

**SO YOU'RE
JOINING YOUR LOCAL
SACRE...**

A HANDBOOK FOR
SACRE
M E M B E R S
I N W A L E S

This document has been produced by the Churches' Joint Education Policy Committee, a co-ordinating group of CYTUN and ChurchesTogether in England, in detailed consultation with the Society of Education Officers and the Wales Association of SACREs. This process has been generously supported by grants from the British and Foreign Schools Society and Wales Association of SACREs (to prepare the Welsh Language version).

Further copies are available, free of charge, from
WASACRE Officers
SACRE Clerks of each LEA in Wales

SO YOU'RE JOINING YOUR LOCAL SACRE . . .

You may have been:

persuaded
elected
volunteered

This booklet:

- ◆ is intended as a guide;
- ◆ points out appropriate legal documentation;
- ◆ identifies support material;
- ◆ enables you to work within your SACRE to support and encourage local schools to ensure high standards in Religious Education and worship.

WHY IS THERE A SACRE?

In 1944, Local Education Authorities (LEAs) were empowered by law to set up a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education, known in short as a SACRE. In 1988, LEAs had a duty laid upon them to do so.

WHAT DOES A SACRE DO?

It is required by law that RE be taught in schools, but RE is not part of the National Curriculum. Instead RE is a local responsibility. SACREs oversee RE and Collective Worship.

WHO WILL YOU MEET AT A SACRE?

A SACRE is designed to represent all the interests of the local community. You could find elected councillors, representatives of faith communities, and members of the education community.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

A SACRE is part of the local government machinery

Welsh Office Circular 10/94, para 88:1 a 2; Education Act 1996, Pennod III

WHAT ARE ITS DUTIES?

Its main function is to advise the LEA on matters related to Collective Worship in community schools and some other schools and on the Religious Education given in accordance with their Agreed Syllabus. The situation is complicated. Figure 1 may help.

- ◆ The SACRE can require the LEA to review its Agreed Syllabus.
- ◆ It must consider applications from head teachers that their school be released from the requirement for Collective Worship to be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character. This is known as a determination.
- ◆ The SACRE must publish an Annual Report of its work.

ACCAC, Annual SACRE Reports: Guidance on the Format and Structure

ACCAC Review of SACRE Reports

Figure 1: Religious Education and Collective Worship in School

		Schools Having a Religious Character			
		<i>Voluntary Aided</i>	<i>Voluntary Controlled</i>	<i>Foundation</i>	<i>Community</i>
<i>Religious Education</i>	Reflects religious character (1)	LEA Agreed Syllabus (2)	LEA Agreed Syllabus (2) (3)	Not applicable	
<i>Worship</i>	Reflects religious character	Reflects religious character	Reflects religious character	Not applicable	

		Schools Having No Religious Character			
		<i>Voluntary Aided</i>	<i>Voluntary Controlled</i>	<i>Foundation</i>	<i>Community</i>
<i>Religious Education</i>	LEA Agreed Syllabus	LEA Agreed Syllabus	LEA Agreed Syllabus (3)	LEA Agreed Syllabus	
<i>Worship</i>	1996 Act - Broadly and Mainly Christian	1996 Act - Broadly and Mainly Christian	1996 Act - Broadly and Mainly Christian	1996 Act - Broadly and Mainly Christian	

Notes: Parents have the right to withdraw their children from RE and/or Collective Worship in all schools.

- (1) Parents can opt for their children to receive Agreed Syllabus RE.
- (2) Parents can opt for their children to receive RE in accordance with the religious character of the school.
- (3) These schools have a five-year period to return to their LEA Agreed Syllabus if they have been using a syllabus from another authority.

WHAT ELSE CAN A SACRE DO?

A SACRE's broad role is to support effective provision of RE and Collective Worship within its remit, see Figure 1, by:

- ◆ giving advice on methods of teaching agreed syllabus RE including the choice of teaching materials;
- ◆ advising the LEA on the provision of training for teachers;
- ◆ monitoring inspection reports on RE, Collective Worship and Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development (SMSC);
- ◆ considering complaints about the provision and delivery of Religious Education and Collective Worship referred to it by the LEA.

As a member of your local SACRE, you will be involved in the formal process as required by the law. It is, however, an opportunity to work with others to look creatively and imaginatively at the religious education of young people in your community. Make time to dream dreams!

SOME MORE ABOUT THE COMPOSITION OF A SACRE

This is defined by law. It is made up of three committees. See Figure 2.

Figure 2: The Composition of a SACRE



Each of these committees has equal voting rights (one vote per committee).

COMMITTEE A

Within these groups will be those from faith communities represented within the locality.

This contains representatives of Christian denominations, e.g., some of the following: the Roman Catholic Church, Church in Wales, Free Churches, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian Church of Wales, Union of Welsh Independents, United Reformed Church, Salvation Army, Society of Friends.

It also might contain representatives from other Faiths, e.g., Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Bahais, Parsees, Jains.

The composition of Committee A will vary from SACRE to SACRE as it reflects the variety and numerical representation of the different faith communities in the locality.

Humanist representatives cannot be members of Committee A but can be co-opted to the SACRE as additional members.

COMMITTEE B

The teacher members of the committee are representatives of teacher associations. It is the Local Authority that decides which teacher associations will be represented. They may approach the teacher unions, but it is possible that associations of RE teachers in the local area will be asked to provide a representative.

COMMITTEE C

It is the local authority's responsibility to provide their own representatives for this committee. The LEA may wish to have all parties and viewpoints from across the political spectrum represented on the SACRE.

SOME PRACTICALITIES

How often does a SACRE meet?

There is no hard and fast rule about the number of meetings a SACRE should hold each year. It must, however, meet sufficient times to fulfil its statutory duties. WASACRE recommends that this necessitates meetings being held at least once a term. There is a requirement to produce an Annual Report.

If I'm not there, will it matter?

- ◆ Each committee should have at least one member present.
- ◆ Decisions cannot be made unless there is at least one person present to cast the committee's single vote.
- ◆ Co-opted members do not have a vote.

Will I be asked to Chair the meeting?

The law does not state how the Chair of a SACRE should be appointed. The LEA can make this decision or can allow the SACRE to choose the Chair from amongst their members. As a member of the SACRE you could, therefore, be appointed Chair of the SACRE, but not against your will!

Welsh Office Circular 10/94, para. 114, 115

Will I be asked to take the minutes?

The LEA's responsibility to set up a SACRE implies a duty to fund it. This means the LEA should provide a clerk for the SACRE who would attend and minute each meeting. The clerk is usually the point of contact for SACRE matters within the Local Authority.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Figure 1 shows the types of school whose Collective Worship comes within the remit of the SACRE. These schools are required to provide a daily act of Collective Worship which 'shall be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character'. This means it reflects the broad traditions of Christian belief without being distinctive of any particular Christian denomination.

Education Act 1996, Chapter III

WASACRE recommends that SACRES:

- ◆ receive inspection reports;
- ◆ monitor good practice, including any difficulties;
- ◆ offer advice to head teachers and governing bodies and disseminate good practice.

Many SACREs produce their own statements on Collective Worship.

DETERMINATIONS

Determinations are 'exceptions from broadly Christian Collective Worship'. The determination procedure allows for the requirement that Collective Worship should be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character' to be lifted in respect of some or all of the pupils in a school for whom this is deemed inappropriate.

Applications for determinations are made to the SACRE by the head teacher of any community school after consultation with the school's governing body. Determinations are only possible for schools that have no religious character. The SACRE should review each determination every five years.

Education Act 1996, Chapter III, Welsh Office Circular 10/94, para. 68-80

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Figure 1 shows the types of school whose provision for Religious Education comes within the remit of a SACRE. These schools are required to follow the local Agreed Syllabus for RE which must 'reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain'.

Education Act 1996, Chapter III, Welsh Office Circular 10/94, para. 31-37

SACREs should provide advice on:

Methods of teaching RE

How is the Agreed Syllabus best delivered to each age group? What mixture should there be of formal content, thematic work, group work, personal discovery, visits to specified buildings or events, and visitors with an educational remit? What is the relationship to cross-curricular studies, to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and to Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE)? Is the distinctiveness of RE being maintained in such relationships?

Choices of resources for RE

National publications review all new RE materials and resource centres can be visited by teachers. The SACRE should consider cost factors and offer, with an RE Adviser's help, advice on the most appropriate (or most economic) materials to deliver the aims, objectives and content of the Agreed Syllabus.

Training of teachers

National surveys show that the effective introduction of a new Agreed Syllabus requires a considerable investment in resources and in the training of all primary teachers and all those teaching RE in secondary schools, if the syllabus is to be properly implemented. SACREs should ensure that LEAs are aware of the need for teachers to be trained to deliver effectively the Local Agreed Syllabus for RE.

WASACREs recommends that SACREs:

- ◆ receive inspection reports;
- ◆ monitor good practice in the delivery of the Agreed Syllabus and take note of any difficulties;
- ◆ disseminate good practice on the teaching of RE.

Other interests also include:

Assessment and testing

SACREs should monitor school approaches to assessing pupils' progress in RE. They should also be aware of the uptake of external examinations in RE and RS.

RE and SMSC

SACREs should be aware of the links between pupils' RE and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Committee A has the opportunity to indicate areas of knowledge that pupils should have about religious beliefs and the influence these have on the formation of attitudes and values.

Religious teaching from within the faith community

SACREs should be aware that some pupils will be formally receiving teaching about their own religion from their parents or through attendance at church, gurdwara, mosque, synagogue or temple. The style of this teaching could differ from religious education, prescribed by law, to be delivered in their schools.

REVIEW OF THE RE SYLLABUS

It is required by law that every LEA institute a review of its locally agreed syllabuses within five years of the last review.

If committees A and B ask the LEA in writing to reconsider its Agreed Syllabus it must convene a conference for that purpose.

Education Act 1996, Chapter III

SO WHAT IS AN AGREED SYLLABUS CONFERENCE (ASC)?

An ASC is convened in order to produce an Agreed Syllabus for RE. It is a separate legal entity from a SACRE.

An ASC:

- ◆ contains the same committees as the SACRE;
- ◆ can be made up of SACRE members but need not do so. There is no provision for co-opted members.

The Chair of the ASC can be appointed by the LEA or the LEA may allow the ASC to choose its own Chair.

The LEA's responsibility to convene the ASC implies a duty to provide funds for its work.

For detailed provisions, see Education Act 1996, Chapter III, Schedule 31

WHAT IS THE DISTINCTIVE CONTRIBUTION OF EACH OF THE COMMITTEES TO THE WORK OF SACREs?

COMMITTEE A

Committee A is made up of representatives from faith communities represented within the locality. Members of Committee A:

- ◆ should present a positive image of their religion, so that members of the other Committees are disabused of any religious stereotypes of each denomination or religion. They must also make clear any grounds on which they may differ from each other, but also the respect they have for each other's viewpoints – since such convictions and mutual understanding both lie at the heart of effective classroom RE.
- ◆ can create opportunities within SACRE meetings to raise awareness of issues of sensitivity in the teaching of RE to the children of their faith community.
- ◆ should appreciate the difficulties schools are facing in the area, support their best endeavours, and act, where necessary as a link between schools and the faith communities.

COMMITTEE B

Committee B is made up of teachers who are representative of teacher associations. Members of Committee B should:

- ◆ have a real and positive interest in RE in primary, secondary or special schools;
- ◆ ensure that the needs of schools and teachers are considered by the SACRE in their discussions;
- ◆ provide SACRE with information about the context in which RE is taught in the schools in the local authority;
- ◆ ensure that the associations they represent are informed about the work of the SACRE;
- ◆ create opportunities for other teachers to learn more about the work of the SACRE and give them the opportunity to have their views expressed at SACRE meetings;
- ◆ consult other teachers on matters of particular importance to the work of SACRE.

COMMITTEE C

Committee C is made up of representatives of the local authority. Members of Committee C:

- ◆ can bring to the meeting the breadth of educational issues and concerns which elected members are wrestling with and place RE's role within it;

- ◆ can be the supporters of RE within the various committees and structures of the LEA/ County Council;
- ◆ can give political support to enable RE, because of its local determination, flourish within each LEA – financial support, advisory support etc;
- ◆ can appreciate the issues raised by a multi-faith, multi-cultural society for the education of children in RE, and reflect these issues in the Education Committee, Scrutiny Committee, and Cabinet etc. as a means of supporting RE;
- ◆ can bring the ‘public’ dimension to the debate about RE provision and support.

MAKING THE WORK OF SACREs KNOWN

To Local Education authorities

- ◆ The relationship of SACREs to the work of the LEA and elected members is important. **SACREs should ensure that their proceedings are reported to the LEA’s Education Committee, or, where there is no longer an Education Committee, the appropriate committee established by the Authority to make decisions about education services,** through the circulation of the agreed minutes of each meeting as well as by the formal presentation, to that committee, of their Annual Report.
- ◆ **The local RE Adviser can provide professional guidance** and practical expertise which can be used by the SACRE. Their attendance at SACRE meetings is invaluable.

To schools, governors and parents

- ◆ Many schools seem unaware of the responsibilities and activities of their local SACRE. It would be helpful for SACREs to suggest that each school’s staff notice board should display information about SACRE membership so that classroom teachers may know whom to contact. In this way the specialist expertise on different faiths represented on a SACRE may be a source, to schools, of advice representative of the religion or denomination concerned.
- ◆ Many governing bodies and parents are also unaware of the activities of their local SACRE and the impact of this on the teaching of RE. It would be helpful if the availability of the SACRE Annual Report is made more widely known.

To the faith communities

- ◆ Individual faith community members have a responsibility to inform those they represent about the activities of a SACRE. They should also be available to receive views of their community to feed into SACRE discussions.
- ◆ The SACRE Annual Report should be sent to the faith communities represented on the SACRE.

To the general public

- ◆ The SACRE meetings are open to the general public. Notice of meetings should be given and relevant documents made available.

RESOURCES

EDUCATION LEGISLATION

Education Act 1996, Part V, Chapter III, Schedule 31

School Standards and Framework Act 1998, Chapter VI and Schedules 19 and 20

The Welsh Office *Circular number 10/94* Religious Education and Collective Worship

Qualification, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC):

Annual SACRE Reports - Guidance on Structure and Format. ISBN 186112 0648

Review of SACRE Reports - produced annually