

Nottingham City Council

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Minutes of the meeting held at Middleton Primary School on 26 September 2024 from 4.30 pm - 5.40 pm

	GROUP A - Representatives of Christian denominations and other religions/faith (17)	
	Vacant	Salvation Army
	Vacant	Methodist Church
✓	Moira Dales	Roman Catholic
	Vacant	Hinduism
	Vacant	Humanism
✓	Deb Martin	Quaker
✓	Qasim Hussain	Islam
✓	Dr Irfan Malik	Islam – Aymidyma Muslim
	Pvail Singh	Sikhism
	Norman Randall	Jewish
✓	Fr Julian Lowe	Orthodox
✓	Ezekiel Alawale	Majority Black Led Churches
	Vacant	Baptist
	GROUP B - Church of England representatives (6)	
✓	Andrea Burrows	Lowdham Primary
✓	Emmanuel Ofori	Governor, Berridge Primary and Bluecoat Aspley (Secondary)
✓	Anne Lumb	Southwell and Nottingham Diocese
	Kirstie Lacey	Bluecoat Aspley Academy (Secondary)
✓	Sarah Peek	St Stephen's Primary
	Vacant	
	GROUP C - Teacher representatives (6)	
	Ambreen Razak	Chair of Governors, Snape Wood Primary
	Louise Regan	National Education Union
✓	Nazia Iqbal	Chair of Governors, Middleton Primary
✓	Fiona Maciel	Governor, Carrington Primary
✓	Samia Ishaque	Governor, Middleton Primary
	Vacant	
	GROUP D - Elected Members of Nottingham City Council representatives	
✓	Councillor Cheryl Barnard	Elected Member
	Councillor David Mellen	Elected Member
✓	Councillor Angela Kandola	Elected Member
✓	Councillor Samina Riaz	Elected Member
	Councillor Farzanna Mahmood	Elected Member
✓	Councillor Sajid Mohammed	Elected Member

Others in Attendance

Heidi Shewell-Cooper

Jasmin Howell

Jane Garrard

- SACRE Lead Officer

- Substitute for Nick Lee, Director of Education

- Governance Officer

36 Apologies for absence

Councillor David Mellen
Norman Randall
Ambreen Razak
Louise Regan
Pvail Singh

Nick Lee – Jasmin Howell attended in his absence

37 Declarations of Interest

None

38 Introduction to Religious Education at Middleton Primary School

Helen Baird, RE Lead at Middleton Primary School, spoke about the approach to religious education at the school, highlighting the following information:

- a) The school is a UNICEF Rights Respecting School and has achieved the UNICEF UK Rights Respecting School Award. This underpins everything that the school does and intertwines well with religious education. The school teaches about, and through them.
- b) One of the rights that is most frequently referred to by pupils is that no discrimination is a vital right for everybody.
- c) Some of the rights are particularly fundamental to religious education, including the right to share thoughts freely and the right to freedom of thought and religion.
- d) There are 662 pupils at the school and, based on parent responses, this is comprised of 254 Muslim, 212 No Religion, 111 Christian, 19 Sikh, 1 Buddhist, 1 Anglican, 2 Hindu, 9 other, 16 refused to say and 25 no response.
- e) The school organises 'One Day Wonder' events where the whole school focuses on a particular religious festival for a day. Some of these events are led by pupils from the relevant faith.

In response to questions, the following additional information was provided:

- f) Generally parents are happy with the religious education provided and only one family has requested that their children do not participate in religious education lessons.
- g) There is lots of communication with parents about the curriculum and in advance of One Day Wonder events.
- h) Staff with different faiths get involved in religious education and One Day Wonder events. It is really positive for pupils to see teachers in a different context.

A copy of the presentation given is attached to these minutes.

39 SACRE Constitution and Code of Conduct

Heidi Shewell-Cooper, SACRE Lead Officer, explained that the Constitution has been reviewed and a draft Constitution was presented to the SACRE at its meeting in July for feedback. Following that, the Constitution has been further refined and reviewed by the Council's Legal Services, and is now being brought to the SACRE for approval.

Members discussed the balance of faiths represented on the SACRE and, in particular, whether the number of places for Church of England representatives is disproportionately high and could be reduced. The SACRE agreed to explore the legislative requirements and good practice in relation to this and whether it is possible to reduce the number of Church of England representatives.

Resolved to:

- (1) approve the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Constitution, as set out in the report;**
- (2) require all members to sign a declaration that they agree to abide by the Code of Conduct;**
- (3) explore the legal requirements for membership and, if possible, develop proposals to amend the Constitution to reduce the number of Church of England representatives so that the overall membership that is more reflective of faiths in the city;**
- (4) appoint the following individuals as Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the representative groups for 2024/25:**
 - a. Group A**
 - i. Chair – Ezekiel Alawale**
 - ii. Vice Chair – Julian Lowe**
 - b. Group B**
 - i. Chair – Anne Lumb**
 - ii. Vice Chair – Sarah Peek**
 - c. Group C**
 - i. Chair – Nazia Iqbal**
 - ii. Vice Chair – Samia Ishaque**
 - d. Group D**
 - i. Chair – Councillor Cheryl Barnard**
 - ii. Vice Chair Samina Riaz**
- (5) note that, as Chair of Group A, Ezekiel Alawale is Vice-Chair of the SACRE for 2024/25.**

40 Minutes

Subject to amending that Anne Lumb had given her apologies, the minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2024 were confirmed as an accurate record.

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2024 were confirmed as an accurate record.

41 Matters Arising

Heidi Shewell-Cooper, SACRE Lead Officer, reported that:

- a) There will be a meeting in early October to discuss the Art Project and identify what would be helpful to the City and to schools. This work will be supported by Challenge Nottingham. Sarah Peek volunteered to assist with this project.

- b) Letters have been sent to members who have not attended a meeting for some time. As a result, some members decided to resign and there are now vacancies for representatives from the Baptist Church, United Reform Church, Methodist Church, Hinduism, one member of Group B and one member of Group C. Work is taking place to fill these vacancies.
- c) Letters have been sent to MPs representing the Nottingham area about the work of SACRE and the importance of religious education in schools. It is also known that Lilian Greenwood MP and Alex Norris MP took up the opportunity to find out more at the National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE) stall at the Labour Party Conference.
- d) The information about the Resource Centre was circulated.

42 RE Monitoring Sub-Group: Funding Update

Heidi Shewell-Cooper, SACRE Lead Officer, outlined that, at its last meeting, the SACRE agreed to request funding of £10,000 from the Council to support work to monitor the religious education that is taking place in schools. As the Director of Education has been off sick there has not yet been a response from the Council to this request and therefore further discussion on this item was deferred to the next meeting.

43 LA Officers Update

Heidi Shewell-Cooper, SACRE Lead Officer, provided an update on resignations from, and new members of the SACRE.

Heidi-Shewell-Cooper, SACRE Lead Officer, reported that the Council's Education Welfare Service has asked if the SACRE can put together guidance about school attendance and absence in relation to religious observance. The aim of this would be to:

- a) alleviate confusion for parents and schools about which days will be authorised for religious observance
- b) give parents confidence in their rights to ask for authorised absence for religious observance
- c) ensure a consistent approach across the local authority area
- d) help schools to take responsibility for decisions about absence
- e) reduce queries to the Education Welfare Service from parents and schools
- f) reduce inconsistencies in approach and the potential for legal challenge to the local authority when schools act without guidance.

Members discussed the extent to which there is evidence that school absence for religious observance is an issue, and were advised that this is hard to evidence because there is no attendance code for this reason. However, there is local intelligence that there can be issues. It was agreed that it would be useful to have a policy that has flexibility for Headteachers to make decisions based on local situations/ their local community, but that this should be based on intelligence about local issues to ensure that it is useful. Julian Lowe and Fiona Maciel volunteered to assist with this project.

Resolved to:

- (1) note the resignations from, and new members of the Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education;**
- (2) produce guidance for schools on absence for reasons of religious observance.**

44 Any Other Business

Heidi Shewell-Cooper, SACRE Lead Officer, encouraged all members to consider the training opportunities on offer from NASACRE, which has recently been circulated.

Councillor Sajid Mohammed noted that the advice provided to schools last year about Ramadan observance was well received and suggested that this is reviewed to ensure it is up-to-date and has a Nottingham focus and then re-circulated to schools before the end of this term. Councillor Sajid Mohammed, Samia Ishaque and Qasim Hussain volunteered to assist with this task.

Resolved to circulate updated advice on Ramadan observance to schools by the end of term.

45 Dates of future meetings

The next meeting is a joint meeting with the Nottinghamshire County Council SACRE on 27 February 2025. The main item for discussion will be the commencement of conversations about the joint syllabus. The meeting will be held at 6-7:30pm, rather than its usual time.