

Hillingdon SACRE Annual Report 2023-2024

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1. Introduction

Hillingdon Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Every Local Authority is required to have a SACRE which is made up of four groups: (A) Faith representatives, (B) The Church of England, (C) Teachers and (D) Councillors and Local Authority representatives.

SACREs have responsibility for advising a Local Authority (LA) on religious education and collective worship in its schools. SACREs have a duty to publish an annual report. The main purpose of the annual report is to hold the LA to account, by informing the Secretary of State and key partners what advice SACRE gave the LA during the year and how that was responded to; this includes advice on RE and Collective Worship in those schools for which the LA has responsibility.

Hillingdon SACRE is a member of the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE). A copy of this report, which covers the academic year 2023-2024, will be sent to NASACRE.

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1a. Chair's Introduction

1b. Overview of academic year 2023-24

Hillingdon SACRE met three times online during the academic year 2023-24. Each meeting was quorate, and further details of attendance can be seen in Appendix 1.

The RE Advisor, with the support of the LA, ensures all materials and minutes are updated regularly. All agendas and approved minutes of these meetings are saved regularly and made accessible to the public via the Hillingdon Council [website](#), with further resources and supporting information for Hillingdon schools on the LEAP [website](#).

Agenda items for these meetings included (in no particular order):

- Engagement and Training of primary teachers and support for Secondary teachers
- Communication with schools, including newsletters supported by LA
- Borough RE Calendar Competition
- Accommodation for SACRE meetings and the move from solely online meetings
- Budget and Advisory support for SACRE and support from the LA
- Website access to SACRE information
- Attendance and membership to SACRE, including updating the constitution
- Discussion around Sentientism and wider Muslim (Shia) representation on SACRE
- Determinations and Declarations of Interest of members
- SACRE action planning and self-evaluation
- Ofsted updates and subject reports, including of May 2021 and April 2024
- NASACRE AGM and conference
- Opportunities for members' development in understanding other worldviews and religions
- Development of the subject following national research, including the National Content Standard
- Connecting with other organisations, including RE Hubs
- Locally Agreed Syllabus
- Opportunities for members to support schools in delivering high quality RE
- Creating additional guidance materials for schools, including 'religious observance'
- Aligning SACRE works with LA initiatives e.g. Universal Offer

The support work of SACRE is recorded in an action plan which is continually updated by the Advisor. Please see Appendix 2. This action planning takes into account awareness of national developments raised via the Advisor, and any feedback received from teachers in schools, including those shared through the Teachers' Network Groups. All support work is continually logged and shared with Members via a detailed action plan. From academic year 2024 onwards, members have agreed to complete an annual self-evaluation, which will then be used to inform this support work.

2. Standards and quality of provision in RE

When the Adviser took over the role in the previous academic year, it was agreed that the main priorities for SACRE was to establish links with schools, and to open lines of communication in order to ascertain the provision and standards of RE in schools.

2a. School Support

Teacher Sessions

During the academic year of this report, the Advisor, with support of the LA and liaising with the Hillingdon Learning Partnership, has coordinated, successfully planned and delivered 3 termly networks CPD sessions with subject leaders from primary and secondary schools, including academies, faith schools and community schools. These have been provided at no additional costs to Hillingdon schools.

The information/evidence referenced throughout this report information has been gleaned by the RE Advisor through conversations, visits and reports from schools as part of or following these sessions (see section 2b).

Sessions have included clarification and having of research around of what high quality, meaningful RE can look like in schools, with opportunities to share and discuss planning documents to support this type of RE. Teachers are clear about Ofsted expectations around the including of different types of knowledge and have even been able to take part in a national research project themselves around one of these, led by the University of Huddersfield.

Schools Website

In addition, the LA has supported the development and revising of the SACRE pages for schools on their website, which now include updated resources and information, as well as guidance documents to support the delivery of RE as a subject as well as including guidance documents for headteachers to support their pupils on matters relating to whole school issues and concerns beyond the RE curriculum. SACRE will endeavour to continue adding support materials to this website.

School Communication

Further to this, the LA has supported the development and sharing of bulletins and newsletters devised by the Advisor, meaning that all schools have been receiving national and local updates and been notified of the support available (including the networks, above). This has not only ensured schools are reminded of the importance and relevance of the statutory subject but have been continually informed as to how they are able to provide it.

Advise to Schools

Throughout the academic year of this report the RE Advisor liaised with the Councils' Democratic Services to respond to one Freedom of Information request, as well as 3 individual schools' requests. These were in relation to the grating of authorised absence for certain festivals.

Subsequently, Hillingdon SACRE has devised, approved and shared some written guidance on this for head teachers, which has now also been included in the exemplar materials on the NASACRE [website](#) under 'Other Guidance from SACREs to Schools.'

In addition, in response to the situation in the Middle East sparked by the events of 7th October, SACRE commissioned the Advisor to devise a guidance paper for schools, which was supported and promoted by the LA.

2b. The Agreed Syllabus

When the current Advisor began the role in supporting SACRE, the purchase of a Syllabus had already been agreed and [shared](#) with schools in April 2022.

Throughout the academic year of this report, the Advisor conducted informal review and consultation sessions with teachers, via the aforementioned networks (2a), around the Syllabus. Questions included whether subject leaders were:

- able to clarify from the Syllabus what high quality RE could look like
- clear about expectations of what RE should look like in their schools
- aware and confident the RE curriculum in their school was complicit with the requirements in the Syllabus
- were able to plan their RE curriculum from this Syllabus.

SACRE have continued to be informed about the feedback received from schools in relation to these questions and have also been made aware of the national research developments and Ofsted publications (see 1b).

Following conversations with both SACRE and schools, it has been agreed:

- to invite more members to join the teachers' group of SACRE to support improved communication
- schools should continue to receive free CPD/ network sessions, which will include...
- updates and discussion around Ofsted and other research (also share with SACRE), which will allow...
- continued support in defining and recognising high quality RE, which can later be...
- included in a revision of the Locally Agreed Syllabus in due course.

In addition, other actions and documents have been developed and agreed in a bid to continue building a solid picture of school provision and review of the current syllabus, including an e-survey to be coordinated in the next academic year. Please see section 2c, below.

2c. School Provision, Attainment and Quality of Religious Education

The setting up of the teacher networks and communications systems (as specified in section 2a) have allowed some initial consultation with schools to determine a picture of RE provision in the Borough.

Primary

Conclusions drawn from the information from schools is that the Syllabus is not as helpful as it could be in defining or planning for high quality RE which reflects the research and other developments in the subject, nor Ofsted expectations.

Schools that have engaged with us have informed us they are predominantly following purchased curriculum packages (of which the RE Advisor is familiar), without awareness or confirmation that these are adherent to the current syllabus.

All schools in the network have been exposed to a range of exemplar curriculum and other planning documents, which reflect the pedagogy of RE being promoted and many of these schools have now recognised where these packages do not and which they would like to be defined in a new/revised syllabus.

With the development and dissemination of the e-survey a more specific picture of school provision can be ascertained, including the format of the RE curriculum (e.g. timetabled or drop-down days). This can then be correlated with the statutory requirements in the syllabus.

Secondary

The Hillingdon Agreed Syllabus recommends that 5% of curriculum time is dedicated to RE, which should equate to approximately 38-45 hours for KS3 and 30-36 hours for KS4. No specific proposal has been included or is made for Key Stage 5. This excludes time allocated for collective worship.

RE (or RS) remains statutory for all pupils in every key stage, whether or not sitting a GCSE or equivalent qualification in the subject. While requirements for some academies may differ, their funding arrangements ensure that they make provision for all pupils in RE.

However, in the recent [Ofsted](#) Report, it is clear that nationally “Fewer than 1/5 schools ... included any discernible RE content at KS4 and in sixth form for those who had not chosen to study the subject at GCSE or A Level.” This number falls to 1/2 with no KS4 RE at all for academies, and 1/3 did not even teach RE in KS3!

In conversation with the secondary schools engaged with the networks, there are similar findings, in which only those pupils who have opted at GCSE actually studying any discernible RE content in KS4.

As a result, all schools have been made aware of their statutory obligations, as well as the Hillingdon ‘Universal Promise’ via the SACRE website and through communication via the LA and with a newsletter.

Subject Leaders in schools have shared with the Advisor some of the barriers to providing an appropriate and sufficient curriculum in line with these requirements, including lack of specialist teachers to deliver or the budget to devise one. Therefore, whilst SACRE is aware that further clarification may need to be provided in a revised syllabus in due course, without additional support or funding, schools themselves are less likely or able to rectify the deficit.

However, the first step of clarifying the current picture of provision in schools can be started with the development of an e-survey to be disseminated this academic year.

In addition, the Advisor is also seeking data collected from the Teaching Hours for RE from School Workforce Census which may also provide some information about the provision of RE in secondary schools in the Borough.

2d. Standards and Quality of Provision of RE - Public Examinations

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, pupils did not sit formal examinations until Summer 2022. Pupils were instead graded through internal assessment, and therefore no official/verified data was provided.

Public examination information, such as number of entries and results will support SACRE in building a picture of RE provision in the borough, and comparisons with national achievements can be made. At the time of compiling this report, confirmed/validated data for Summer 2024 was unavailable, but can be added once provided.

In the meantime, the below figures for 2023 have been retrieved:

GCSE 2023	Total number of pupils Hillingdon: 1837		A Level 2023	Total number of pupils Hillingdon: 95	
	% grade 4+	% Grade 7+		% A* - C	
	↓ 73%	↓ 30%		↓ 73%	

3. Collective Worship

Hillingdon SACRE supports an inclusive approach to collective worship that promotes spiritual development and contributes to community cohesion.

Following the commencement of support provided by the new Advisor, a full review of policies and school application for changes of determination materials was completed. All documents have been made available on the relevant website and Hillingdon SACRE is now ready should a request be received, but there have been no requests this year.

Whilst there remains a desire to increase this support by updating our guidance and support materials further, the focus has been directed towards schools' provision of RE teaching and learning through a quality RE curriculum aligned to our syllabus. It is hoped that, if funding allows, SACRE will be able to provide further guidance and support in this area to schools in the future.

4. SACRE work with other agencies

We are active members of NASACRE and both the Advisor and a member of SACRE attended the annual conference in 2024. Our Advisor continues to access the latest research and resources through her continued membership with AREIAC and as part of her work beyond the LA. Over the past year, she has also worked in collaboration with national examination boards as well as establishing links with Huddersfield University to provide training and support for Hillingdon schools, who were also able to take part in a national research project (please see section 2a).

We are keen to support all endeavours to expose more pupils to different worldviews and religions with experiences of real believers beyond a textbook as part of effective RE. Hillingdon members have been encouraged to take part in the free training provided through the RE Hubs, so that they may become accredited speakers whom our schools can approach to invite into their schools.

Moreover, we have taken the initiative to build on the links and relationships our members hold with various places of interest and worship in the borough to invite them to do the same. We shall continue to explore strategies to strengthen these relationships and broaden the opportunities for school visits with the RE Hubs.

5. Community Cohesion

Hillingdon SACRE supports RE that meets the needs of all students with or without religious beliefs, and promotes inclusion and religious, non-religious and racial harmony. We believe that RE promotes understanding and respect for all communities and it is even more vital now that we continue to do this, with the rise of fundamentalism and extremism in the UK and worldwide and examples of conflict within our own local community. Through the teaching of RE, negative stereotypes and prejudices can and should be tackled and we should generate understanding, overcome barriers, and promote community cohesion.

In the Autumn term a guidance paper was provided to schools in response to the situation in the Middle East sparked by the events of 7th October. This was shared and supported by the LA, along with in-person training sessions offered to all schools. These activities were achieved and enhanced by deploying the close working relationships and links between the Advisor and several national organisations and charities, including the Faith Belief Forum.

Hillingdon is incredibly proud of the diversity of the community. Following concerted efforts, SACRE now has membership which better reflects the religious and non-religious diversity of the local community, having recently gained a further representative of Shia Islam.

It has also been agreed that we shall now also present attendance at SACRE for each group/committee in the Annual Report, therefore making it easier to identify additional/alternative members to be invited to join SACRE.

Having consolidated our membership, and build working network with our teachers, we have decided next year to focus on a new project to celebrate our community's diversity by engaging pupils in creating artwork for an interfaith calendar. Dates of upcoming religious festivals and secular commemorations will be collated so that schools can use this calendar to support their planning of collective worship and their pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development beyond the Religious Education classroom.

6. Management of SACRE

The Chair of SACRE remains Sumen Starr from the Teachers/Schools representative Group C. The Vice Chair is currently Keith Lunn, from Group B.

We have a solid [membership](#), which is continuously being monitored, and recent revisions to the constitution has allowing us with more opportunities for additional members as our community expand and should the need arise. We have also continued to increase the teachers' representation, gaining additional primary teacher members and a further secondary representative to Group C.

A detailed action/development plan is produced for SACRE each year aligned with the financial year of the council and is regularly updated by the RE Advisor and revisited by SACRE in meetings. A copy of the action plan for the academic year of this report can be found in Appendix 2.

From academic year 2024 onwards, members have agreed to complete an annual self-evaluation, which will then be used to inform this support work. The RE Advisor will then provide recommendations based on these comments, from which the following year's action plan can be derived.

The LA continues to be invaluable in the support of the work of our SACRE, by providing an RE Specialist to advise SACRE, deliver teacher training and support, and lead on the Agreed Syllabus. A senior member of the LA's Education Improvement and Partnerships (EIP) not only attends our meetings, but continuously provides any required support to achieve all agreed SACRE actions. They also share contributions and suggestions for how the work of SACRE may align with other LA priorities and initiatives, strengthening the impact of all.

The LA continues to receive all the SACRE funding, and in the last academic year used this to provide/support:

- The provision of a SACRE / RE Advisor 9 days including...
- CPD and support materials for staff in Schools on RE teaching and learning with the HLP
- SACRE and Religious Education website development and maintenance
- Networking and training opportunities for SACRE Advisor and members (e.g. NASACRE conference)

As well as...

- Providing Hybrid SACRE meetings with IT support and hosting at the Civic Centre
- Administrative Clerking support for the SACRE from Democratic Services
- Maintaining the SACRE/RE website of resources for teachers

7. Summary

With an enthusiastic Advisor and a supportive LA, Hillingdon SACRE is now in a strong position to not just report on the RE in the borough, but to actively contribute to the provision with innovative and creative strategies and resources devised by keen SACRE members themselves.

Meeting 21.11.23

Meeting 5.3.24

Meeting 26.6.24

Ria Searle	Committee Member	Present	Ria Searle	Committee Member	Apologies	Ria Searle Group C - Secondary RE Teacher	Committee Member	In attendance
Tim Wright	Committee Member	Present	Tim Wright	Committee Member	Present	Tim Wright Group B - Church of England	Committee Member	In attendance
Stacey Burman (HSACRE Advisor)	Advisor	In attendance	Stacey Burman (HSACRE Advisor)	Advisor	In attendance	Stacey Burman (HSACRE Advisor)	Advisor	Present
Sumen Starr	Chair	In attendance	Sumen Starr	Chair	In attendance	Sumen Starr Group C - Secondary Head Teacher	Chair	Present
Alice Vahdat	Committee Member	Present	Alice Vahdat	Committee Member	In attendance	Alice Vahdat Group A - Bahai	Committee Member	Absent
Balmukund Prasad Joshi	Committee Member	Present	Balmukund Prasad Joshi	Committee Member	Absent	Balmukund Prasad Joshi Group A - Hindu	Committee Member	In attendance
Alavari Jeevathol	Committee Member	Present	Alavari Jeevathol	Committee Member	In attendance	Alavari Jeevathol Group A - Humanists UK	Committee Member	In attendance
Dorothy Sadlik	Committee Member	Present	Dorothy Sadlik	Committee Member	Apologies	Dorothy Sadlik Group A - Jewish	Committee Member	In attendance
Angela Lount	Committee Member	Expected	Angela Lount	Committee Member	Absent	Angela Lount Group A - Methodist	Committee Member	Absent
Naseem Bint Amir	Committee Member	Present	Naseem Bint Amir	Committee Member	Absent	Naseem Bint Amir Group A - Muslim	Committee Member	Absent
Ninette Fernandes-Viana	Committee Member	Present	Ninette Fernandes-Viana	Committee Member	Absent	Ninette Fernandes-Viana Group A - Roman Catholic	Committee Member	Absent
Jasvir Singh Rayat	Committee Member	Present	Jasvir Singh Rayat	Committee Member	Present	Jasvir Singh Rayat Group A - Sikh	Committee Member	In attendance
Pauline Byles	Committee Member	Present	Pauline Byles	Committee Member	Present	Pauline Byles Group B - Church of England	Committee Member	In attendance
Melanie Dring MA BA(Hons) PGCE	Committee Member	Present	Melanie Dring MA BA(Hons) PGCE	Committee Member	Absent	Melanie Dring MA BA(Hons) PGCE Group B - Church of England	Committee Member	Absent
Keith Lunn	Committee Member	Present	Keith Lunn	Committee Member	Present	Keith Lunn Group B - Church of England	Vice-Chair	In attendance
Hedson De Castro	Committee Member	Present	Hedson De Castro	Committee Member	Present	Hedson De Castro Group C - SEND Secondary School Teacher	Committee Member	In attendance
Councillor Kishan Bhatt	Committee Member	Present	Councillor Kishan Bhatt	Committee Member	Absent	Councillor Kishan Bhatt Group D - Local Authority	Committee Member	Present
Councillor June Nelson	Committee Member	Apologies	Councillor June Nelson	Committee Member	Present	Councillor June Nelson Group D - Local Authority	Committee Member	Present
Councillor Jagjit Singh	Committee Member	Present	Councillor Jagjit Singh	Committee Member	Present	Steven Clarke	Secretary	Expected
Councillor Colleen Sullivan	Committee Member	Present	Councillor Colleen Sullivan	Committee Member	Apologies	Rebecca Reid (HSACRE Clerk)	Secretary	Present
Michael Hawkins	Officer	In attendance	Michael Hawkins	Officer	In attendance	Waheda Rahmanji	Committee Member	In attendance
Rebecca Reid	Secretary	In attendance	Rebecca Reid	Secretary	In attendance	Jemna Nauls	Committee Member	In attendance
						David Baeston	Committee Member	In attendance
						Councillor Shehryar Ahmad-Wallana	Committee Member	Apologies

Appendix 1

1. SACRE Meetings and Development

Focus	Actions	Timing	Outcomes
Advisor	MH confirm vendor arrangements for SB SB to suggest amendments to constitution/members groups required SB create audit of members. SACRE members complete audit.	Autumn 2023 Autumn 2023	Advisor receiving payment for support from relevant budgets
Members	RR amend/update on website. SB source new members if needed. SACRE members vote new members if needed.	Spring 2024 Summer Meeting 2024	Vacancies filled with consistent and high attendance
	RR maintain register of attendance to be included in future Annual Reports	Autumn 2024	
NASACRE	RR renew membership of NASACRE RR confirm booking of attendance to NASACRE conference	May 2023 Summer Meeting 2024	Passwords received from NASACRE/confirmation of membership SACRE attendance to NASACRE
Meetings and Training	SB liaise NOF/MG to update SACRE webpage SB/Chair/MG attend RE Hubs/NASACRE meeting. Feedback to SACRE SACRE faith group members (A+B) registered on 'RE Hubs' website for teachers SB share new research in RE, inc. Ofsted expectations and syllabus examples.	Autumn 2023 November 2023 Spring Meeting 2024 Ongoing	Improved communication with schools and within SACRE Agenda and dates agreed for year ahead. Members informed of all national and local updates, including regional/pan London. SACRE attendees recognise good quality RE in syllabi including own

2. School communication and Support

Newsletter	SB devise newsletter insert for teachers. MH support dissemination to schools SB to obtain email contacts for schools from HSP (DG) and MH	Autumn 2023 Autumn 2023	All schools aware of Advisor, aims of SACRE, CPD sessions available
Teachers' Session 1	RR/SB confirm HLP (DG) + MH notify schools of teacher online session SB to plan and deliver teachers' session	Primary 27/11 Secondary 6/12	Minimum 10 schools attending/communication with Advisor.
Teachers' Session 2	SB confirm HLP (DG) + MH notify schools of teacher session SB to plan and deliver teachers' session	Primary 11/3 Secondary 11/3	Minimum 10 schools attending. Attendees confirm understanding of good quality RE.
Teachers' Session 3	SB confirm with HLP (DG) + MH notify schools of teacher session SB to plan and deliver teachers' session	Primary 3/6 Secondary 3/6	Minimum 10 schools attending and engaging in review of RE Syllabus. Increased picture of school provision of RE.
Interfaith Events/ Materials	SB draft Hubs invitation letter for places of worship, SS sign, RR send. SACRE agree format of above Interfaith support around anti-persecution focus SB confirm with HLP (DG) + notify schools SB run x2 events for schools. SB feedback to SACRE SB prep schools' art competition SACRE faith members re. images of belief MH disseminate second newsletter to schools and upload to HEAP web page School and SACRE sharing 14/11/24 SB collate and prepare and share materials and certificates? from above	March 2024 Summer 2024 Autumn 2024 Spring 2024	Bespoke Interfaith event/resources or materials for all schools to engage which promotes strong RE (as agreed, above). 1/4 Hillingdon schools engaged with above to boost awareness of aims of SACRE and examples of strong RE in action.

3. Monitoring of standards and quality of RE and Collective Worship in Hillingdon Schools

Collective Worship	SB devise <u>determinations</u> policy and guidance SACRE approve once explained, RR to upload to SACRE website	Autumn 2023	SACRE clear about requirements for CW. Systems in place for requests.
School Survey	SB devise e survey for Subject Leaders MH/SACRE approve and share with schools	Summer 2024	SACRE have stronger picture of RE and CW in schools
	SB share with schools and collate/analyse results SB share findings/results with SACRE	Autumn Term Autumn	
	SB include in Annual Report	December 2024	

Achieved Ongoing Not Yet