

CUMBRIAN STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)
Minutes Of Meeting on 2 July 2026
The Queen Katherine School, Kendal, and via TEAMS

Committee A: Other Faiths/Denominations

Present: Karen O'Donoghue (Baha'i) (Chair), Wendy Ridley (Buddhist), Laura Simmons (Humanist)

Apologies: Mohammed Dhalech (Muslim), Sheila Gewolb (Jewish), Jacqueline Hampson (Catholic), Rashmi Manemi (Hindu), Zaeed Mohammed (Muslim), Michael Watmough (Quaker)

Committee B: Church of England (CE)

Present: Laura Watson

Apologies: Richard Cox

Committee C: Teachers Associations

Present: Brian Eaton, Katherine France

Apologies: James Douglas, Bernadette Little

Committee D: Local Authority

Present: Janet Battye (W&F)

Apologies: Elaine Lynch (Cumberland), John Murray (W&F), Chris Southward (Cumberland)

Co-opted

Present: Carolyn Reade

Apologies: Rebekah Ackroyd (University of Cumbria), Vicky Bunter

Vacancies:

- Baptist
- Orthodox
- Pentecostal
- Salvation Army
- Unitarian
- United Reformed

Clerk to SACRE

Sue McGaw

Marie Bainbridge (Cumberland) minute taker

LA Support:

Present: Rachel Laverack (Cumberland), David Hodgkiss (Westmorland & Furness)

RE Advisor to Cumbria SACRE

Jane Yates.

1.Welcome and apologies for absence

Apologies for absences and substitutions, as above. The meeting was quorate. KO'D thanked everyone for attending.

2.Minutes of previous meeting – already distributed

To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2026

The minutes were agreed

3. Matters arising not covered in the agenda

Membership - recent resignation, Sarah Harrison, CofE Rep – LW has highlighted the vacant post with Churches Together. **Action: JY to promote NAHT rep with PHA and CASH**

New member - Jacqueline Hampson, Diocese of Lancaster

No response re replacement Methodist or NAHT rep

New member – Zaeed Mohammed, Muslim

SMcG has applied for voluntary redundancy and is awaiting the outcome. MB attended to take the minutes as her likely successor.

4. Feedback - working group meeting (am)

RL advised that it was a productive meeting. The conference was discussed for most of the session with future plans taking up the remainder of the meeting.

Thanks given to JY and SMcG for organising the conference and to SACRE members who attended. Initially, conference bookings were low which led to additional pressures re possible cancellation fees. It was agreed to explore alternative venues in the future where cancellation fees were less of an issue. Penrith RUFC and Junction 36 to be explored as possible future venues. Ultimately, conference numbers were good and the event deemed a success.

There were positive evaluations from the conference. It was highlighted that it was useful for conversation/discussion facilitation. The main speaker was positively received. He was a good presenter and made the session relaxed. The IT worked well. The oracy session was helpful. The teachers valued being together with other RE colleagues. The new National Curriculum and syllabus was discussed. The school presentation was particularly successful and the children played a brilliant part. **Action – JY to send the children certificates.**

Difficulties in conference booking for teachers due to cost and supply cover. Holding conference events in schools was suggested to counteract this. Another suggestion was to hold the event in the autumn term instead of late summer term. Another possibility was to move to a conference every 2 years instead of annually. Most who completed the survey said that an annual conference was preferable. It was noted that this year's conference also clashed with PHA in W and F and PHSE events which may have contributed to the slightly lower attendance.

61 delegates completed SACRE survey. Had lovely comments such as 'I look forward to the SACRE conference every year' and 'the speakers are wonderful and engaging'. Suggested having a 'new to RE' workshop as part of SACRE conference.

DH asked how SACRE can keep abreast of change of school RE leaders.

Pennine Learning Collective Workshop guidance review will be shared with members before the end of the academic year with a deadline for comments. It is hoped that Cumbrian SACRE will adopt this guidance and, if members agree, that it will be shared with schools at the start of the 26-27 academic year.

Discussion over Cumbria Unity statement. It was agreed that it can be signed by an individual but not as either a SACRE or SACRE member, due to the political nature of the document.

5. Update from the LA – local and national priorities and actions (standing item)

No updates from either council at this stage. Still awaiting outcome of curriculum review and whether RE will be part of the NC in future.

6. SACRE conference – feedback

KO'D thanked JY for organising conference.

7. SACRE annual questionnaire

LW's idea to complete the survey during the conference was productive, as 61 people completed questionnaire compared to 40 in 2025. **Action – JY to send via CASH and PHA.**

DH and RL sent link in letter to schools with questions about future conferences being the main focus. Most respondents reported that they found about the conference through the half-termly SACRE newsletter. 10 teachers' details were missing from the teacher network email distribution list but have now been added. Survey findings indicated that no children were fully withdrawn from RE but an increasing number of children did not attend Muslim and Jewish speaker events at school. There was negative feedback on social media following Muslim speaker events. There is tension in Dalton-in-Furness following the building of a mosque. KF asked whether there was a difference in schools in terms of negativity from parents. She asked about any geographical patterns in relation to withdrawal. Is reality better than perception? LW reported that schools have been contacting the Diocese for guidance re school faith visits.

8. Community Cohesion (standing item)

Mary-Claire Telford, Safer Communities Manager (Communities and Localities) for Cumberland Council introduced herself and gave a brief talk on her role.

LATE ADDITION TO AGENDA – RE in schools Q&A with pupil representatives of QKS sixth form

Outcomes were that they would like class discussions instead of PowerPoint viewing, would like current RE affairs included in the curriculum and would prefer religious representative to discuss their faith instead of teachers.

9. SACRE links with other organisations (standing item)

Not discussed in working group. KO'D attended signing of faith covenant. Jonny Gios conducted a faith audit. **Action – KO'D to share.**

10. North West RE Hubs

JY advised of review of RE hubs. Will find out about funding in next 2 weeks. Expecting paired down offer.

11. Local and national updates

Questions leading role on community cohesion. 28 February 2027 deadline for project application.

12. SACRE Newsletter

Members requested to submit items asap, preferably with links included.

13. Arrangements for future meetings

Autumn meeting – tie into Museum of the Moon at Carlisle Cathedral, running from 1-30 October. **15 October 2026 – Venue to be confirmed.**

Spring meeting - TBC

Summer meeting - TBC

Agreed that autumn meeting will take place from 13:30-15:30 on 15 October - [About – Museum of the Moon](#) - and that dates for future meetings will be decided then.

14. Member updates

None present.

15.AOB – Items deferred to next meeting

BE was asked at the SACRE conference whether veganism should be taught as RE.