

The Suffolk Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

CONSTITUTION AND PROCEDURES

A. The Statutory Framework

A1 STATUS

Under section 390 [1] of the 1996 Education Act, the local authority has a statutory duty to constitute a standing advisory council on religious education.

A2 PURPOSES

Section 391 [1] requires SACREs to advise the local authority on matters connected with:

- (i) religious worship in community schools or in foundation schools which do not have a religious character, and
- (ii) religious education given in accordance with an agreed syllabus.

These may be matters the authority refers to SACRE or others as the council may see fit. They include, in particular, methods of teaching, the choice of materials and the provision of training for teachers (391 [2]).

SACRE must also carry out the functions conferred on them by section 394-5, that is, the determination of cases in which the requirement for Christian Collective Worship is not to apply and the consequent review of such determinations. The requirements and procedures for determinations are also given in these sections.

A3 MEMBERSHIP

Section 390 (2-5) requires SACRE to consist of groups of persons appointed by the local authority as representative members of the following:

- A. such Christian denominations and other religions and denominations of such religions as, in the opinion of the authority, will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area;
- B. the Church of England;
- C. such associations representing teachers as, in the opinion of the authority, ought to be represented, having regard to the circumstances of the area; and
- D. the local authority.

The numbers appointed to each group should be consistent with the efficient discharge of the group's functions and reflect broadly the proportionate strength of a denomination or religion in the area (392 [2]). The LA should take reasonable steps to ensure that a SACRE member is, and continues to be, representative of their particular religion, denomination or association (393 [3]).

SACRE may also include co-opted members. Such members may only be co-opted by appointed members of SACRE. A person co-opted as a member of the council shall hold office on such terms as may be determined by the members co-opting him (392 [5]).

Members may resign at any time (392 [6]).

A4 VOTING AND OTHER PROCEDURES

On any question to be decided by SACRE only the 4 representative groups (see A3 above) are entitled to vote, each group having a single vote. (390 [7])

A5 AGREED SYLLABUS REVIEW

The representative groups on SACRE, except the Local Authority group, may at any time require a review of the current Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education. Each group has a single vote on the issue. (390 [3-4])

On written notification of such a requirement, the LA must convene an Agreed Syllabus conference to reconsider the Agreed Syllabus. (390 [5])

A6 ANNUAL REPORT

SACRE must publish an annual report on how they have exercised their functions during the previous year and a copy sent to the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. (390 [6-7])

The council's report must

- i. specify any matters on which SACRE has given advice to the authority,
- ii. broadly describe the nature of the advice given, and
- iii. where matters were not referred to SACRE by the authority, give their reasons for offering such advice.

A7 PUBLIC ACCESS TO MEETINGS AND DOCUMENTS

SACRE meetings must be open to the public, with prescribed exceptions (397 [1-3]).

- i. Notice should be given of the time and place of meetings.
- ii. Copies of agendas and reports must be available for inspection by members of the public at cost price.

A8 VALIDITY OF PROCEEDINGS

The validity of any proceedings of the SACRE or of any representative group within the SACRE shall not be affected by either:-

- i. any vacancy amongst representative members;
- ii. any assertion that a representative does not at the time represent the denomination or associations for which he/she was appointed.

B. Locally Determined Procedures

Section 392 of the 1996 Education Act provides a SACRE with the power to regulate its own proceedings in relation to many areas of the statutory framework.

Norfolk has established the following guidance on membership and on procedures for the conduct of its business:

B1 MEMBERSHIP

The Local Authority is responsible for appointing members of SACRE (see A3). Suffolk SACRE membership is as follows:

Committee A – Representatives of Christian & other Religious Denominations

Fourteen persons to be appointed by the LA after consultation with the faith communities:

- One to represent the Roman Catholic Church
- One to represent the Orthodox Churches
- Three to represent larger Free churches (Baptist /Methodist / URC)
- Two to represent smaller Free churches (e.g. Salvation Army / Pentecostal / House Churches)
- Six from other world faiths represented in Norfolk (Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Baha'i)
- Humanist representative

Committee B – Representatives of the Church of England

Four persons to be appointed by the LA after consultation with the appropriate Diocesan Boards of Education.

- Two to represent the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich
- One to represent the Diocese of Norwich

Committee C – Teachers' Representatives

Six persons to be appointed by the LA:

- Persons (other than headteachers) to represent RE colleagues in primary, middle, secondary and special school contexts.
- Persons to represent the Headteachers in primary, middle, secondary and special school contexts.

Committee D – Representatives of the Local Authority

- Three county councilors appointed by the County Council Cabinet

Co-opted members

- Additional persons shall be co-opted to SACRE by other appointed members as appropriate, to give representation to Trusts and other educational bodies or groups in the area with an interest or an expertise in an area of its work.
- Members so co-opted, shall not vote although their views are sought when questions are debated.

- Co-options shall be reviewed at the same time as the general membership of SACRE.

LA officers

- LA officers servicing SACRE shall normally attend each full SACRE meeting.

B2 MEETINGS

- i. Full SACRE meetings shall take place no fewer than three times a year; these meetings shall be open to the public and observers welcome.
- ii. The dates and venues for these meetings shall be published on the County Council Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).
- iii. In addition, an annual conference shall be planned for RE colleagues, headteachers and other interested parties.

B3 OFFICERS

- i. There shall be a Chairperson and Vice-chairperson who shall be elected at the first meeting of the academic year.
- ii. The same person shall not normally serve for more than three years.
- iii. The Local Authority shall appoint the Clerk to SACRE.

B4 AGENDA GROUP

- i. SACRE shall appoint an SACRE Development Group comprising one person from each of the representative groups (committees).
- ii. The Development Group shall meet at least once between SACRE meetings to ensure decisions of the SACRE are progressed, to deal with urgent business and to prepare the agenda for the following meeting of SACRE.

B5 ATTENDANCE AND TENURE OF OFFICE

- i. Membership, and the representative nature of the different groups, shall be reviewed annually in the Spring meeting.
- ii. Members of SACRE shall not normally serve for more than six consecutive years.
- iii. The LA may remove any representative or co-opted member who has failed to attend three consecutive meetings without valid reason.

B6 REVIEW OF CONSTITUTION

- i. Section (B) of this constitution shall be reviewed briefly in the first meeting of the academic year.
- ii. In the event of new legislation concerning SACREs, a review of the whole document shall take place at the first possible SACRE meeting.