Advisor. Members were asked to raise their hand to vote for V. Gregory to become a Group C member of SACRE.

Resolved:- That SACRE approve the membership of V. Gregory into Group C.

91. APPOINTMENT OF RE ADVISOR TO ROTHERHAM SACRE

As referred to earlier in the meeting, the Chair explained to Members that V. Gregory was unfortunately unable to continue the role of RE Advisor to Rotherham SACRE as their school could no longer release them for the time required to fulfil the role. As a result, SACRE would need to recruit a new RE Advisor.

A draft job specification had been included at page 15 of the Agenda Pack. The Chair explained that the job specification had been drafted by the Service Director, and the Chair and former RE Advisor had made some amendments to it.

Members commented that more detail was required on the qualifications and experience required. For example, that the RE Advisor would need to have experience of working in an educational setting and have a lot of substantive knowledge of the of RE as a subject. Organisational, writing and administrative skills would also be key. Members felt that the

document as it stood felt more like a description of the role than a detailed person specification.

The Service Director confirmed that the role would be paid but that payment would be made to the RE Advisor's school to compensate for the time taken away from their substantive role. The Chair commented that it was usually the equivalent of 5 days' worth of time per academic year. It was commented that this should also be specified in the job description, along with details of who the RE Advisor would report to (the Chair). The Chair confirmed that the role would be advertised via the Council website and the Rotherham School Improvement Service (RoSIS) website and newsletter.

Members asked the Chair and the Service Director to revisit the job specification document and amend it to include the additional information discussed. The Service Director confirmed that they would make the necessary amendments and would circulate an updated job specification to Members for review. The Chair and the Governance Advisor would also consult the NASACRE website to see if any sample job specification documents were available on there.

Resolved: - That the Chair and the Service Director would rework the RE Advisor job specification to ensure that a more detailed person specification sat alongside it.

92. SACRE ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025 UPDATE

The Chair informed Members that the SACRE Annual Report 2024-25 had been presented to the Council's Improving Lives Select Commission (ILSC) on Tuesday 17 March 2026 and that ILSC had noted the report and endorsed the priorities of SACRE going forward.

The Service Director commented that the Chair had done an excellent job of presenting the SACRE Annual Report to ILSC and that the Annual Report also had the endorsement of the relevant Cabinet Member, Councillor Cusworth. Members thanked the Chair for representing SACRE and for highlighting the important work and function of SACRE at the ILSC meeting. The Chair thanked the Service Director for their help in compiling the Annual Report.

The Governance Advisor reminded Members that the aim for the 2025-26 Annual Report was to start drafting it during the summer term of 2026, in order that it could go through the various governance processes earlier. The Service Director emphasised the need for the Annual Report to be the work of SACRE and not the Council, in order that it could fulfil its role of holding the local authority to account.

93. BUDGET UPDATE

This item provided an update on the 2025-2026 SACRE budget prior to

the close out of accounts at the end of the financial year, during which the following was discussed:

- The Chair explained that the cost for the planned RE Awards would fall into the 2026-27 financial year as it was not due to take place until the summer months.
- The Service Director confirmed that the final accounts for the 2025-26 financial year would be presented to SACRE at its June meeting.
- The available SACRE budget for 2025-26 was £5695.00. The amount committed in the budget but not spent was £3,563.00, representing £1,813.00 for the RE Awards and £1,750.00 for 5 days of V. Gregory's time as RE Advisor, which had not been provided.
- The Service Director proposed utilising some of the unspent funds in the 2025-26 budget towards payment for the Chair's time to date in reviewing the Agreed Syllabus, as discussed earlier in the meeting. The Service Director also sought approval of a spend to update the SACRE website. The revised spend for the remainder of the 2025-26 financial year was presented to SACRE members as follows:
 - £2,000.00 - 4 days Headteacher time (Review of Agreed Syllabus) - Hannah Lambert; and
 - £250.00 – SACRE website - updating and formatting.
- This would leave a balance unspent of £1,830.00 for the financial year 2025-26.

Members were in agreement to the revised spend.

Resolved:-

- That the proposed spend for the 2025-26 financial year be amended to include the following:
 - £2,000.00 - 4 days Headteacher time (Review of Agreed Syllabus) - Hannah Lambert; and
 - £250.00 – SACRE website - updating and formatting; and
- That the Annual Budget Report be presented at the next SACRE meeting for consideration and approval in June 2026.

The Chair informed Members that no update to progress on the RE Awards Ceremony was available as the sub-group who were due to organise it had not yet been able to meet. The Chair would speak to E. Nicholls, L. Melvin and V. Gregory to see if a meeting could be arranged and S. Yasseen confirmed that they were also due to take part in this group and would contact the other members to arrange a date.

95. CURRICULUM & ASSESSMENT REVIEW UPDATE

The Chair provided an update on the Curriculum and Assessment Review from a recent online NASACRE meeting. A summary was provided at this meeting of the key-note speech of Dr Vanessa Ogden, Chair of the Task & Finish group. This summary had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting.

The Chair reported that programmes of study had been written for RE for the new National Curriculum and were due to go to the government for approval shortly. Nothing had been made widely available to RE teachers yet. It was therefore looking likely that RE would come under the National Curriculum. Members welcomed this development.

The Governance Advisor, who had also been present at the NASACRE online meeting, reported that NASACRE had confirmed that any SACREs that were currently undertaking a review of the Agreed Syllabus, should proceed with a “light-touch” review, given the imminent changes in RE and probable inclusion in the National Curriculum. This supported the view that Rotherham SACRE had taken with regard to its current review of the Agreed Syllabus.

The Chair further reported that there had been discussion over the future role of SACREs and how this was likely to strengthen with regard to community cohesion. Members commented that this would fit with the Government White Paper on Education and the intended approach to include a greater emphasis on belonging and community and how children could be “good citizens”.

D. Homer asked whether anything was likely to change with regard to collective worship. The Chair commented that the Church of England was reviewing its guidance on collective worship. Members discussed the importance of making sure that collective worship was appropriate for the context of each school. For a lot of schools, a daily act of collective worship was very difficult to accommodate due to space. Often, assemblies and celebration or special event days were used to promote messages of tolerance, inclusion and community engagement.

The Chair commented that they intended to add to the SACRE Development Plan for the next academic year, the task of creating guidance for schools on requests to withdraw from RE, following the recent judgment in Northern Ireland. It would now be considered

“burdensome” for both parents and schools to be called in for meetings to discuss the matter, so the Chair felt that schools would benefit from clear guidance on how to navigate this difficult situation. Current advice for schools was to immediately agree to a withdrawal.

96. DRAFT CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2026-27

The Governance Advisor confirmed that the draft meeting dates had been approved by Full Council at its meeting on 4 March 2026 and that the dates set out in the Agenda Pack (below) were confirmed meeting dates for Rotherham SACRE for the municipal year 2026-2027:-

- 11 June 2026
- 17 September 2026
- 3 December 2026
- 4 March 2027

The Governance Advisor had checked that there were no clashes with any religious holidays/festivals but asked Members to let them know if they were aware of any issues. Invites for the upcoming meetings would be issued shortly.

97. URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair asked for it to be noted that the description of the circumstances of V. Gregory stepping down from the position of RE Advisor to Rotherham SACRE was not correct in the Agenda to the meeting. It was explained that V. Gregory had not resigned from the post but that her school was no longer able to release her for the amount of time required for the role. The Governance Advisor confirmed that, for clarity, this correction would be reflected within the minutes to the meeting.