

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Thursday 3 July 2025

Present: Cllr Sally Cresswell (CSC), Cllr Bill Stevens (CBS), Cllr Tina Tuohy (CTT), Cllr Sue Dann (CSD), Katie Freeman (KF, Vice Chair, Diocesan Board of Exeter), Dr Judith Beckman (DJB, Jewish Community), Arezoo Farahzad (AF, Baha'i Community), Muhunthiny Sivasothy (MS, Hindu Community), Reverend David Evans (DE, Baptist Church), Sarah Lakey (SL, Diocesan Board of Exeter), Professor David Salter (PDS, Quaker Community), Deborah Temple (DT, Co-opted Jewish Community rep), Martyn Cox (MC, Humanist), Dr Ian Jamison (DIJ), Michael House (MH, PCC Education Officer), Asif Siddique (AS, SACRE coordinator), Ed Pawson (EP, Advisor to Plymouth SACRE)

Attended remotely: Selina Day (SD, Marjon), Lesley Clark (Roman Catholic Diocese of Plymouth), Sara Wells (SW, PCFCD)

Observer: Denise Prothero (Teacher and RE Lead, Prince Rock Primary School)

The meeting started at 1.30pm and finished at 3.40pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the committee will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

1. Introduction and welcome to new members - Chair

KF chaired the meeting in the absence of CTB and introduced the new and returning members.
New members: Councillor Andy Lugger (CAL) Returning member: Councillor Tina Touhy (CTT)
Last meeting: Sarah Lakey (SL)
Leavers: Councillor Kathy Watkin (now Plymouth Lord Mayor)
New Observers: Denise Prothero (DP, Teacher and RE Lead, Prince Rock Primary School) welcomed.

2. Apologies - AS

Cllr Tess Blight (TB, Chair), Cllr Andy Lugger (CAL), Kerry Wardle (KW, DHSB), Chaz Singh (CS, Co-optee Sikh Rep), Jasmin Rhead (JR, NEU, DHSB), Leonore Newson (LN, Pagan Community), Giles Freathy (GF, Marjon, RE Lecturer), Bhai Gurmit Singh (BGS, Sikh Community), Gwen Hughes, Claire Wills (CW, Headteacher Special School)

3. Declarations of Interest - Chair

DDS and DJB are PCFCD's trustees
CSC, CSD and CTT support PCFCD from Councillor Grants fund. SW is PCFCD's manager and AF is the Chair of trustees.

4. AGM: Election of new Chair/Vice-Chair/Group spokespeople

KF announced the re-election of CTB as Chair and EP announced KF as Vice Chair, noting no other nominations received. Both were duly elected with no opposition or abstentions.
The group expressed gratitude for their service and continued dedication and support in their roles.

5. Minutes from the last meeting - Chair

Minutes from the last meeting were reviewed.
Correction proposed by SW – on the bottom of page 2, on the last three lines – initials needs changing from “CW” to “SW”, in relation to the SHAP calendars and the £3k funding.
Amendments approved and seconded appropriately.

6. **Chair's Urgent Business - Chair**

A moment of reflection was held in memory of Dawn Cox, a respected RE teacher, academic and author who passed away earlier in the year. KF shared a heartfelt tribute highlighting Dawn's contributions to RE education and the community.

7. **LA officer input - MH**

Local Authority Officer Report: MH presented the financial report, highlighting a projected amount of over £3000 for discretionary use after covering expenses and conferences. He added that budget projections are similar to last year. He also mentioned a budget correction where SACRE had accidentally paid for the head teachers' conference, which has now been rectified. This report is part of the agenda pack.

Group Representatives: EP and MH discussed the need for spokespeople from each group for transparency in decision-making between meetings. Group A nominated AF, Group B nominated SD, Group C nominated DIJ, and Group D nominated CTT as their respective spokespeople.

Constitution Review: MH introduced a proposed constitution for SACRE, emphasising the need for transparency and proper governance. He invited members to review and provide feedback before the next meeting. Final discussion and ratification planned for the autumn meeting.

8. **Member Focus**

KF announced plans to include a member focus in future meetings, inviting members to present their areas of activity for 5-10 minutes. All members to get in touch via SACRE inbox if they are interested to present.

9. **Plymouth Agreed Syllabus - Impact & Follow-up survey - EP**

EP highlighted areas where support is needed and the confidence levels of teachers in implementing the syllabus.

EP presented the key findings and informed that:

- 32 responses were received across Devon, Torbay, and Plymouth
- Majority of schools use the Devon syllabus.
- 66% of schools have fully implemented it.
- Teachers find new units (e.g., on Humanism, Racism, Environment) helpful.
- Concerns about confidence in delivering the syllabus.
- CPD uptake is mixed; LTLRE and diocesan training are key support avenues.
- Academisation may be affecting engagement with local syllabus and training.
- The survey highlighted areas where teachers need more support, including understanding the new units on humanism, opposing racism, and the environment.
- EP noted that while 40% of teachers are confident in implementing the syllabus, 50% are confident in some aspects, and 10% are unsure, indicating a need for further training and support.

10. **Ofsted Inspections: summaries - EP**

EP reviewed recent Ofsted inspections, highlighting positive comments about RE and collective worship in several schools. He also mentioned the need for follow-up with some schools.

Positive Comments: Ed highlighted positive comments from Ofsted inspections about RE and collective worship in schools like Pilgrim Primary, Ford Primary, and Widey Court Primary, commending their efforts.

Follow-Up needed: Ed mentioned the need for follow-up with schools like Marine Academy and Millbay Academy to explore issues around the provision of RE in the curriculum.

Secondary Schools: Ed noted that secondary schools like Plympton Academy had no significant comments on RE in their Ofsted reports.

Ed mentioned that work on special school RE is ongoing, with no specific updates at the moment.

11. **Learn Teach Lead RE - EP report**

EP and KF discussed the upcoming Learn Teach Lead RE conference in October and the challenges in engaging RE leads in Plymouth. They plan to use various channels to improve communication and attendance.

Conference Details: Ed and Katie discussed the Learn Teach Lead RE conference scheduled on 17th October 2025, focusing on embracing diversity and inclusion through a religion and worldviews approach. Key speakers: Revd. Anjali Kanagaratnam and KF (on pilgrimage)

Engagement Challenges: KF highlighted the challenges in engaging RE leads in Plymouth, noting low attendance at recent training sessions despite efforts to communicate through various channels.

Improving Communication: EP and KF plan to use multiple channels, including direct emails, school bulletins, and collaboration with the Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity, to improve communication and attendance at future events.

12. **Local & National Developments: RE Hubs, Curriculum & Assessment Review - EP**

EP and KF provided an update on the national curriculum and assessment review, highlighting the focus on RE and the potential for a national curriculum. They discussed the implications for SACREs and the importance of a national content standard noting that RE is one of the three subjects under detailed scrutiny.

They discussed the potential for a national curriculum for RE, which could standardise content and improve the quality of provision across schools.

They highlighted the implications for SACREs including the possibility of no longer writing local syllabuses if a national curriculum is implemented.

EP presented data on the recruitment of secondary RE teachers, showing a shortfall in meeting targets. KF discussed the challenges in attracting trainees and the need for higher bursaries.

EP shared that RE Hubs are growing nationally; over 1,000 speakers now listed but local engagement remains a challenge. He added that Young Ambassadors from Okehampton College recently visited Parliament to advocate for RE.

(i) **Constitution - Chair MH**

MH introduced a proposed constitution for SACRE, emphasising the need for transparency and proper governance. He invited members to review and provide feedback before the next meeting. Final discussion and ratification planned for the autumn meeting.

13. **PCFCD Updates - SW**

SW provided an update on the Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity, noting a slight decrease in subscriptions due to budget cuts. She also reported on the successful use of Sacre funding for workshops and visits.

Services4Schools 2025/26

Currently waiting on PCC for final numbers re subscribing schools, but initial indication is that subscription levels through the S4S process will be slightly down on last year. PCFCD have lost a few longstanding schools who have confirmed this is due to budget cuts.

Currently at 49 schools (51 last year) through S4S process.

Schools have been reminded that they can still use services on a Pay-As-You-Use basis even if they don't subscribe. PCFCD also have schools from outside Plymouth that subscribe each year. Schools need to be encouraged to use PCFCD whether through subscription or PAYG. PCFCD will need PCC to expedite S4S payment as per previous years as already serviced schools for nearly 1/3 of FY without payment to date.

SACRE Funding Update

SHAP Calendars all sent either by post (Primary schools) or electronically (Secondary schools). Well received with positive feedback.

FS Training – March training cancelled due to low take-up. Still desperately need more speakers, particularly Hindu & Jewish. More training planned for Autumn Term.

50% of Secondary School Workshops complete and 50% of Synagogue/PIETy Visits complete with other 50% booked in for Primary & Secondary Schools.

2025/26 Funding - KF & SW still need to meet and progress

14. **Date and venue of next meeting - AS**

Date of the next meeting – KF & AS

Tuesday, 11 November 2025, Council House, Plymouth