



**Oldham**  
Council

**Standing Advisory Council on Religious  
Education  
(SACRE)**

**Annual Report 2024-25**

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# Section One: Introduction and the Work of SACRE

## Words from the Chair#

I am pleased to present this year's SACRE Annual Report. The past year has been one of progress, collaboration, and celebration for Religious Education in Oldham.

A major highlight has been the launch of our new Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education. This represents a significant milestone for Oldham and reflects the hard work and dedication of many individuals. The launch conference in June was a great success, bringing together both primary and secondary teachers, along with faith and non-faith community representatives from across the borough. The range of contributions and the level of engagement on the day clearly demonstrated the enthusiasm and commitment that exist in Oldham for high-quality Religious Education.

Teachers play a crucial role in shaping and implementing the new syllabus, and I would like to express my sincere thanks for their insight, creativity, and professionalism. It is these very contributions that ensure the teaching of RE in Oldham remains meaningful, relevant, and inclusive for all pupils.

Over the past year, SACRE has also continued to use the Self-Evaluation Framework to reflect critically on its work and identify priorities for ongoing development. This process has helped us strengthen our effectiveness and focus our efforts on supporting schools. On behalf of SACRE, I would like to thank the Local Authority (Oldham Council) for its continued support. This partnership is vital to the success of our work.

Oldham continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to Religious Education and to ensuring that every young person benefits from high-quality learning in this important area of the curriculum. As Chair of SACRE, I am proud of the professionalism and dedication shown by our schools, teachers, and community partners. Together, we are building on these firm foundations and further strengthening Religious Education across Oldham.

My thanks go to all members of SACRE and Pennine Learning for their expertise and ongoing support. Together, we will continue to promote and sustain excellence in Religious Education across the borough.

**Claire Harewood**

**Chair of Oldham SACRE**

## Overview

This annual report is prepared by Oldham SACRE. SACRE as a body is required to advise the Local Authority on matters relating to Religious Education and Collective Worship. This report provides a picture of the support given for Religious Education and Collective Worship during 2024-25. The report is a public document which is also sent to the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE) and the Department for Education.

For further information on the report or on RE and Collective Worship, contact Jake Womack at [jake@penninelearning.com](mailto:jake@penninelearning.com) or the clerk to SACRE, Kate Sanderson [kate.sanderson@tameside.gov.uk](mailto:kate.sanderson@tameside.gov.uk)

## Dates and content of meetings

There were three meetings of Oldham SACRE during the year 2024-25. Meetings are open to the public and minutes are also available on-line. These meetings were held on, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2024, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2025 and 18<sup>th</sup> June 2025. In addition there was a meeting of the Local Agreed Syllabus Conference on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2025 where SACRE recommended to Oldham Council the new Local Agreed Syllabus (Believing and Belonging)

As well as considering the general position of RE and collective worship in Oldham, SACRE discussed the following issues at its meetings during the year:

- Annual Report
- Local Agreed Syllabus Conference to agree the new syllabus
- CPD for teachers including the Oldham Teaching Conference (SACRE)
- Secondary RE provision
- SACRE audit and work plan
- Organisation of SACRE – exploring roles for SACRE members
- Reports from regional and national bodies (NASACRE and GM Faiths Forum)
- Reports from network and schools
- Questions to be included in enquiry to schools
- Collective Worship
- Publishing advice for schools on sensitive issues about faith in schools.
- Self-evaluation form (SEF) and development plan
- The need for Muslim, Humanist representation as well as teachers
- Census data

## SEF Summary: **Key areas June 2025**

### SACRE

1. **Membership review:** We have secured additional representatives, but some of these have moved and some have not replied to the recent membership trawl. This means we will have vacancies for: Sikhi, Islam, SEND school, Teacher Associations and HA. Our thanks to the CofE for providing representation. Islam is a major priority, and while we have some representation (Cllr Umar Nasheen and Claire Harewood), a designated rep is required.
2. **Attendance and participation:** this has been an important year for SACRE, with the commissioning and agreement of the LAS. Additional meetings have taken place to facilitate this, including Oldham wide online consultation, primary consultation and secondary consultation. SACRE members have been a big part of making this happen. The Syllabus launch had over 50 attendees, and also had faith communities with stalls to facilitate connection with lived experience.
3. **Equipping and training:** NASACRE courses are freely available to members. This will continue.
4. **The development plan should be continually reviewed, revised, and evaluated as part of meetings.** This is a standing item.
5. **An annual questionnaire:** This year, the questionnaire was postponed due to the LAS. However, schools participated in the consultation process (Oldham wide online consultation, primary consultation meeting, secondary consultation meeting, LAS was an item at networks led by the professional advisor). Next year it will resume with a focus on LAS implementation.
6. **More opportunities should be found to hear from pupils and teachers and pupils:** We have certainly covered this for teachers through the LAS work. However, we still need to seek additional opportunities for students. We plan to host the meeting at a school and have a curriculum presentation from students.
7. **MAT links:** MATS were represented at the LAS launch and at the mop up. PL is working alongside MATs to support the adoption of the LAS.

### Religious Education

1. **Annual questionnaire:** Postponed due to LAS.
3. **The relationship between SACRE and school senior leaders could be developed further:** LAS provided an opportunity for this. Leaders also allowed staff to be part of developing new Oldham specific units. There is more work to be done here with the utilisation of the 10% secured by resource sales allowing for resource production by local teachers.

### Local Agreed Syllabus

1. **Agreement of the LAS:** PL were commissioned for the LAS and have completed lots of consultation (covered above). Syllabus was agreed, commissioned and launched. Implementation to be monitored and training offered.
2. **LAS launch and training:** The launch was completed along with online syllabus 'mop up' training. Networks have also had training, and this will continue through the next year.

### Collective Worship

1. **Advice:** The professional advisor led a session on Collective Worship with the Primary team alongside Ground breakers. Our information on Collective Worship was distributed. Cranmer Institute also sent this out on our behalf.
2. **Enquiry:** Postponed and covered above.

### Community Cohesion

1. **Membership should be widened:** Covered above.
2. **Advice should be prepared to support schools in dealing with sensitive issues connected to faith and beliefs.** This has been done. A redistribution should follow the syllabus launch as supporting resources are drip fed to schools through the next year.

## SACRE Priorities for 2025-26

Self-evaluation has helped to identify key areas for development which are included in SACRE's development plan.

### SACRE

1. **Membership review:** continue to ensure full representation is in place with maybe more regular reps for Islam in place.
2. **Equipping and training:** SACRE induction booklet to be produced. New visits guide has been completed and needs agreement at next SACRE. NASACRE courses continue to be available. LAS training to take place over the year.
3. **An annual questionnaire:** The questionnaire will be agreed at the November SACRE meeting, with data to be gathered for the following SACRE. It will focus on the LAS and support that can be offered.

4. **More opportunities should be found to hear from pupils and teachers and pupils:**

Additional opportunities may be found next year for this, through checking the implementation of the syllabus. In the year, we will aim to have a presentation from a school (or schools) about RE in their setting. This could be done as a host school. Additional time has been allocated for advisory work in Oldham for 2025-26.

5. Additional communication to go to MATS this year, especially through the means of the Syllabus.

#### Community Cohesion

1. **Advice should be prepared to support schools in dealing with sensitive issues connected to faith and beliefs.** This has been done, but another wave of promotion could be carried out. This can be sent out as a 'batch' of helpful RE documents next year (new visits guide, updated sensitivities guidance, network info, syllabus support).

Further details of the self-evaluation or the development plan can be obtained via the clerk to SACRE.

### Meetings for 2025-26

SACRE meetings for 2024-2025 have been provisionally arranged for these dates:

- 5<sup>th</sup> November @ Brian Clarke Academy
- 25<sup>th</sup> February @ Venue TBC
- 3<sup>rd</sup> June Venue @ TBC

For more information contact the clerk, Kate Sanderson [kate.sanderson@tameside.gov.uk](mailto:kate.sanderson@tameside.gov.uk)

## Section Two: Statutory Responsibilities: Religious Education

### The Local Agreed Syllabus

The Agreed Syllabus for RE has now been agreed and launched in summer 2025. The new syllabus is based on the Big Ideas in RE (2021) and is compliant with the new guidance from the RE Council.

### Standards and Monitoring

#### SACRE enquiry

Due to the LAS process, there was no SACRE enquiry this year. Consultation with primary and secondary teachers formed teacher voice, as did feedback from the launch.

	Entries	%9-4	%9-5	%9-7
School A	0			
School B	29	62.1%	48.3%	10.3%
School C	5	60.0%	40.0%	20.0%
School D	146	63.7%	47.9%	15.1%
School E	16	50.0%	37.5%	6.3%
School F	17	64.7%	52.9%	11.8%
School G	40	85.0%	80.0%	37.5%
School H	12	66.7%	66.7%	25.0%
School I	80	76.3%	68.8%	27.5%
School J	248	88.7%	80.2%	47.2%
School K	280	63.9%	54.6%	25.4%
School L	281	61.2%	49.1%	26.7%
School M	85	75.3%	61.2%	28.2%
School N	53	69.8%	64.2%	30.2%
School O	0			
School P	1	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	<b>1293</b>	<b>70.2%</b>	<b>59.7%</b>	<b>28.8%</b>

Overall, Oldham schools have performed in line with national average, with some schools performing significantly above. Some schools have no entries, and some results are lower than expected. SACRE will seek to work alongside these schools, offering support and resources to bolster continued improvement, ensuring students get more than just their statutory entitlement. Each school is of course, reflective of its context, and SACRE will be mindful of this. We thank Oldham's schools and RE teachers for their continued work to deliver high quality RE.

## **RE Quality Mark**

The last school to have an up-to-date REQM has lapsed. This means there are no schools with the award in Oldham. Work needs to be done to support an increase in uptake. One school (Brian Clarke) has the SACRE Merit, and we will plan to roll this out to more schools to support with interest in the completion of the REQM.

## **Professional development and support for schools**

### **General support**

During the year professional support continued through the RE consultant, Jake Womack who is contracted through Pennine Learning, a small regional company specializing in RE and community cohesion. The team also includes three other experienced consultants in primary and secondary RE. Oldham Council contracted 15 days during the year, though this time is arranged as flexibly as possible to facilitate effective working with schools and others. Pennine Learning also supports SACREs and RE in neighbouring Tameside, Calderdale and Kirklees, enabling appropriate collaboration and partnership.

Support is available to schools in a number of ways, including:

- Advice on the local agreed syllabus;
- Consultancy over specific or general RE issues, including advice about withdrawal from RE;
- Support for schools wishing to develop and improve RE following Ofsted inspections
- A SACRE Merit award which dovetails with the REQM to increase uptake
- Professional conversations with subject leaders/coordinators
- Attending the PL run Primary Network
- Professional advisor attends Secondary Network

### **Training**

This year, Jake Womack has co-ordinated the Primary RE network under the administration of Cranmer. Networks have been very well attended and have grown significantly. Hayley Green and Gemma Wood were thanked for their two years working alongside Jake. They will be replaced by Gemma Crispin and Nina Courke. This represents the championing of local teaching talent and means that schools with both a religious and non- religious character will be represented fully.

The secondary network has been established for Oldham and Tameside and is run by the Northern Teaching Alliance based at The Blue Coat School. This is led by Shabnam Khaliq. Jake Womack has attended some of the meetings as a representative of SACRE. Jake should attend more of these meetings next year, especially with regard to supporting LAS implementation.

A half-termly newsletter and CPD digest is sent to all schools, and this includes information about professional development opportunities in RE regionally and nationally. Oldham teachers have been able to access training for RE coordinators and sessions for subject knowledge development. This was publicized again at networks, and distribution has increased.

A 'Deep Dive' in Religious Education is also offered to schools. This half-day session focuses on a review of curriculum provision, looking at its scope, rigor and sequencing.

Oldham Schools are particularly fortunate to have access to visits provided through the Oldham Interfaith Forum and to the Oldham Pledge project.

Oldham SACRE offer a document on sensitivity to issues relating to faith in schools. This is available to schools as practical information and support to school leaders.

Oldham will be providing SACRE Awards based on the REQM. 4 free spaces will be provided (an increase on the last year). Additional spaces can be arranged.

Oldham council have subsidised the LAS package for maintained schools, meaning they can get complete planning and PowerPoint resources for very low cost. It has made the syllabus free to all schools. 10% of additional resource sales will be kept for upskilling teachers with regard to the syllabus and the production of additional resources. A full glossary of terms, a handbook and exemplar planning will be available at no extra cost.

## **Section Three: Statutory Responsibilities: Collective Worship**

### **Standards and Monitoring of Collective Worship**

Guidance is offered to schools and Ofsted reports are scrutinized in order to keep up to date with current issues and concerns. There was no enquiry this year due to the LAS process.

### **Complaints and determinations**

There were no complaints made during the year to SACRE about Collective Worship. There were no new or reviewed determinations to vary statutory requirements in any maintained school in Oldham. Responsibility for determinations in English academies and free schools rest with the Schools Funding Agency.

### **Professional development and support for schools**

SACRE is always ready to advise or support schools on request. A half-day course on planning for collective worship/ inclusive assemblies is available to aid schools in developing an effective and inspiring programme.

SACRE has produced revised advice on collective worship which is available for schools.

Resources to support the LAS are freely available to schools and training can be given.

Webinar support has been scheduled to help schools plan and deliver the LAS.

## **Other information**

Parents have a statutory right to withdraw their children from collective worship. Guidance on good practice and protocols for withdrawal is available to schools; consultants are available if further support is needed. SACRE recognizes parents' legal rights but hopes all children will be enabled to receive stimulating and balanced RE as part of their entitlement to a broad curriculum.

## **Section Four: Links with other organisations**

SACRE has active links with the following organizations:

- National Association of SACREs (NASACRE)
- The North-north-west SACRE Hub
- RE Today
- The Association of RE Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants (AREIAC)
- Faith communities and organizations
- Oldham School Performance Team
- Northern Teaching Alliance based at The Blue Coat School
- The Oldham Inter-Faith Forum
- Greater Manchester Interfaith Network
- Oldham and Tameside RE Practitioner Network

## Section Five: Other areas of involvement

### The Oldham Interfaith Forum

SACRE is grateful to the work of the Interfaith Forum in, among other things, supporting links between schools and local faith communities. This helps to fulfil our obligation to promote fundamental values of respect and tolerance.

The virtual faith trail, *Many Faiths, One Community*, is also a great resource for schools and comprises a set of videos for schools, exploring what goes on in four places of worship: a Christian Church, a Hindu Temple, a Mosque, and a Synagogue. Schools should contact the Interfaith Forum or the SACRE consultants for the link.

The Oldham Festival of Light continues to be a fantastic opportunity for religious and non-religious belief networking. SACRE offers its support in any way that would be helpful.

### Faith sensitivities

The *Sharing the Journey* resource detailing faith sensitivities and how schools can address them was released. It is available for the use of educators. It will be re-published with other helpful documents through the year alongside the LAS.

## Section Six: SACRE arrangements

Oldham Council funds the operation of SACRE by contracting its consultant, providing a clerk and supporting its work through links with senior education officers.

SACRE membership includes representatives from all four constituent committees. 

Committee A	Faith communities except for the Church of England
Committee B	Anglican representatives
Committee C	Teachers and schools
Committee D	Oldham Council

<b>OLDHAM SACRE 2023-24</b>	<b>Cttee</b>	<b>Name</b>
Buddhist	A	Olwen Smith
Hindu	A	Mrs Krishna Sisodia
Hindu	A	Nitiksha Raghvani
Humanist	A	Eamonn Keane
Jewish	A	Rabbi Daniel Walker
Muslim	A	Mr Bilal Brown
Muslim	A	Mohibur Rahman
Sikhi	A	<b>Vacancy</b>
Oldham Interfaith forum	A	The Rev Howard Sutcliffe
Oldham Interfaith forum	A	Samia Farid
Salvation Army	A	<b>Vacancy</b>
Free churches/Oldham Congregational churches	A	Mr Peter Butler
Evangelical church	A	Mrs Mary Butt
Free churches	A	<b>Vacancy</b>
Free churches	A	Mr Ian Whitehead
Roman Catholic Church	A	Ms Claire Mitchell
Church of England	B	Lynsey Leech
Church of England	B	Andrew Holt
Church of England	B	Suzanne McHake
Church of England	B	<b>Vacancy</b>
	C	Shabnam Khaliq
Secondary teacher	C	Aisha Mohammad
Primary teacher	C	Rachel Whittle
Special School head	C	Ms R Lomax
NEU	C	Miss Jacqueline Beattie
Secondary academies (Hathershaw)	C	Ms Claire Harewood
Special schools (Kingfisher)	C	Ms Nicola Smith
Teaching school	C	
Teachers associations and HE	C	
Local authority	D	Cllr Pam Byrne
Local authority	D	Cllr Umar Nasheen
Local authority	D	Mr Tony Shepherd
Local authority	D	Mr John Gilmore
Co-opted	Z	<b>Available</b>
Co-opted	Z	<b>Available</b>
Co-opted	Z	<b>Available</b>

SACRE needs to ensure there continues to be consistent attendance and should seek to fill the gaps in representation.

Training is provided by NASACRE and offered to SACRE members. We would encourage our new members to attend the, *So you have joined your local SACRE* session as well as other relevant training session from NASACRE. Additional induction meeting should also be booked for new members as needed and we plan to produce an induction pack.

## Section Seven: Advice to the Local Authority

The following advice is given by SACRE to the local authority:

1. Ensure SACRE's annual report is considered carefully by the Scrutiny Panel of the Council and any of its content is noted.
2. The local authority should ensure that SACRE has its full complement of attending local representatives, especially from faith communities. A regular Muslim representative is needed.
3. The local authority should encourage the best local provision for skilled and specialist RE teaching in Oldham, especially given the low numbers in RE recruitment. This could include support for the national bursary.

We would like to thank Oldham Council for its support with RE and Collective Worship. Oldham Council are an example of excellence who have helped to promote good religious literacy through the support of its teachers and schools. We are most pleased to operate on their behalf and look forward to promoting understanding, cohesion, and excellence in Oldham.

No appendices are attached to this report; all the relevant information is contained within the main body. However, any further information can be requested via the clerk.



This annual report is prepared for Oldham Standing Advisory Council on RE (SACRE) as part of its statutory responsibility. For further information on the report or on RE and Collective Worship, please contact Jake Womack via [jake@penninelearning.com](mailto:jake@penninelearning.com)