

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDING
ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

THURSDAY 12th FEBRUARY 2026

The meeting took place online via MS Teams

Present

Representing Christian denominations and other religious dominations and beliefs (Group A):

Wendy Brice-Thompson (WBT), Roman Catholic
Peter Feinson (PF), Baptist
Jenny Fox (JF), Salvation Army
Dr John Lester (JL), Baha'i faith
Tariq Mahmood (TM), Sunni Muslim
George Prinn (GP), Humanist
Barry Smith (BS), United Reform Church

Representing the Church of England (Group B):

Stephanie Elner (SE)
Ruth Evertt* (RE)

Representing teachers (Group C):

None.

Representing the Local Authority (Group D):

None.

Co-opted Member

Sidra Naeem (SN)

Observer

Sarah Yeneralski (SY)

Professional adviser:

Julia Diamond Conway (JDC) – R.E. Advisor

Joanne McLauchlan – Clerk, Havering Governor Services

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Katherine Tumilty, Corinne Simmons and Kathryn Everett. John Smailes had resigned as of 11th February 2026.

It was noted that Ruth Everett needed to leave at 6.30pm.

It was noted that the meeting was not quorate.

2. NEW OR SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no new members in attendance. However, it was noted that as the meeting was not quorate, the appointment of Sarah Yeneralski to Group C could not be approved.

3. SACRE MEMBERSHIP REVIEW

HGS had contacted the following SACRE members regarding attendance Sansar Narwal, Pastor Aloysius Peter, Luthaneal Adams, Bal Degum and Terry Riches.

Pastor Aloysius Peter had responded that he would be able to return from April 2026. Luthaneal Adams had been unwell but wished to continue. No response had been received from Sansar Narwal, Bal Degum and Terry Riches. SACRE members agreed to remove them from the membership.

ACTION: HGS

JDC recommended that the Local Authority should be advised that a new Hindu representative was needed for Group A as well as new members for Group C (Teachers).

ACTION: HGS

Ruth Everett informed members that she was retiring from her post at the Diocese and had agreed to continue as a SACRE member. RE would seek other Church of England representatives within Havering.

JDC suggested that national bodies or local community representatives could be contacted to seek new members. JDC acknowledged that it had been difficult to find a member from the Hindu community and suggested contacting the Hindu Education Board. JDC would send the contact email address to the Chair and HGS.

ACTION: JDC/Chair/HGS

JDC reported that she had shared the resignation of J Smailes with Dawn Ladbrook. JDC asked if Dawn Ladbrook would be the representative for the Evangelical Free Church or would this be shared with another representative. The Chair agreed to find out.

ACTION: Chair (WBT)

4. MINUTES OF MEETINGS HELD ON 24th JUNE 2025 AND 25th NOVEMBER 2025 AND MATTERS ARISING

4.1. The minutes of the meeting held on 24th June 2025 had been received and agreed at the previous meeting of 25th November 2025.

However, as the meeting was not quorate, the minutes could not be formally approved and so would be presented at the next meeting on 23rd June 2026.

ACTION: HGS (agenda)

4.2. The minutes of the meeting held on 25th November 2025 were received and agreed.

However, as the meeting was not quorate, the minutes could not be approved and so would be presented at the next meeting on 23rd June 2026.

ACTION: HGS (agenda)

The Chair reminded members that an election for the position of Chair would be required at the next meeting.

ACTION: HGS (agenda)

4.3. Matters arising from the meeting of 25th November (not included elsewhere on the agenda, were:

4.3.1. SACRE Membership (minute 1, refers): Members noted the recommendation to appoint David Taylor to Group A at the next meeting, once his term as a councillor came to an end.

ACTION: HGS

4.3.2. National Developments in Religious Education (minute 6, refers): The presentation had been circulated to members with the meeting papers.

4.3.3. Zoom Link for January Training (minute 9, refers): The link had been shared with members.

5. UPDATE ON SCHOOL ACTIVITY

JDC reported that there would be a training day at CEME on 17th March 2026; Islam, Judaism, and ways of knowing would be included. JDC invited feedback on religion and views and the termly twilight session. Peter Feinson reported that the session had questioned what 'world views' were and the context. There had been a discussion on the context and approach of world views. The Religious Education Council (REC) had been commissioned a project to resources for the national content standard. World Views had always existed, but an intellectual framework

had now been drawn up. However, individual experiences, desires and identity shaped an individual's view and family life also contributed. PF commented that World Views were like eyes and nobody stands nowhere. The book, *The Universe Next Door*, was referenced by PF and it was highlighted that the World Views approach was not an entirely new idea. Textbook versions often included content that could be considered objectionable and unpalatable.

The Ofsted categories of knowing were questioned and then explained by JDC and examples given: an organised individual may have a world view that was religious or non-religious, for example, the hierarchical structure of Islam was a world view organised in a specific way. Also, as individuals, we had our own world views, such as, having grown up with a sister. However, an individual's experiences might lead them to be different. Individuals could be of the same branch of a religion but had a different view. Individual world views could affect an organised world view. For example, 2 individuals with the same religion living nearby each other as adults, one may be conservative and the other may like the religion, but it may not be as important to them and so only celebrated the main festivals. JDC invited questions and there were none.

PF commented that there could be several views for one religion and JDC said that this was probably the case with several religions. JDC said that within World Views, children could not be taught one stereotype, for example, Christian or Humanist. JDC invited questions and there were none.

JDC explained that World Views would move away from stereotypes, the differences within religions would be studied and the actual reality considered.

The Chair invited questions.

TM commented that the media influenced the view of religions and clouded the position. To have an authentic view, as opposed to that presented by the media, it would take a lot of work. JDC acknowledged this interesting point and explained that the commission planned to hold public sessions on interfaith relations. JDC had attended a group session run by Ruth Peacock of the Religion & Media Centre to help journalists with their reporting on religion and provide knowledge. JDC stated that some members of faith groups had stories to share, which journalists were not aware of.

TM commented that the journalists would have to have some knowledge or interest in the religion to be able to report accurately and also human

weakness could lead to some unconscious bias. This comment was acknowledged by the Chair.

6. NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

JDC stated that the report from the Curriculum & Assessment Review had been published and had advised that R.E. would be well-placed in the National Curriculum. The government had set up a task and finish group where stage 1 would involve consensus building, i.e. was it a possibility? JDC asked if the SACRE had been invited to the meeting with the head of the group on 2nd March 2026. JDC would forward the details to HGS (M Morgan).

ACTION: JDC

Dr Vanessa Ogden (Leader of Task & Finish Group) was running a session for SACRE members to discuss the inclusion of R.E in the national curriculum. If the outcome was to include R.E, this would lead to some changes in the way SACREs were run. The next phase would be consensus building. If the consensus was to include R.E in the national curriculum, there would then drafting and testing of what would be included. The outcome of the findings of the first stage would then form the basis of a national content standard, which would be available on the R.E. Council website. There would then be changes to legislation and R.E. would be part of the national curriculum and the role of SACRE discussed. The final stage would be the implementation of R.E. in the national curriculum.

JDC informed member that there could be some restraints with regard to the EBacc and pupil choice. R.E. GCSE was not part of the EBacc and so there could be a decline in the uptake of R.E. GCSE across the UK. In terms of Attainment 8, there would be a new version where R.E. would sit with Humanities. There was a plan to review GCSE content for all subjects, and the new R.E. GCSE would be ready in September 2029 or 2030. There would then be changes to AS and A levels.

In terms of informal R.E., a group called Theos had been formed to look at it. The group would look at how pupils learnt about religion and values through their daily lives. Provision varied widely. Havering was a diverse area and offered more natural encounters and interfaith relationships than other areas of the UK. JDC informed members that there had been a supreme court ruling in Northern Ireland linked to R.E. where a non-religious family had taken a school to court and the outcome had been that the parents could withdraw the child from R.E. lessons. JDC stated that parents had a right to withdraw their child and did not have to give a reason. It was noted that schools stated on their website that parents had the right to withdraw their child from R.E. without reason. If parents did exercise this right, a conversation could be had with parents to clarify which part of the curriculum the parents wished to withdraw their child from. Parents could not be asked for reason either verbally or by letter.

The Secondary School survey had been published and the percentage of specialist R.E staff and non-specialist staff had not changed. Schools were more compliant in Key Stage 3 than Key Stage 4. The outcomes also indicated that barriers to staying in post were workload the low profile of the subject for 39% of those surveyed. Specialist R.E. teachers were supporting non-specialists.

The NASACRE (National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education) conference & AGM would take place in Liverpool on 18th May 2026, and Dr. Vanessa Ogden would be speaking along with C Alderton, CEO Faith & Belief Forum. Bookings were open.

The West Hill Award would now be bi-annually rather than yearly to give SAVREs more time to plan and apply. The deadline for the next round was 28th February 2027.

JDC acknowledge that Ramadan would be starting soon. JDC wished members a blessed, happy, and peaceful Ramada. Eid would be 19th or 20th March 2026. JDC recommended that members looked at the timetables for local Mosques.

Jewish culture month would take place from 16th May to 14th June 2026 and would be a celebration of Jewish contribution, culture, and community.

The SACRE had subscribed to the NASACRE training and JDC highlighted the following sessions:

- 23rd February 2026: Being an Effective SACRE Clerk
- 10th March 2026: [08:00] How might a SACRE want to use freely available resources to support high quality RE in their area?
- 12th March 2026: [08:00] NASACRE in conversation for Chairs & Vice-Chairs

JDC invited questions and there were none. The Chair thanked JDC for the updates.

TM thanked JDC for the wishes for a happy Ramadan. TM would be hosting a multi-faith representation on Wednesday 4th March 2026 and he or Sidra Nasseem would circulate the details. All were welcome and TM invited members to please come and enjoy.

A member asked if there had been a ruling on Collective Worship and JDC responded that this was under review at a high level and a decision had not yet been made.

JL queried the meeting at CEME on 17th March and JDC explained that it was training day for teachers and subject leaders. M Morgan had sent an email to SACRE members asking if they would like to attend. JDC had not planned a specific SACRE session, but members were welcome to come and meet the teachers.

SY asked if the survey had only been for primary schools and would it be emailed out. JDC responded that it was on the website and had been emailed. JDC would endeavour to send this on, and it would be helpful if as many schools as possible provided feedback.

SY stated that she would be attending the training on 17th March as a teacher.

Further questions were invited and there were none.

7. WORKING PARTY UPDATE – PRIMARY R.E. CONFERENCE

JL suggested that suggestions for the content for the conference could be raised with teachers at the training day at CEME on 17th March 2026. The Chair would be leading a Christianity Workshop and recommended that she met with JL to discuss content. JL would contact the Chair.

ACTION: JL

The Chair suggested a meeting of the working party in advance of the next SACRE meeting and JDC acknowledged that this was a good idea. Good planning would lead to a good event and schools needed to know the content.

ACTION: Chair

8. SCHOOL WEBSITE MONITORING UPDATE

JDC reported that in the past, members had met at school to conduct the audits of the school websites. At present, the auditing at home was not working and so an alternative approach could be considered. The Chair state that the audits could be conducted at home, but members needed to know what to do.

TM asked for the timing of the training day on 17th March 2026, and JDC confirmed that it was 9am to 4pm at CEME. JDC stated that a session for SACRE members to be in discussion with groups had not been planned. JDC invited members to come along and join in and contribute to the day. If members did attend, if there was anything they would like to do (or not do), there would be an opportunity to tell the schools.

TM said that he had given talks at Gidea Park Primary School and a local Catholic School. TM was interested in school visits and would like to engage. SE thanked TM for his visit to St Edward's, which had been very good.

9. AGREED SYLLABUS SURVEY UPDATE

JDC reported that she had had a meeting with S Sutton (Havering Head of Education Quality & Effectiveness) and the next step was to approach T Cook (Havering Director of Education) to establish if a survey could be conducted; a response was awaited.

If agreed, the intention would be to conduct the survey before the next meeting so that the outcomes would be available for discussion. JDC, S Sutton and T Cook were mindful that R.E. could become part of the national curriculum and so a gentle start was needed.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no other business items to discuss.

JL reported that he had attended a meeting at the Town Hall on Tuesday and had also attended an interesting talk on unconscious bias. TM had attended the Havering Health Improvement Group.

8. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was noted: Tuesday 23rd June 2026

Members were asked to inform WBT and M Morgan if they were able to offer a venue for the next meeting, either a school or a place of worship. It would be good to meet in person.

ACTION: All members

The Chair thanked JDC and JM and members for their attendance and contributions.

The meeting closed at 7.11pm.

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