

CUMBRIAN STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE) MINUTES OF MEETING ON 13 NOVEMBER 2025 VOREDA HOUSE, PENRITH AND VIA TEAMS

Committee A: Other Faiths/Denominations

Present: Mohammed Dhalech, Karen O'Donoghue (Chair), Rashi Manemi, Wendy Ridley, Jane Yates, Michael Watmough

Apologies: Sheila Gewolb

Committee B: Church of England (CE)

Present: Richard Cox, Sarah Harrison, Laura Watson

Committee C: Teachers Associations

Present: James Douglas, Brian Eaton, Katherine France, Bernadette Little

Committee D: Local Authority

Present: Janet Battye (W&F), John Murray (W&F)

Apologies: Elaine Lynch (Cumberland), Chris Southward (Cumberland)

Co-opted

Present: Lisa MacGregor, Carolyn Reade.

Apologies: Vicky Bunter

Vacancies

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

Clerk to SACRE

Sue McGaw

LA Support Officer:

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

1. Welcome and introductions

Apologies for absence and substitutions – as above. The meeting was quorate. Members introduced themselves.

Welcome to our new methodist representative Morgan Tebb-Rogers. We also had an observer present, Philip Lambert from the Orthodox Church, he said their community is very diverse and includes Russian and Ukrainian members of the congregation which leads to tolerance and a lack of fear.

Irene Roberts-Green has resigned, she has been a huge contributor to SACRE for many years and previously served as Vice Chair. Jane has circulated an e-card to members. The NAHT union has been contacted to get a replacement. **SMc/JY**

2. Minutes of previous meeting held on 4 June 2025

The minutes were agreed.

3. Matters arising not covered in the agenda

Welcome to our new methodist representative Morgan Tebb-Roger.

4. Feedback from working group

The working group had been looking at Aim 5 on the Development Plan – membership, we do not have Sikhi representation, JY pointed out the this is not being studied by many Cumbrian schools in detail, at present. The group had been looking at the last Census in 2021. JY will add a piece to the Annual Report. **JY**

SMc to amend Annual Report 2024-25 that was sent to members with incorrect union names and an incorrect political party beside some members. **SMc**

SACRE Conference 2026 – unfortunately the main speaker, Julie Childs, has unexpectedly left RE Today and JY is having to find a replacement – WG discussed various options. **JY**

5. SACRE Links with other organisations

Carlisle One World Centre - JY and Rashmi Maneri (RM) presented at one of their recent events. JY mentioned an event they are running on 22 November in Carlisle, bringing together representatives from various faiths, Jane is unable to attend, she will forward the flyer, if anyone would like to attend. **JY**

For those who weren't already aware KF gave details of the trip to parliament, in July 2025, that KF and JY attended with young ambassadors from Queen Katherine School and Grayrigg CofE Primary. An event facilitated by Edge Hill University was held online bringing together Y10 pupils from all over the North West.

JY's is involved with CDEC – Cumbria Development Education Centre to obtain funding from Westmorland & Furness council to further develop the Virtual Voices project (speakers from a number of religions who are available to schools) this includes quite a few of our SACRE members.

6. Community Cohesion

Concern was raised about the disturbing development with some protests, eg the Raise the Flag campaign during the summer and the ongoing protest around the creation of an Islamic Centre in Dalton in Furness, a Christian element is being introduced with a recitation of the Lords Prayer.

There are demonstrations in support of the Dalton project and some of our members have attended those. A discussion outlined the situation with reports from the protests and the wider implications.

- MD - concerns in the Muslim community, abuse in the workplace has risen 20% with an increase in harassment of hospital staff. Racial slurs being ignored in schools as some teachers are not sure how to deal with them. Feedback suggests that some teachers are deciding not to include Islam in the curriculum or organize mosque visits or visitors in schools. MD questioned whether inter-faith week is just a superficial event and not going far enough to address the significant issues in our country.
- Reporting on a BBC Radio 4 programme, where people from Barrow had been interviewed about their views, some of which were shocking. KF said that schools have a responsibility to report hate crimes. She pointed out that some schools do not have RE specialists and therefore some schools are less well-equipped to deal with some of the issues arising.
- WR reported attending a counter demonstration and the hateful language that was directed at the group she was with. The solution is about bringing people together and try to bring some healing.
- JD reported a similar experience to WRs sent to him by a union member.
- BE said it was dangerous to label all demonstrators as racist but that it stems from people's fears and that we need to focus on 'healing and communicating'.
- A question was posed exploring what can SACRE do? JY and SG are both on the NASACRE executive, can we look at providing guidance.
- It was noted that it is the responsibility of all leaders and school staff to champion inclusion and challenge racist views.
- JY to share new document from NATRE on the Ofsted changes, which now includes religious bullying, which should impact of racist reporting. See link [Ofsted RE changes 2025 – NATRE](#)

- LW to approach a minister from Churches Together, ask if they are interested in collaborating with SACRE. **LW**
- KOD will invite Westmorland and Furness councils Community Cohesion Officer to address a SACRE meeting. **KOD**

KO'D involved with Interfaith week in Barrow in Furness, they are looking for youth workers with a DBS to help with a story telling event.

7. North West RE Hubs

JY is the NW RE Hubs Lead. Survey for teachers and stakeholders – see links below, she asked if members would take the time to complete it.

Main news article about survey: <https://www.re-hubs.uk/about/re-hubs-news/celebrating-three-years-of-re-hubs>

[Teacher survey on Microsoft Forms](#)

[Stakeholder survey on Microsoft Forms](#)

Thanks to members who have signed up to the hubs site who make themselves available to schools. JY running an online teacher focus group on 25 November from 4-5pm and she asked if members of the working group would be able to attend. **WG**

8. Local and National Updates – distributed before the meeting

Question – how can we make more of Interfaith Week? - look at this for next year.

RC asked about the withdrawal of the bursary, does this just affect RE or other subjects? KF thought that it was only chemistry, computing, maths and physics that the rest were not affected. The RE Council are responding and are regularly lobbying parliamentary conferences.

Curriculum and Assessment Review - Building a Worldclass Curriculum for All from NASACRE.

Recommends RE added to the curriculum, the next stage is consultation, JY to send NASACRE statement – see link below. No indication that SACREs will no longer be required, even though they won't be involved in the writing of the curriculum.

[NASACRE-chairs-Statement-on-CaAR-11.25.pdf](#)

11. SACRE Newsletter

Members to pass on anything they want included in the next newsletter by the end of term.

(ALL)

JY thanked for all the work she does.

Lisa MacGregor from the University of Lancaster mentioned that as well as taking her students to places of worship in Cumbria she also gives them copies of SACRE Newsletters in preparation for them being given places in Cumbrian schools. JY said that she could liaise with LW to provide a Padlet for them. **JY**

12. Arrangements for future meetings – Spring and Summer 2026

The date for the spring meeting was re-arranged, after discussion it was changed to Thursday 26 March, to take place in Carlisle – probably Cumbria House. **SMc**

Summer meeting 2 July 2026 – KF to ask if there is a room at The Queen Katherine School - **KF**

13. Members updates

- ARC – Anti Racism Cumbria – WR has been attending free training in the Furness area.
- JY – positive start to interfaith week, Y10 classes met with Hinduism, Sikhism representatives to talk about Diwali. 500 students attended online for a 50-minute session. The biggest group Jane has seen.
- W&F Community Cohesion – talking to Kendal College about running Escape to Safety exhibition. It will also be held at Ullswater CC and Carlisle College.
- KOD attending South Lakes Interfaith event in Kendal on Sunday. Bahai World News Service – KOD encouraged members to have a look at the construction of the Shrine of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

There are still issues for members joining via Teams – difficulting hearing some of what is said in the meeting room.