

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)



One of the areas in which Neil Richardson has been involved since 1988 is Ealing SACRE. Here, he outlines what is involved for Magna readers.

Every Local Authority (LA) is required by law to have a SACRE. Its origins go back to the Education Act of 1944, but the Education Reform Act 1988 and the Education Act 1996 strengthened its place in an LA. The responsibilities are:

- * to provide advice to the LA on all aspects of its provision for RE in its schools (this does not include Voluntary Aided Schools such as Edward Betham)
- * to decide whether the LA's Agreed Syllabus for RE needs to be reviewed and to require that the LA does so at least every 5 years.
- * to provide advice to the LA on Collective Worship in its schools (this does not include Voluntary Aided or Voluntary Controlled Schools).
- * to consider any requests from Head Teachers to hold Collective Worship that is not of a broadly Christian character. This is known as a Determination.
- * to advise on matters relating to training for teachers in RE and Collective Worship.

In addition, SACREs may have on their agenda any matter germane to the attainment of an understanding and tolerant society into which the children in schools are growing and will make their own contribution in time. They may educate and inform themselves by hearing presentations for teachers or religious representatives or educational authorities.



The LA is charged with responsibility for determining what is a just and proper representation of religious groups and may change its complexion if requested. The matter is ultimately decided by the LA which is the Council, but in effect, it will be the Ealing Cabinet which agrees any change.

Religious Education is ideally placed to support the new Government emphasis on Community cohesion. This quote illustrates how:- “The best SACREs make a significant direct contribution to supporting RE, in particular faith community members who regularly offer their services to schools by leading collective worship, organising school visits to places of worship and contributing to RE lessons. A few provide high quality support that can be shown to have a positive impact on standards. Effective SACREs give confidence to local faith communities that their religion is being accurately presented and that RE is not confessional. SACREs are worthwhile organisations in that they provide unique opportunities for members of the community, of all faiths and none, to meet and discuss educational issues. The strength of SACREs lies in their multi-faith, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural composition. Building on this strength, several have already developed a role as an advisory group to the local authority on any matters related to faith, ethnicity and culture, either alone or in collaboration with other committees.” (From: An evaluation of the work of Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education, November 2004, Ofsted publication)



To find out more go to www.egfl.org.uk/categories/teaching/curriculum/subjects/re/sacre