

## **SACRE MEMBER Rôle and Responsibilities, Qualities and Questions**

SACRE are Standing Advisory Committees for Religious Education, statutory bodies to advise and monitor the provision of Religious Education and Collective Worship in Maintained Schools, Free Schools and Academies.

They are based on Local Authority areas, and LA's have the statutory responsibility to run and support a SACRE to work with all those schools, although LA's have no other (discernible) control over Free Schools and Academies (and little funding to carry this out for non-maintained schools) There are 6 in the South Eastern Baptist Association Area.

Each SACRE is made up of 4 groups of representatives:

- A. Other Faiths (Christian and non Christian faiths. Lay or ordained. Some SACRES interpret this to include Pagans and / or Humanists)
- B. Anglican Church (lay or ordained, nominated by that body)
- C. Professional association (Trade Union) Reps from Teaching and Head-Teacher Unions.
- D. County (or Borough) Councilors (Nominated by Local Authority)

Agreement across all 4 groups is necessary in decision-making.

It is up to SACRES to decide whether the Chairman of the SACRE must be a Councilor or can come from any group.

The role of the SACRE is:

To produce (and review and revise) an approved syllabus for the Primary and Secondary Schools in their area to follow. This can be a syllabus of their design or one off the shelf. (Or the SACRE could delegate to an Agreed Syllabus Conference – made up largely of SACRE Members). Faith Schools, Academies and Free Schools do

not have to follow this — they often do -- but their syllabi must meet national criteria. The SACRE must monitor the application of their own (and inevitably myriad other) syllabi to ensure they meet national legal framework and guidelines and will stand up to OFSTED and Church inspections. There is a minimum legal entitlement to R.E. laid down by legislation, although R.E is not in the National Curriculum or the newer 'Baccalaureate'.

The SACRE may feel it incumbent on it to contact, survey or visit schools where it has concerns, or where OFSTED inspections, exam results, or Church and parental concerns have been raised.

Similarly a SACRE should monitor the provision of Collective Worship as set out in legislation.

In addition a SACRE is able to offer guidance, support, mentoring, training of teachers and governors, teaching materials and resources, and run conferences. This is to be resourced by LEAs, or from income generated by running courses or the sale of resources.

SACRE meetings should be open to visitors and should publish their minutes, Membership and meetings' timetable.

An average SACRE would meet termly, and produce an annual report for its LA.

An LA would provide an Education Officer to service a SACRE, clerking resource, accommodation, and possibly fund a consultant with more specific knowledge than the Education Officer.

The SACRE member from a particular faith organisation would need to be nominated by the organisation rather than self-appointed, would need to look to their organisation for briefing on their policy, for support, and any out-of-pocket expenses. In return the representative may be asked for periodic reports. The SACRE member may be ordained or lay, ideally should have some experience or connection with 'state' (maintained, faith, free or academy) schools rather than independent schools (in the fee-paying meaning) —perhaps as a teacher, church schools' or youth worker, minister visiting schools, governor, or most likely as a former student and a current parent or grand-parent of current students. There is inevitably a deal of educational jargon to be mastered so the SACRE member must be prepared for that, and not see the appointment as a 'jolly' or vanity project.

The efficient and well-informed SACRE is vital to the maintenance of a minimum of religious education and collective worship at a time when it is being watered down as part of PHSE (the former acronym), SMCE (current acronym for you to master) or the current Government enthusiasm for 'British Values'

Please come back to me for more information, and do look on the website of the East Sussex County Council SACRE and the Department for Education.

*Peter White (Teacher, examiner and education manager in a former life, now retired, a Town Crier and @ Seaford Baptist Church)*