

THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

At a meeting of the **STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)** held on **THURSDAY, 1ST MAY, 2025** at 5.30 pm in Committee Room 2, Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE

MEMBERS PRESENT

Panel A Christian and Other Denominations

Ann Boater (Quaker)
Dr. Lynndy Levin (Jewish)
Ariyananda Luo (Buddhist)
Lorraine Nunez (Roman Catholic)
Abdul Quadir (Muslim)

Panel B The Church of England

Stephanie Ellner
Mary Thorne (Chair)

Panel C Teachers

Craig Baxter

Panel D Camden Local Authority

Councillor Julian Fulbrook
Councillor Sylvia McNamara
Councillor Nazma Rahman

ALSO PRESENT

Anoushka Clayton-Walshe, Committee Services
Rebecca Branch, Faith Forum representative
Claire Clinton, Professional Advisor to SACRE
Owen Rees, Head of Governor Services, Camden Learning

The minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting. They are subject to approval and signature at the next meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) and any corrections approved at that meeting will be recorded in those minutes.

MINUTES

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Judy Dixey, Councillor Rebecca Filer, Emily Knowles, Rev. Damien Mason, Councillor Jenny Mulholland, Nandarane Naina Parmar and Helen Young.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY, NON-PECUNIARY AND OTHER INTERESTS IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA

There were no declarations.

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Webcasting

The Chair announced that the meeting as being broadcast live to the internet and would be capable of repeated viewing and copies of the recording could be made available on request. Those participating in the meeting were deemed to be consenting to being filmed.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2025 be approved and signed as a correct record.

5. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR DECIDES TO TAKE AS URGENT

There was no notification of urgent business.

6. MEMBERSHIP OF CAMDEN SACRE

The Professional Advisor welcomed the new SACRE member for Panel A, Ariyananda Luo, acting as the Buddhist representative.

RESOLVED –

THAT the membership be noted

7. FAITH FORUM UPDATE

Consideration was given to Faith Forum verbal update.

The Faith Forum representative gave the following updates:

- A calendar of events had been previously circulated. The team were being more strategic in their planning, mindful that they were trying to appeal and be visible to a particularly busy group of people – leaders in the faith, elected councillor, local area and school communities.

- The introduction of neighbourhood coffee mornings was so far successful, bringing in 30 attendees at the last meeting and six faiths represented. There were different themes relevant to communities at each meeting, such as Violence Against Woman and Girls (VAWG) in faith settings, homelessness, crime and safeguarding. There had been difficulty in bringing school leaders to the meetings, where if they could attend they had the opportunity to network and make connections with faith and charity leaders and help learning between institutions. The team would increase targeted advertising to school leading and find ways that could supporting their attendance.

The Chair thanked the Faith Forum representative for the update and invited questions and comments from members. The following was discussed:

- The Professional Advisor suggested Faith Forum to attend both secondary and primary network meetings and for them to present a clear case to schools on the benefits of attending the coffee mornings. They asked the Head of Governor Services, as a separate attempt, how this offer could be put forward to school leadership. The Faith Forum representative said the team aimed to broker partnerships, identify potential hosts for meetings, and support RE visits to schools, and confirmed they were happy to consider and take forward the suggestions made.
- A member raised concerns about the difficulty of getting teachers and schools to attend the coffee morning and asked whether governors or parent organisations could be approached instead. They also suggested contacting Early Years groups, where some held their own coffee mornings, to explore involvement. The Professional Advisor acknowledged the challenge due to the number of Camden schools and the limited capacity of the small team to make individual visits, which was why a neighbourhood-based approach had been adopted. They added that if schools could not attend coffee mornings, connecting with a Faith Forum representative could lead to future partnership opportunities. A SACRE teacher representative highlighted the difficulty in obtaining cover to attend external activities, noting that while secondary network meetings were recognised, other activities were often subject to a no-release policy, particularly during the run-up to exam season.

RESOLVED –

THAT SACRE note the update.

8. DETERMINATION - RICHARD COBDEN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Consideration was given to Richard Cobden Primary School's determination application.

The Head of School (Scarlett Cookson), accompanied by the Deputy Headteacher (Hou Law), presented their application. The Head of School explained they were seeking a determination as their community school was in a diverse area with a majority Muslim intake and needed to reflect the needs of its pupils. They emphasised the importance of children seeing their own faith represented, as well as having opportunities to learn about other faiths and ideas. The school required

flexibility in its approach. Assemblies followed a themed plan linked to both British and school values, and throughout the year, staff spoke about world events, religious festivals, and social issues in a way appropriate for pupils. The school also prioritised reflection, oracy, and pupil voice, ensuring key questions were included and children had opportunities to share their views.

The Professional Advisor stated that the school demonstrated an excellent act of worship and strong pupil engagement. The school had reviewed the updated guidance and had previously held a determination. The Professional Advisor added that while times of reflection were in place, it was important to ensure that children were given daily opportunities to reflect and understood what reflection meant. They observed that some children appeared to understand the process, while others may have simply been quiet without engaging in internal reflection. They stressed the importance of offering a choice between prayer and reflection. The Chair highlighted the distinction between a teaching moment and a reflection moment, explaining that collective worship differed from classroom teaching and played a role in developing a child's spirituality.

Members asked whether there had been an opportunity to ask children what they reflected on. The Head of School explained that reflection usually took place at the end of assembly following discussion, but was often followed immediately by playtime, which meant there was limited opportunity to come back together. The school had now started to develop its practice by creating space for further discussion, enabling staff to capture the children's thoughts and gain insight into what they were reflecting on.

It was confirmed by the Professional Advisor that the Department for Education's guidance did not require schools, particularly primary schools, to provide prayer spaces. While secondary schools sometimes offered space due to the age and maturity of pupils, the responsibility for meeting religious requirements remained with parents, who could make arrangements for their children to pray during lunchtime if they wished; this would not be organised by school staff.

The Chair acknowledged that high-quality collective worship was taking place and noted the positive impact of previous work between the Professional Advisor and the school on the importance of teaching and social and emotional development. They observed that the school had taken this feedback on board and developed it further, with clear strengthening of practice as a result.

RESOLVED –

THAT SACRE agree the Richard Cobden Primary School determination application.

9. NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SACRE (NASACRE) UPDATES

Consideration was given to the NASACRE updates.

Two members confirmed they would like to be Camden delegates for the NASACRE conference 2025 on 19 May 2025 – Ann Boater and Councillor Rahman.

The Professional Advisor noted there was a SACRE introduction online webinar on 24 June, which members were free to attend.

RESOLVED –

THAT SACRE note the update.

10. UNDERSTANDING RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (RE) DATA FROM CAMDEN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Consideration was given to the RE data for Camden secondary schools.

The Professional Advisor made the following points about the data:

- Data was provided by the school and may contain minor errors, as it was often completed by administrative staff. These issues could usually be resolved through direct communication with the school.
- It was noted that it was SACRE's role to advise the local authority on concerns or observations arising from this data.
- In Year 7, government recommendations advised that 5% of curriculum time be allocated to RE, equating to 1 hour, 10 minutes. The commonly reported figure of 4.23% typically meant one hour of RE per week. RE time allocation generally reduced in Years 10 and 11, particularly for pupils not opting for a qualification. This made interpretation of the data more complex, as it depended on pupil numbers and course selection.
- Pupils taking RE as a GCSE option typically received two hours per week. Those not opting for a qualification often had reduced provision, usually around one hour or less.
- 97.3% of pupils at Achland Burghley did not take a formal RE qualification. This raised questions about what non-qualification RE provision was in place for the majority of pupils.
- Camden School for Girls was highlighted as an example where nearly all pupils took RE, despite only receiving 30 minutes of timetabled RE per week. The strong GCSE results were attributed in part to the Head of RE voluntarily running additional sessions during lunchtimes, which were not reflected in the official timetable data.
- Errors were identified in the submissions from Hampstead and Regent schools, and it was suggested that support should be offered to those completing the form, as the data was also reviewed by Ofsted.
- It was noted that UCL Academy did not complete return therefore no data was available. Although the school did offer RE, through Ofsted only GCSE data was available, showing that 21% of pupils had taken the exam in the previous year. This left 78.6% unaccounted for in terms of RE provision. In response, a member and representative from the school clarified that in Years 10 and 11, those taking GCSE RE had 150 minutes of lessons per week. For others, there was no non-assessed RE; however, spiritual development was addressed through assemblies. The Professional Advisor suggested that ideally there should be a short, non-assessed RE course of one lesson per week.

The Chair stated that SACRE should address schools failing to deliver statutory RE, noting this was a legal issue affecting several schools, and suggested posing direct questions to headteachers. The Professional Advisor confirmed that decisions about RE provision were made higher up in the school hierarchy. SACRE's role was to identify the right questions to raise with the local authority for further investigation. The Head of Governor Services, declaring their governance role at UCL Academy, acknowledged curriculum pressures at Key Stages 3 and 4. They advised that, while SACRE could pursue the matter, there may be more scope for challenge and assurance at Key Stage 3 in the near term.

The Professional Advisor referred to the recent launch of the revised syllabus and encouraged SACRE to continue its momentum. Several Heads of RE had supported SACRE raising the issue of compulsory RE provision. The syllabus included suggestions such as timetabling RE through drop-down days. An upcoming Oak Academy course was offering free general RE materials, including PowerPoints, that schools could use. While recommended changes were now unlikely before September, discussions for future implementation could begin now.

The Head of Governor Services recommended following up with schools that submitted no data.

The Professional Advisor noted there were some positive outcomes in the data and proposed sending congratulatory letters to those schools.

Action By - Professional Advisor and Clerk

The Chair highlighted there was a lot of work taking place in the ongoing national curriculum review, which will provide clarity in the next academic year once the review is completed.

The Head of Governor Services acknowledged the positive RE outcomes, and suggested in future years to congratulate schools who made measurable improvements as well as results. The Professional Advisor reported that impactful interventions were being implemented in schools, though the results would only become apparent later, and these interventions would be embedded over time, with follow-up discussions planned. They also mentioned that secondary teachers were being brought together for the first time in a long period, with a noticeable increase in participation this year. Positive feedback had been received by schools, and discussions were showing a promising rise in engagement.

RESOLVED –

THAT SACRE note the data.

11. CAMDEN SACRE PRIORITIES 2024-25

Consideration was given to the Camden SACRE Priorities 2024-25 paper.

The Professional Advisor confirmed that monitoring forms would be sent out in June after exams via email using a Google form, with a return deadline of by the end of July. The information gathered would be discussed at the autumn meeting.

The Chair and the Head of Governor Services thanked the Professional Advisor for her quality work, noting significant improvements.

RESOLVED –

THAT SACRE note the paper.

12. SACRE ANNUAL SELF-EVALUATION TOOLKIT (SECTIONS 4 AND 5)

Consideration was given to the SACRE Annual Self-evaluation Toolkit and Actions paper.

The following was discussed for each section:

4a – Supporting pupil entitlement

Members assessed Camden as ‘established’ in this area, noting that systems were in place and had recently been updated. It was agreed that the area would progress towards ‘advanced’ once the new monitoring form had been introduced and embedded.

4b – Enhancing the quality of provision of collective worship (CW)

- Members agreed Camden was at ‘advanced’ level. This was based on first-hand experience, regular determinations, recent dissemination of good practice, and written advice provided on collective worship.
- It was noted by the Chair that going forward it would be important to ensure collective worship remained a regular agenda item alongside RE, maintaining a balance between the two now that the syllabus work had been completed.
- It was also recognised that there was limited knowledge of RE provision in schools which did not hold determinations.

4c – Responding to requests for determinations

Members felt this was at ‘advanced’ level. Camden had improved in this area, with schools presenting their requests and a noted improvement in practice.

5a – SACRE’s membership

- Members agreed Camden was at ‘advanced’ level. There was a strong and representative membership, with ongoing engagement from councillors, teachers, and the Faith Forum.
- It was noted that the terms of reference had been reviewed and updated.

5b – SACRE’s understanding of the local area

- Members assessed this area as ‘established’. SACRE had reviewed local data 18 months ago, including religious identity data from the Camden census, and had considered how SACRE membership reflected the local demographic.
- The work had been referenced in previous SACRE annual reports, and it was suggested that this could be highlighted more explicitly in future reports. Links

had also been made with the local interfaith group, and this would be kept under review.

5c – SACRE’s engagement with the community cohesion agenda

- Members said Camden reflected elements of ‘developing’, ‘established’ and ‘advanced’ in this area.
- The syllabus included clear references to community cohesion from Early Years through to the end of Key Stage 3, with explicit content on units which could be accessed by all schools. However, members noted that not all schools may be fully aware of this available content. The Professional Advisor said it was being regularly highlighted in network meetings and built into various shared documents.
- The language of ‘community cohesion’ had evolved to ‘personal development’ in line with Ofsted frameworks. SACRE would reflect this shift when the new inspection report cards were finalised.
- A member asked whether there was evidence linking what pupils were taught in RE to their lived experience of community cohesion. The Professional Advisor suggested this could be explored through the pupil survey conducted every three years, as had been done previously. This combined teacher-led class discussion forms with individual anonymous pupil responses. The Chair highlighted the importance of capturing the ‘so what’ questions - how RE shaped pupils’ relationships and values. A member teacher representative noted that while a student attitude survey already existed, with questions on self and wellbeing, it may not fully address how pupils related to others.
- The Professional Advisor said it was disappointing not to have pupil work to share at this meeting, but teachers were likely stretched before the school holidays, and they would attempt to organise their involvement at a future meeting. The Chair suggested even a video submission could be valuable as a way to connect to schools at SACRE meetings.

5d – SACRE’s role within wider LA initiatives on community cohesion

Members agreed Camden was at ‘advanced’ level in this area.

RESOLVED –

THAT SACRE note Sections 4 and 5 of the self-evaluation toolkit.

13. INTERVENTIONS AND DEVELOPMENTS FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN CAMDEN

Consideration was given to the Interventions and developments for Religious Education in Camden paper.

The Professional Advisor noted that five teachers took part in the GCSE intervention, beginning with an in-person day followed by three online webinars. The group had time with the chief examiner - once during marking and again during revision. The Professional Advisor also provided the teachers with GCSE games and flash cards. Teacher feedback from the intervention was positive and included in Appendix 1.

RESOLVED –

THAT SACRE

1. Note the GCSE intervention feedback from teachers (Appendix 1)
2. Agree the monitoring RE survey questions (Appendix 2a and 2b), ahead of implementation with schools

14. CAMDEN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (RE) NETWORK MEETINGS UPDATE

Consideration was given to the RE network meetings update.

In relation to primary network meetings, the Professional Advisor reported that the next meeting would take place in June and include a Hindu masterclass. A piece of work would be taking place with Kate Prude on assessing the impact of the new Agreed Syllabus this year.

In relation to primary network meetings, the Professional Advisor noted that the meetings were going well. In the summer term, schools would be asked to share examples of key stage work illustrating weak, middle, and strong performance. Camden schools were invited to join an online network meeting with Newham and Barking & Dagenham, which would include a masterclass delivered by Anna Silver from the Board of Deputies of British Jews. The session focused on teaching Judaism as a world view. The Chair commented that masterclasses were highly valuable for teachers, especially those hearing directly from lived experience.

The Head of Governor Services welcomed the clear link between SACRE and the network meetings and emphasised the importance of tracking attendance to monitor engagement.

RESOLVED –

THAT SACRE note the update.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

There was no urgent business.

16. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The following provisional meeting dates for the 2025/26 academic year, all starting at 5.30pm, were noted:

- 22 October 2025
- 11 February 2026
- 10 June 2026

The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions over the year.

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) - Thursday, 1st May, 2025

The next meeting was scheduled to be held fully in-person on 22 October and the Professional Advisor would arrange for school representatives to attend.

The meeting ended at 7.10 pm.

CHAIR

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MINUTES END