

**ROTHERHAM STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
(SACRE)- AGREED SYLLABUS CONFERENCE
MONDAY 2 MARCH 2026 AT 4.00PM**

Present:-

Group A

A. Viswanath

T. Williams

T. Griffin

Group B

H. Lambert (Chair)

Group C

Group D

Also in attendance was A. Duncan (SEND School Representative)

11. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from D. Homer, L. Melvin, E. Nicholls and S. Yasseen and Councillor Ismail.

12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest declared.

13. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting held on 18th November 2025 along with any matters arising. As the meeting was not quorate these minutes will automatically carry forward to the next meeting for approval.

14. UPDATE ON THE CURRENT REVIEW OF THE LOCAL AGREED RE SYLLABUS

The purpose of the ASC meetings was to plan and prepare for the new Local RE Agreed Syllabus (Syllabus), which was due to be released to schools in September 2026. This was the third meeting of the ASC for the 2025/2026 academic year.

The Chair explained that since the last meeting, the RE Advisor had confirmed that they would have to step away from the post due to their school being unable to release them for the time required. As a result, resource to complete the Syllabus review was now very stretched. The Chair would continue to work on the amendments when they could but was likely to require assistance from other SACRE ASC members to complete the review. As a result of the lack of dedicated resource, the timescale for completion and approval by SACRE of the new Syllabus by September 2026 for the next academic year, was looking unlikely.

The group talked through the Chair's amendments to the draft Syllabus and in the ensuing discussion, the following points were raised:-

- The Chair confirmed that all the changes that had been discussed in the previous meeting had been made. This should ensure that the syllabus was in line with the recently updated Religious Education Curriculum guidance.
- There was discussion around the formatting of the document. The insertions and amendments made by the Chair were sometimes in a different style and font and this led to the document looking somewhat messy and piecemeal. The Chair acknowledged this but confirmed that the content of the Syllabus was their current priority and that once this was complete and agreed upon, the formatting could be sorted to ensure that the document looked better with a more consistent style throughout. The Governance Advisor commented that officers from RMBC may be able to provide some assistance in ensuring the formatting was standardised and would talk to Niall Devlin, the Service Director of Education & Inclusion, about this.
- The Chair confirmed that the Introduction section had been updated to provide a summary of the aims and purposes of the Syllabus and how it had been refined from the previous version. Numerous dates had also been updated throughout the document.
- The Chair talked through the changes discussed in the earlier meeting, where the teaching of Islam was to be made more prominent in KS1 units, to better reflect the demographic in the Rotherham area. The wording had therefore been changed in parts of the Syllabus to reflect this.
- In the section headed "**Religious Education in Rotherham – Aims and Purposes**", the Chair explained that quite a few changes had been made to reflect the National Statement of Entitlement and that the aims of RE within Rotherham were aligned with current thinking and the OFSTED Deep & Meaningful Report. Reference had also been included to the Together for Tomorrow project.

- The Chair confirmed that the table at the bottom of page 7 would be removed, as previously agreed, and that the headings of the boxes on the flow chart on page 8 would be changed to reflect the headings in the table:- A – Substantive Knowledge, B – Disciplinary Knowledge & C – Personal Worldview.
- The sections headed “**Spiritual Moral, Social and Cultural Development**” and “**Religious Education and Statutory Relationships and Sex Education**” had been drafted to reflect updates to the curriculum which were coming into effect in September 2026.
- The Chair explained that they had attempted to update the census data from the ONS in the table on page 12 but was hoping that Tricia Williams would be able to check this as she had previously offered to provide the required data. The data had been taken from the 2021 census, and it was discussed that it would be worth keeping reference to previous years’ data within the document so that the changes in the religious make-up of the area could be tracked. It was also suggested that each column should display the percentages for reference. Tricia Williams did later join the meeting and confirmed that she could double check the census data and would confirm to the Chair if any amendments were required.
- The table headed “**Global religion: a simple approach**” had been amended slightly as the information available from the Pew Research Centre now used the comparator “*If the world was a village of 100 people*” rather than 1,000 people.
- During discussions on the stages at which different religions and worldviews were to be studied, the SEND School Representative commented that when setting SEND children work on RE, they were often working well below age related expectations – for example, KS2 children were accessing Foundation stage units. In their experience, this meant that there were not enough units of work available to keep SEND children engaged in RE at the level they needed to work at. It would potentially be necessary for those teaching SEND to look at other faiths and worldviews earlier, within the Foundation level, to keep building on knowledge. A lot of SEND settings were using other resources, such as Twinkl and Oak National Academy, to provide enough material to teach at a Foundation level.
- It was discussed that further guidance could be provided within this section for SEND staff regarding the adaptation of units and breaking them down into smaller chunks which would work better for the cognitive ability of SEND students. The Chair and the SEND School Representative agreed to meet further to develop this work outside of the meeting, with a view to creating further units for

SEND students. The Chair commented that this could be part of SACRE's wider development plan. It was important that all children could access the RE syllabus.

- The Chair explained that a new section had been inserted which would be headed "**Inclusive Practice in RE**". This covered the adaptations learning that could be made for SEND students within a mainstream, primary setting. This section reflected a lot of the Education Endowment Fund research on inclusive practice and would ensure alignment with the National Statement of Entitlement and SEND Code of Practice. The Chair acknowledged that this section would not go far enough to support students within a wholly SEND setting, but the SEND School Representative commented that it was encouraging that these adaptations were being encouraged and clearly set out for mainstream staff.
- The expectation that RE should be taught in dedicated lessons once or twice a week rather than in blocks or themed sessions had been incorporated across the document.
- A new section headed "**RE subject content: programmes of study 4-19**" had been added and this incorporated new statutory requirements for EYFS and up to date research on pedagogy.
- The Chair confirmed that they would now move on to make amendments to the sections setting out the Syllabus in detail for Key Stages 1 & 2 but commented that they would need further input from some of the secondary school staff who were members of SACRE ASC with regard to the detail on Key Stages 3, 4 & 5. The Chair would liaise with these members to try and hold a sub-group discussion on the post-11 syllabus prior to the next meeting of SACRE ASC.

15. NEXT STEPS FOR THE DRAFT LOCAL AGREED RE SYLLABUS

The next steps to progress the review of the Syllabus were discussed as follows:–

- Feedback from this meeting would be provided to the next SACRE meeting on 19th March 2026.
- The Chair would continue to work on re-drafting the Syllabus, based on previous feedback and discussions which had taken place in this meeting. Due to the RE Advisor's recent resignation, the Chair would contact Members for assistance where required.
- The Chair would liaise with Tricia Williams to verify the census and ONS data set out in the Syllabus.
- The Chair would look to expand on the section headed "**Which worldviews are to be studied**" and add a paragraph to provide guidance for SEND settings on how to adapt units of work.
- The Chair would look to arrange a separate meeting with Angela

Duncan, SEND School Representative, to consider creating some separate SEND units of work, as part of SACRE's wider development plan.

- The Chair would look to arrange a separate sub-group meeting of secondary school staff members of SACRE ASC to consider amendments to the "**Program of Study**" sections for Key Stages 3, 4 & 5.
- The Governance Advisor confirmed that the next meeting of the ASC group was scheduled for 1st June 2026, subject to approval of the municipal calendar for 2026-27 by Full Council on 4th March 2026. A further meeting of the ASC had been included in the calendar of meetings for September 2026 given that completion of the required amendments to the Syllabus was likely to take longer due to the lack of resource following the RE Advisor's resignation.

The Chair thanked all members of the group for their time and useful feedback.

16. PROPOSED 2026-2027 SACRE ASC DATES

The Governance Advisor explained that the proposed dates for the 2026-27 municipal calendar were due to be approved at the meeting of Full Council which was due to take place on 4th March 2026. The Governance Advisor had included two more meetings of the SACRE ASC in the draft calendar of meetings on the following dates:-

- 1st June 2026; and
- 7th September 2026.

It was hoped that the revised Syllabus could be finalised over the summer months and brought to the ASC and SACRE in September 2026 for approval, prior to distribution to and implementation in schools from January 2027.

17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no additional items of business requiring consideration at the meeting. The date and time of the next meeting of the ASC was expected to be Monday 1st June 2026 at 4.00pm, via Teams, subject to Council approval of the 2026-27 Municipal Calendar.