



Chief Executive
Andrew Travers

Wandsworth Borough Council
Chief Executive's Group
6th Floor, Town Hall Extension,
Wandsworth High Street,
London, SW18 2PU

Date: 12 June 2026

For further information on this agenda, please contact the Democratic Services Officer: Ruth Wright on ruth.wright@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk, 020 8871 6038

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

**MONDAY, 22ND JUNE, 2026 AT 7.30 P.M.
EL FAZL MOSQUE, 16 GRESSENHALL ROAD, LONDON,
SW18 5QL**

SACRE Membership:

Group A – Religious denominations other than the Church of England – namely Christian and other denominations, religions and world views which appropriately reflect the principal faith traditions and belief systems in Wandsworth:

Mr Dominique Joseph Clem (Seventh-day Adventist Church), Ms Sharon Coussins (Wimbledon Synagogue), Ms Saffi Haines (Society of Friends), Rev. Pete Herbert-James (Balham Baptist Church), Dr Lottie Holmes (Humanists UK), Mrs Maria Liddy (Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark), Ms Gita Patel (Hindu Education Board UK), Imam Hamzah Patel (Balham Mosque and Tooting Islamic Centre), Dr Laow Panyasiri (Buddhapadipa Temple), Mr Paul Phillips (Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is), Mr Anup Sagar (Garrett Lane Mandir – Hindu Society) Mr Usman Shazhad Butt (Ahmadiyya Muslim Association), Mr Charan Singh (Khalsa Centre Gurdwara) and Mr Harbans Singh Mehta (Khalsa Centre Gurdwara).

Group A Substitute: Ms Shanta Chellappoo-Phillips (Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is).

Group B – Church of England:

Rev. Susan Bolen, Mr Shaun Burns and Miss Sharon Cunningham.

Group C – Teachers' Associations:

Mrs Claire Beecher (NEU), Ms Clare Hewitson (NEU), Ms Anna Madden (NAHT) and Ms Jan Sharp (NASUWT).

Group D – Local Authority:

Councillor Will Sweet (Chair), Councillor Victoria Asante, Councillor Angela Graham and Councillor Jo Rigby.

Co-opted members: Ms Ruhena Bakhsh (Burntwood School), Ms Brigitte Sayers-Eugster (Shaftesbury Park Primary School).

AGENDA

1. Welcome and Apologies

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. Minutes - 26th January 2026

(Pages 3 - 8)

To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting of the SACRE held on 26th January 2026 (attached) and to consider any matters arising.

3. Membership

To receive a verbal update on the membership of the SACRE.

4. National Association of SACREs (NASACRE) Conference Feedback

(Pages 9 - 32)

To discuss documents from the conference (attached).

5. Faith Trails Update

To receive a verbal update on the trails.

6. Community Faith Trail Update

(Pages 33 - 34)

To receive verbal update on the trail, to be held on 18th July 2026. (Poster attached for information.)

7. Future Meeting Dates

To note the forthcoming SACRE meetings scheduled for 2026/27:

- Monday 2nd November 2026 at All Saints' CE Primary School, Putney Common, London, SW15 1HL
- Monday 15th March 2027, venue to be confirmed.

All meetings of the SACRE start at 7.30pm.

Minutes of a meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
held at Alderbrook Primary School, Oldridge Road, London, SW12 8PP
on Monday, 26th January, 2026 at 7.30 p.m.

Group A – Religious denominations other than the Church of England – namely Christian and other denominations, religions and world views which appropriately reflect the principal faith traditions and belief systems in Wandsworth:

Mr Dominique Joseph Clem (Seventh-day Adventist Church)

Ms Saffi Haines (Society of Friends)

Imam Hamzah Patel (Balham Mosque and Tooting Islamic Centre)

Mr Paul Phillips (Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is)

Mr Charan Singh (Khalsa Centre Gurdwara).

Group B – Church of England:

Rev. Susan Bolen

Mr Shaun Burns

Miss Sharon Cunningham.

Group C – Teachers' Associations:

Mrs Claire Beecher (NEU)

Ms Clare Hewitson (NEU)

Ms Anna Madden (NAHT)

Ms Jan Sharp (NASUWT).

Group D – Local Authority:

Councillor Jo Rigby (Chair)

Councillor Rosemary Birchall.

Co-opted members:

Ms Brigitte Sayers-Eugster (Shaftesbury Park Primary School).

In attendance:

Ms Annabelle Brown (Shaftesbury Park Primary School) (observing)

Mr Andy Hough, Assistant Director of School Participation and Performance

Mrs Angela Rundle, SACRE Officer

Mrs Ruth Wright, Democratic Services Officer.

1. Welcome and Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from:

Ms Sharon Coussins (Wimbledon Synagogue)

Councillor Clare Fraser

Councillor Angela Graham

Rev. Pete Herbert-James (Balham Baptist Church)

Dr Lottie Holmes (Humanists UK)

Mr Anup Saggat (Garrett Lane Mandir – Hindu Society)

Imam Usman Shahzad Butt (Ahmadiyya Muslim Association)

Mr Harbans Singh Mehta (Khalsa Centre Gurdwara).

Councillor Rigby thanked Mrs Beecher for hosting the meeting at her school and for the informative tour beforehand, which included seeing the children's RE work and the school's resources.

2. Minutes - 3rd November 2025

RESOLVED – it was unanimously agreed that the minutes of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education meeting held on 3rd November 2025 were a correct record.

3. Membership

Mrs Wright stated that there were no changes to membership following the last meeting.

RESOLVED – details noted for information.

4. SACRE annual report 2024/25

Mrs Rundle made one date correction to the report, in that it should state 'Autumn 2024', not 2025. She advised that GCSE and A-Level attainment was consistently higher for the borough than nationally. AS levels were slightly under the national average rate. A-Level data varied between schools, in terms of how many students sat the exams and the results. At present, the statistics showed that in 2024/25 no students sat the short RE course, mainly undertaken at the Pupil Referral Unit and equivalent to half a GCSE. However, the DfE had not released all data by the time of the meeting.

Mr Hough explained that Wandsworth was ranked third nationally for the number of young people entering into sixth forms. The result was that a higher number of young people had a lower educational starting point for A-Levels. Work was underway with schools to support children to choose the right post-16 pathway for them from the various options available.

Mrs Rundle advised that RE remained a well-thought of subject. Mr Hough thanked Mrs Rundle for her dedication in that achievement and her promotion of RE through newsletters and the RE Subject Leaders Network.

RESOLVED – details noted for information.

5. RE Curriculum and Assessment Review

Members watched part of a video regarding the implications of the curriculum and assessment review for RE, which was created by Culham St Gabriel's. There followed a discussion on the review. Mrs Wright advised that SACRE members had been invited to join a free webinar of the South West SACRE meeting on 3rd March. The keynote speaker was Dr Vanessa Ogden, who was a

member of the review panel and was leading a Task and Finish group for the RE sector, to develop a draft National Curriculum for RE. Details of the webinar to be shared with members the following day.

Mrs Rundle advised that RE had fared better than some other subjects in relation to the review's content. The review's advice was to drop compulsory RE for Key Stage 5 (post 16), which would align with other subjects. The guidance would still not relate to academies and faith schools. Nevertheless, although maintained schools were meant to teach RE, not all taught it in Key Stages 4 and 5 as an exam subject. As such, it was sometimes hard to know what was taught within those schools. Furthermore, not all schools had a trained designated RE lead, which could affect the standard of subject teaching. This was raised in the SACRE's letter to the Secretary of State for Education and the Permanent Secretary at the Department for Education (DfE) last year.

Mrs Rundle commented that the locally agreed RE syllabus used the content standard for RE as its basis. She and Mr Hough added that Wandsworth's agreed RE syllabus was created with teachers and specifically linked with the local area to provide information and details of local experts too. This approach was appreciated by the members present, not just those who were teachers. It was understood that such an approach would enable teachers to 'bring alive' the subject in a meaningful, tangible and flexible way, as they could with geography and history for example. As Mr Burns mentioned, the syllabus provided the basis for teachers to adapt as needed, although greater status of the subject was needed in schools, together with the subject being better equipped and financed.

The role of local SACREs as part of the review was covered in the video, saying that they remained key in the implementation of good RE in schools. Locally agreed syllabuses would be needed at least until 2028, when the changes would be in place. SACREs would remain responsible for monitoring RE teaching in maintained schools. Members raised concerns if RE was to be taught using a national syllabus. This was because the teaching pedagogy could change and it would be difficult to ensure teaching was sound and covered a varied number of religions, denominations and world views. Furthermore, the local relevance and engagement with local faith and world view representatives could be lost.

Ms Sayers-Eugster asked how the review impacted upon collective worship, which at present remained a requirement in maintained schools. Mrs Rundle explained that that element was not covered in the review. It was recognised that 'worship' did not have to have a religious element and that the recent censuses showed religious affiliations had changed, so having a Christian emphasis for the worship may not be appropriate in many schools.

RESOLVED – details noted for information.

6. Relationship, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) guidance

Mrs Rundle explained that on behalf of the Wandsworth/Kingston/Richmond steering group, the new draft subject guidance and briefing was shared in the agenda, as members were asked to provide input into the third version of the guidance. SACRE members were specifically invited to be involved, to ensure

there was participation from religious and world view communities and to maintain good community relations. This was in part in response to instances of unrest in Birmingham in 2020 when the DfE first made the teaching of Relationships and Health Education in primary schools and Relationships, Sex and Health Education in secondary schools compulsory.

Members were asked to consider what was to be taught to each age bracket responsibly and age-appropriately. It was recognised that parents/carers needed to be assured that they had nothing to be worried about regarding their child's learning. Mrs Rundle mentioned that some teachers were part of the steering group, when the original guidance was produced and two SACRE members had presented their approach to the subject in a SACRE meeting.

The teacher representatives present, Mrs Beecher, Ms Hewitson, Ms Madden, Ms Sharp and Ms Sayers-Eugster spoke of their school's experiences with the subject. Some schools invested in particular schemes e.g. Shaftesbury Park Primary School used the Jigsaw programme. The teachers all said that careful communication with families on their school's programme was needed, with consultations and providing space with staff for parents/carers to discuss it if they wanted. However, the reality was that the offer of a discussion was rarely, if ever taken up and no issues were raised from the schools' consultations. Regular termly subject plans were shared with parents/carers to ensure they knew what was forthcoming, or plans were accessed via a parent portal. It was understood that children could not be withdrawn from those aspects of the relationship, sex and health education teaching taught as part of the science curriculum. However, for other elements, the teachers relayed that children had not been withdrawn. Ms Sharp added that it was essential that correct anatomical language was used in the curriculum and teaching, even from Year 1.

Members understood that the previous guidance needed to be updated to include changes, for example, current safe social media use. Mr Burns and Ms Sharp proposed that the curriculum subject titles needed to change to be more appropriate and current. For example, the heading entitled 'getting to grips' was not felt to be appropriate. Members thought that the draft online safety guidance, information on gender reassignment and information on other protected characteristics, was good. Overall, members were happy with the draft guidance.

Mrs Rundle advised that once finalised, the new local guidance could be shared in full with parents/carers, as there was no copyright.

RESOLVED – details noted for information. Mrs Rundle to share feedback with the steering group.

7. Northern Ireland RE Supreme Court ruling

Mrs Rundle opened the item by stating that it was raised by a member of SACRE as a matter of interest. She explained that there was a degree of autonomy between the four home nations in relation to RE. Northern Ireland had a narrower syllabus compared to England, in that it centred on Christianity, causing a lack of plurality. As such, the Northern Ireland's syllabus could be

perceived to be religious instruction rather than education. Councillor Rigby added that Northern Ireland was not as multicultural as England and that impacted upon religious tolerance and whether parents/carers chose to withdraw their child from RE lessons and so narrowing their understanding of others.

RESOLVED – details noted for information.

8. Proposed public Faith Trails update

Mrs Rundle shared in the agenda details from discussions with a colleague in Merton about their 'Walks in Faith'.

Following discussions around Wandsworth trails, the following points were agreed:

- The Wandsworth trails could follow similar routes to the school trails and take place in June/July and/or September/October.
- Consider whether to organise a single pilot walk with three venues, or go for five venues. The routes to be explored would either be based around Wimbledon Parkside and Southfields, or Balham and Tooting.
- Care would be needed to avoid the Wimbledon tennis tournament dates if holding a trail in that area in the summer.
- Avoid religious holy days/events at the chosen places of worship.
- It was thought that a Saturday would work best for the trails.
- Some locations, for example Balham Seventh-day Adventist Church, would need a specific time slot to avoid its usual Saturday activities.
- Mrs Rundle would use existing risk assessments from the school trails and update as needed.
- Advanced booking was still considered to be necessary for security reasons, although people's names could be added to a register if they arrived on the day and there was space.
- A possible voluntary contribution of £5 towards the Mayor's charities or a specified local interest charity was discussed. Some members thought that a mandatory payment per individual or family would help reduce the number of no-shows.
- Consideration of using the borough's 'Access for All' scheme to provide concession payment rates, if payments were mandatory.
- Could use community spaces for the start point, but avoid a busy spot, as an area would be needed for registration checks and initial conversations.
- It was understood that not everyone would participate in the whole walk.
- Basic refreshments could be provided at each venue.
- Lunch could be provided at a venue. Rev. Bolen offered to host this for a Wimbledon walk, as she thought that providing food was good hospitality. Voluntary financial contributions could be sought to cover food costs. Lunch could be a labelled buffet.
- Security could be provided by local neighbourhood police, together with SACRE members in high-viz jackets to help cross busy roads.
- Advertising could include sharing information through schools, the Brightside magazine and/or emails and other council notices. Also advertise with local walking groups.

- Mrs Rundle to email faith representatives about possible dates and morning or afternoon preferences. They would check with others in their site regarding bookings.
- A working group to be convened to organise with walks with Mrs Rundle and Mrs Wright.
- Link with the Multi-Faith Forum.

RESOLVED – details noted for information. More actions as required as plans progress.

9. Future meeting dates

Mrs Wright explained that the forthcoming SACRE meetings scheduled for 2026 and early 2027 had not been confirmed yet. She would share the dates with members as soon as possible.

10. Any other business

Thanks

Councillor Rigby led thanks to Councillor Birchall for her long standing membership on SACRE, as she had decided not to stand in the forthcoming councillor elections, meaning that it would be her last meeting.

The meeting ended at 8.45 p.m.

NASACRE conference write up 18.5.26

Introduction

The conference was formally opened by Bill Moore, NASACRE chair. He welcomed delegates from around the country and spoke about why Liverpool is a special place for him.

The conference then did an interactive menti-meter task – results to delegates answers can be found on our NASACRE webpage for 2026 conference <https://nasacre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/Menti-meter-results-NASACRE-conf-2026.pptx>

Rejoicing in difference – Prof Vanessa Ogden

We welcomed Prof Vanessa Ogden as one of our 2 keynote speakers

Prof Ogden trained as an RE teacher, has been in profession for 32 years and has had many challenges in the profession. She has worked hard in an RE department and worked hard to bring in SACRE's to help teach and support RE. She showcased the work of RE departments and bolstered the importance of the department to senior leadership. For her, SACREs were very helpful in arguing the case for RE. She invited visitors to come into her school and the senior leaders were impressed by how many people came into school. Over 5 years they saw real change in the quality of RE.

There is a nation building role that schools have which is also reflective of their local communities – economics, politics, transport etc, as well as wider geo politics.

This nation building role is really important for schools and is vitally important given social fault lines that are exposed by antisemitism and anti-Muslim hostility. We have to respond in a way that is active and faces this threat down.

Parsons and Watson 1993 – “It is the integrity of the world that is at stake. By the word integrity I mean the organic unity of society, a unity that may as certainly be disrupted as enriched by religious and cultural diversity, especially if the educational implications are not understood, or simply ignored”.

SACRE's, RE and Building social cohesion – RE is an academic subject, it is high quality and it is essential to provide a rich knowledge of diversity and difference in religious traditions. We need to understand this diversity and difference. Very important to have engagement with communities and places of worship and to have visitors coming into schools from these places. Prof Ogden has done this herself with visitors. The visits and interactions make great RE and this has stood out for children that Prof Ogden asked. SACRE's being leaders of place is important for RE and schools – SACRE's need to understand this. SACRE's can model how to live well together and again this is important.

SACREs support RE as an academic subject in the curriculum - the foundation for social harmony comes from religious literacy pupils gain in religion and belief traditions. SACREs can become anchors for social harmony.

RE has three areas:

1. Substantive knowledge – matters of central importance for religious and non-religious traditions. Substantive Knowledge is about pupils knowing about organised traditions and individual ways of living and religion and belief locally, nationally and globally.
2. Disciplinary knowledge - ways of knowing and scholarly tools.
3. Personal knowledge – how you apply this knowledge, how you learn to apply and navigate religion and belief in the world with others.

Great RE, supported by SACREs builds pupils confidence in identity, belief and self-expression – understanding your own involvement in the beliefs you hold and your own identity can lead to feeling positive about difference and diversity – as you have your voice and can use it.

The role of SACREs in RE – Prof Ogden's vision is for a society which rejoices in pluralism and diversity. It embraces human reciprocity which rejects the harms of hate and brings people together. It contributes towards a unified confident, resilient, democratic nation, able to withstand world change and remain true to its values.

She spoke about a way of seeing this is through the idea of one song, with many different voices in harmony. This is tied to the mission of helping to build a better society.

Prof Ogden said thank you to SACREs for all they do and asked for SACREs help as the RISE regional director in London and lead for the other regions across the country.

Deborah Weston – Update on the CaAR proposals for RE to be in the NC

Deborah is currently chair of the REC policy unit, working on all sorts of policy initiatives. She highlighted that RE is under threat – GCSE numbers are on the way down, some SACREs don't meet or find it hard to be quorate, some schools don't offer RE at KS4, even in some primary schools RE is diminishing. She talked about the govt response to the CaAR report and the need for a clear, shared position from the sector on the future of RE.

The groups involved with the response to the CaAR report were the expert advisory group, a religion and belief reference group, a teacher reference group, lead drafters & young ambassadors, as well as a legal reference group. She has been very proud of the community in helping this happen and being willing to compromise even with very wide-ranging views - she has been really impressed. The DfE have also been really grateful for the excellent collaboration, and is clear on the importance of the subject and the thoughtful and detailed work that has come out from the CaAR work. They look forward to working collectively with the sector. The letter sent to Katie Freeman who gave the minister letters from children was shown to delegates which had had a positive response from Bridget Phillipson MP, the Secretary of State for Education.

There has been no public announcement yet on RE in the NC. All subjects are being reviewed. It is the intention that all national curriculum subjects will be sent out for public consultation so RE will be part of this if it is accepted. Deborah talked through how a bill becomes law in the UK for our awareness and stated that moving RE into the National Curriculum requires primary legislation, the last time RE needed this was in 1988.

The summary of the roles and responsibilities of local councillors on a SACRE (produced by the REC, NATRE & NASACRE) is on the NASACRE website here [REPU-infographic-for-new-councillors-on-SACREs-100526.png \(1536x1024\)](#)

Delegates were given time on their tables to write a question or comment to put to Deborah.

Questions from the audience and answers:

4. What will the role of SACREs be if RE is in the Nation Curriculum (NC)?

The proposed programmes of study are a high-level document. A decision needs to be made for it to go out for public consultation. Prof Ogden and her team have put together a draft programme of study and it has been submitted to the Secretary of State for Education. The document is designed to be flexible, so it is likely that most of the RE materials that SACREs have produced to support their Agreed Syllabus will be relevant.

5. What is happening about GCSE reforms, so many schools just teach about Christianity, Judaism and Islam at GCSE and nothing else?

The RE Council (REC) has put together another group on GCSE reform and as part of this, they have been trying to get a consensus statement together to support the DfE in this. One of the suggestions in this document aims to secure a better balance between breadth and depth in GCSE. More on that soon, but NASACRE is involved. If RE goes in the NC then that would need influence reform at GCSE and A Level for RS.

6. What has been NASACRE's role in the consultation period on RE reforms?

They have been included as part of the REC Faith and Belief group and have also had several meetings with Prof Ogden. They have been able to put forward communications from SACREs we have received into what we have raised with government and with Prof Ogden.

7. What is happening with collective Worship (CW)?

The DfE is also revising and looking at CW at the same time as RE and GCSE reform. NASACRE have offered our support to help with any reforms.

8. What is the timeline for any potential changes if RE goes into the NC?

The timeline is short. 2027 is the published date for the new updated NC and then there is a year before classrooms implement this. Deborah has been told that the legal timetable is not impossible.

9. Will NC inclusion of RE change the law around withdrawal?

There is the inclusion of the phrase "objective, critical and pluralistic" in the wording of the RE draft programmes of study, reflecting the wording required for RE under European human rights law. This may mean that in the future the right of withdrawal is no longer needed, but there are no plans at the moment to change that legislation.

Elections and Website

Paul Smalley, NASACRE Executive Officer, launched our new look website and explained that Saquat Ali, Jo Backus and Hifsa Haroon-Iqbal were all elected onto NASACRE exec.

Lunch

We then enjoyed a fabulous lunch – very healthy!

AGM

We then had our AGM – all reports and papers can be found on the website

<https://nasacre.org.uk/conference-and-agm> .

Claire Clinton, NASACRE vice-chair spoke about the planned 26-27 webinar programme and Bill presented gifts and presents to those members of the executive stepping down.

Connection over division: lived experience, belonging and RE in social cohesion- Amy Ark: Senior Programme Manager for Schools, Faith and Belief Forum

Amy explained that they work in schools, universities and communities for positive encounter across all ages and stages. It is an interfaith approach with anti-racist approaches as well.

Amy explained the methodology for F&B forum which is based on social contact theory, Allport 1954. When pupils come together and work together in a positive way they are less likely to be unkind to each other with such an approach. The present time is one of division and polarisation. Amy recommended reading '[Hope not Hate](#)' report by Good Faith partnership.

She highlighted that we are working in a very difficult environment these days. Belonging has been weaponised in present day conversations. There is a need for solidarity and to protect and defend our communities, while recognising the cost of this for, such as, hiding identities. Recognising this is a real problem for many people is very important. We know things can change and we have seen this.

How do we make this a place that is home again for everyone?

Read strategy paper by govt "[Protecting what matters](#)" which highlights that increasing investment in youth and community structures is also important. A lot of behaviours come from fear and misunderstanding and we must recognise this. Why is RE the place to help?

10. It directly studies belief systems
11. It explores identity in a meaningful way
12. It builds empathy and respect
13. It develops critical thinking skills
14. It teaches how to navigate difference
15. It connects to real world issues

Belonging in the classroom involves everyone feeling safe and brave to be themselves, respected in their beliefs, interested in others' perspectives and included not othered.

The F&B forum work using an 'I /you/ we' structure to work from as a basis. It highlights the importance of safe, brave and shared spaces – encouraging respect, active listening, dialogue not debate, I statements and oops and ouch (being able to say when you haven't said something in the right way, or in turn being able to say when someone says something that it is an ouch moment for you and why)!

Amy explained that we encounter faith and belief through storytelling – stories matter and many stories matter, not just a single story. The workshops are interfaith workshops which involve preparing for the discussion, hearing from the speakers and reflecting and creating dialogue. The F&B forum set boundaries and explore the power of language and what inclusive language is, as well as boundaries for answering sensitive questions. Speakers are not expected to represent a group, religion or belief – just themselves.

Their parental engagement project has had very positive feedback and shows how RE can have real benefits for parents - both religious and non-religious. They have an Interfaith week poetry competition which encourages pupil voice and is a great way to amplify this voice from children, which SACREs could get behind and share with schools.

Schools, RE, SACREs and communities – the answer is connection, the vision is a shared connection and a transformed society with a mutual understanding and respect of difference, equality of faiths and beliefs, and a shared understanding of belonging and perhaps, most essentially safety.

Amy then answers some questions from tables (that delegates were asked to write collaboratively) – due to time restraints not all questions were got through on the day, but the exec will continue to review and answer anything that wasn't covered.

Westhill / NASACRE Awards Updates

The 4 SACREs in receipt of a Westhill / NASACRE award give an update of where they are at one year into their 4 projects. This is warmly received by the conference. SACREs were asked to consider applying for the new round of applications that open in December 2026 and close at the end of February 2027. Details on the Website <https://nasacre.org.uk/westhill-nasacre-awards/>

Close

Our chair Bill brought the conference formally to a close.

Justine Ball, NASACRE executive

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Update on the CAR proposal for RE to move into the National Curriculum

Deborah Weston OBE and Dr Richard Kueh – lead drafters

Government response to the Curriculum and Assessment Review

November 2025

Building a world-class curriculum for all

Final Report

November 2025

[Government
response to the
Curriculum and
Assessment
Review](#)

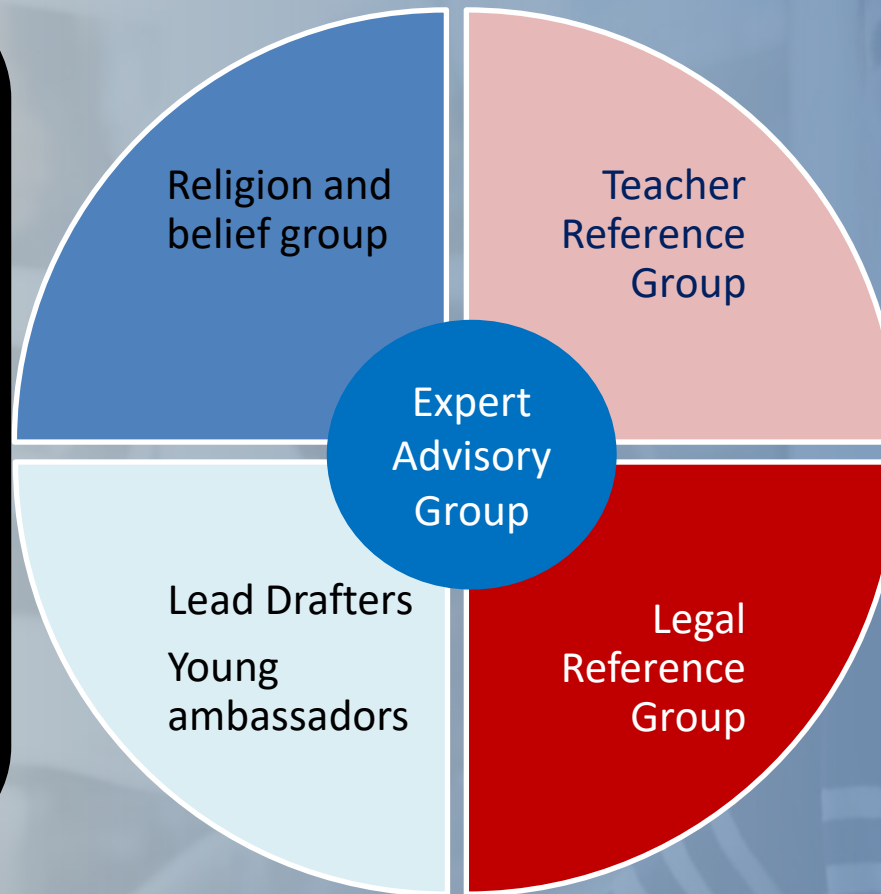
RE

We welcome the Review's work on RE and the careful consideration that the Panel has given, both to how better to support the teaching of the subject, and its potential inclusion in the national curriculum. **We will be shaped and guided by the sector on this important issue and, to take further steps on moving forward, there will need to be a clear shared position from the sector on the future of RE.** Sector consensus should include views from faith, non-faith and wider school stakeholders on an RE curriculum that could be deliverable within all schools as part of a well-sequenced and structured national curriculum. If the sector reaches a consensus on whether this is achievable, we will consult on the content of a draft RE curriculum and on proposed changes to the legislative framework within which RE sits. As part of this we would seek to ensure that sector consensus should underpin future updates to any new RE curriculum. Page 36

TAFG: An iterative process

We listened and responded to:

Individuals, including RE teachers, their associations and young people, school and system leaders, religion and belief bodies and communities. School providers such as academy trusts and faith school providers and local communities, RE inspectors, advisers and consultants, SACRE representatives, university academics,



Engagement secured through:

Group meetings
Face to face meetings
One to one meetings
Correspondence
Telephone calls

Update from the Department for Education



The Department is clear that high quality RE can **develop children's knowledge** of the **religious and non-religious traditions** of Britain and other countries, and **foster understanding** between people with different beliefs.



Following the publication of the Curriculum and Assessment Review, colleagues across the Religious Education sector have undertaken thoughtful and detailed work on the potential inclusion of RE in the national curriculum.



We are grateful for the excellent collaboration that has made this possible and look forward to **continuing to work closely with the sector on next steps.**



High quality RE **builds knowledge, promotes understanding** and **strengthens our society.**



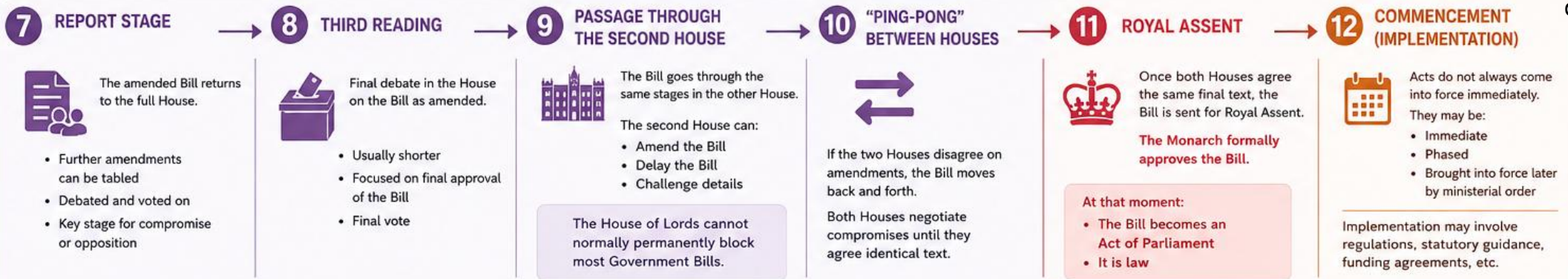
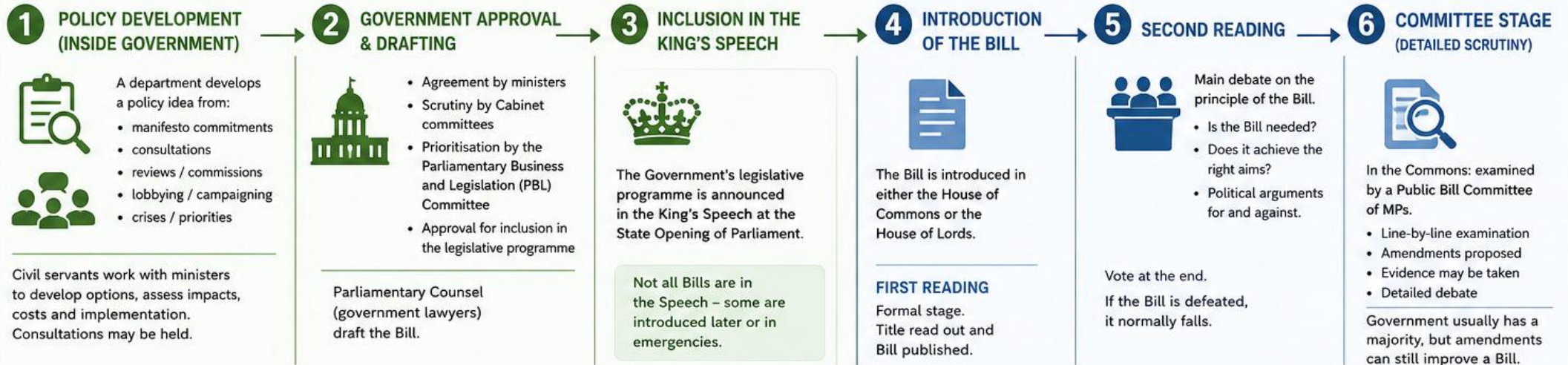
Deborah Weston OBE and Dr Richard Kueh

HOW A BILL BECOMES LAW IN THE UK

FROM POLICY TO ROYAL ASSENT



Parliament makes the law. The Government proposes most Bills.
The Monarch gives Royal Assent, and the Bill becomes an Act of Parliament.

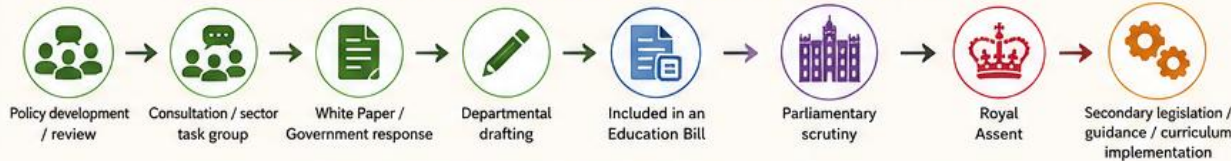


TYPICAL TIMELINES

- Days – emergency legislation
- Months – normal Government Bills
- More than a year – complex or controversial Bills

Some Bills fail because of lack of time, changes in priorities, elections or strong opposition.

EXAMPLE: EDUCATION / RE & NATIONAL CURRICULUM REFORM PATHWAY



Much education policy detail is often delivered through regulations, statutory guidance, curriculum orders, academy funding agreements and inspection frameworks, as well as primary legislation.



KEY POINTS

- Parliament debates and decides.
- The Government needs the support of the House of Commons.
- The House of Lords can delay and amend, but not usually block.
- Royal Assent is constitutional and automatic in practice (last refusal: 1708).

Phased approach

“The Review recommends a phased approach to bringing RE within the national curriculum framework.” (p.111)

Stage 1 – Consensus Building: Independent task and finish group (p.111)

Stage 2 – Drafting & Testing: Based on REC National Content Standard (p.111)

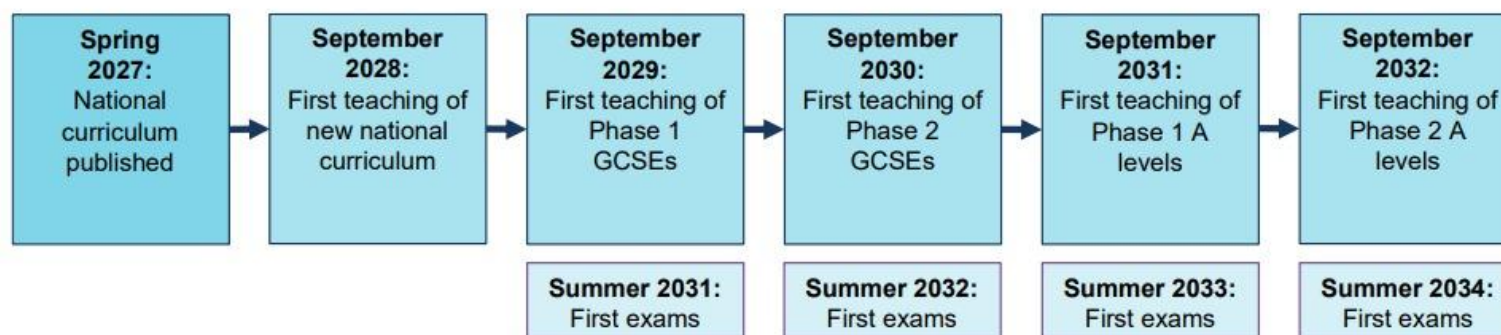
Stage 3 – Legislative & Structural Review: Define future role of SACREs and ASCs (p.112)

Stage 4 – Implementation & Support: National guidance, exemplification and CPD (p.112)

Timeline – DfE response to Curriculum and Assessment Review final report (pg 52)

To ensure pupils experience a coherent curriculum as they progress from key stages 3 to 4, working with Ofqual and awarding organisations, **we will update GCSEs in national curriculum subjects in line with the Review's recommendation, as well as religious studies**. Our aim is that some are ready for first teaching in 2029 and the rest for first teaching in 2030. **We will ensure both groups cover a rich and broad range of subjects. We will also seek to update corresponding AS and A levels to be ready for first teaching in 2031 and 2032, as the cohort progresses to 16 - 19.**

Figure 3: Implementation timelines





Local Councillor Support for Religious Education: Statutory Responsibilities, Community Confidence and National Developments



Religious Education (RE) remains one of the few curriculum areas where local authorities retain important statutory responsibilities. In an increasingly academised and centralised education system, Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs) continue to provide a valuable bridge between councils, schools, religion and belief communities, and wider civic life.



High-quality RE contributes directly to civic life. It helps young people understand religion and belief in contemporary society, supports respectful dialogue across difference, and develops critical thinking, ethical reflection and cultural literacy.

1. THE STATUTORY POSITION

Under the Education Act 1996, local authorities have a duty to:



establish and support a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)



convene an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) when required



review the local Agreed Syllabus at least every five years



publish and support arrangements for Religious Education and collective worship in maintained schools



take note of, and respond to, SACRE advice



RE is a statutory subject in all state-funded schools, although the legal arrangements differ between maintained schools, academies and schools with a religious character.

Councils therefore retain important statutory responsibilities for RE and collective worship within a wider educational landscape in which schools and academy trusts also exercise substantial curriculum responsibility.

4. DRAFT NATIONAL CURRICULUM PROGRAMME OF STUDY

National discussion about the future of Religious Education is continuing following the government's Curriculum and Assessment Review (CAR).



Sector bodies like the RE Council of England and Wales, the National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE) and the National Association of SACREs, and religion and belief representatives, are working towards greater national coherence through the development of the Draft National Curriculum Programme of Study for RE.

These discussions aim to:



improve consistency and curriculum



strengthen academic rigour



ensure pupils encounter a broad range of religious and non-religious traditions



support teacher workload and curriculum planning



improve equality of access to strong RE provision

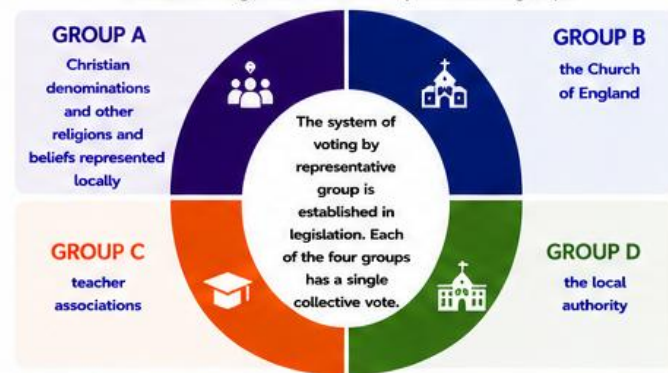
SACREs remain important within this evolving landscape because they:

- support local implementation
- advise councils on statutory responsibilities
- maintain local relationships and dialogue
- provide local expertise and insight

2. SACRES AND THE ROLE OF ELECTED MEMBERS

SACREs are statutory advisory bodies established to support local authorities in fulfilling their responsibilities for Religious Education and collective worship. Local authorities are required by law to convene and support a SACRE, but SACREs are distinct statutory bodies rather than ordinary local authority committees.

Their work depends upon collaboration between schools, local authorities, religion and belief communities, teachers and elected representatives. SACREs are organised into four representative groups:



This structure is intended to support balanced representation, dialogue and consensus-building across the SACRE.

Elected members serving within Group D bring an important democratic and civic perspective to SACRE discussions. Their role includes:

- helping ensure that SACRE advice reflects the needs and character of the local community
- supporting effective communication between the local authority and SACRE
- considering how SACRE work contributes to wider civic priorities, including educational opportunity and community confidence
- helping ensure that statutory responsibilities are fulfilled effectively and proportionately



Members contribute most effectively when discussions are grounded in:

- the statutory responsibilities of the authority
- professional educational expertise
- the representative nature of SACRE membership
- respectful dialogue across different viewpoints and traditions
- the educational interests of children and young people

3. THE CURRENT EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE

England's school system is now predominantly academised. Most secondary schools and many primary schools are academies and are therefore not required to follow the local Agreed Syllabus in the same way as maintained schools.



Academies are still required to provide Religious Education through their funding agreements, but many use trust-wide curricula or adapted versions of local syllabuses.



Schools with a religious character also operate within separate statutory and denominational arrangements.



In this context, SACRE influence increasingly depends upon professional expertise, the quality of support and advice offered to schools, and strong local relationships.

Successful SACREs therefore tend to focus on:



supporting rigorous and balanced RE



offering informed advice to the authority



supporting teachers and schools



helping different religion and belief communities work together



helping schools navigate complex issues relating to religion and belief

5. RE AND THE LAW

Courts have repeatedly affirmed that Religious Education in publicly funded schools should be objective, critical and pluralistic while reflecting both the religious traditions and contemporary diversity of Great Britain.



The existing legal settlement balances:

- the historic place of Christianity in British public life
- the diversity of modern Britain
- the rights of parents and communities
- the professional autonomy of schools and teachers
- protections for schools with a religious character

SACREs play an important role in supporting this balanced and lawful approach.

6. WHY THIS STILL MATTERS

Well-supported SACREs can help councils:



strengthen civic cohesion and community confidence



support schools and teachers



maintain informed dialogue across diverse communities



respond constructively during periods of tension or misunderstanding



promote respectful and informed civic engagement



National Association of SACREs

Rejoicing in Difference: SACREs' Role in Building Social Harmony

18th May 2026

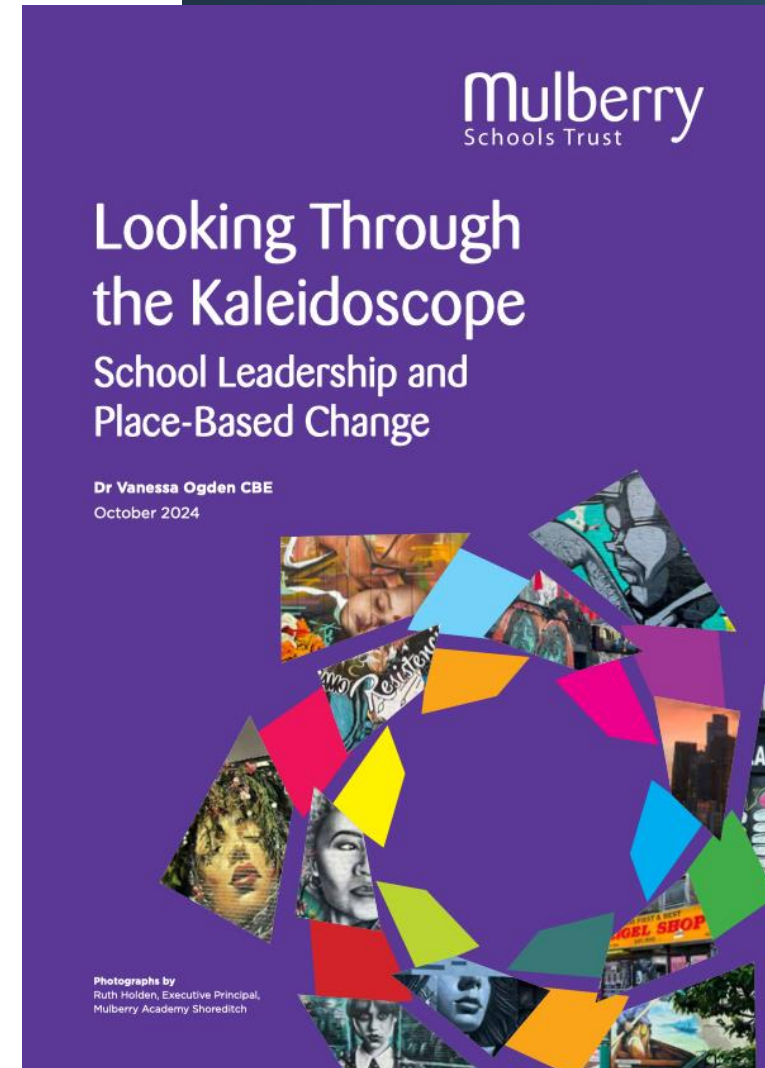
Prof Vanessa Ogden CBE

Honorary Professor University College London

Regional Director for London, DfE

The Nation-Building Role of Schools

- Schools are microcosms of society, influenced especially by immediate context
- Schools are affected by geo-politics, national events and local dynamics
- Schools have a profound effect on **‘place’** and can catalyse transformation



Social Fault-lines Exposed by Antisemitism & Anti-Muslim Hostility



Schools, RE and the Integrity of Society

“In many parts of the world – not least in Britain and the USA – it is the integrity of society that is at stake. By the word ‘integrity’ I mean the organic unity of society, a unity that may as certainly be disrupted as enriched by religious and cultural diversity, especially if the educational implications are not understood, or if understood simply ignored.”

- Parsons & Watson 1993

SACREs, RE and Building Social Cohesion



RE is an academic subject, and high-quality teaching of RE is essential to provide the rich knowledge base we need young people to leave school with.



The most powerful RE acknowledges the subject's interface with lived experience, within and beyond the school's walls, and creates opportunities for students to learn how to manage this effectively.



More powerful still is when schools also act as community anchors, bringing local people together. They become leaders of place and generators of transformation.



The best SACREs offer this space and leadership, modelling how to live together well amongst difference, building social harmony.

Foundation for Social Harmony:

Literacy in Religion and Belief

- **SACREs supporting RE as an academic subject in the curriculum**
- Substantive knowledge
 - Matters of central importance for religious and non-religious traditions
 - Organised traditions and individual ways of living
 - Ultimate questions
 - Religion and belief locally, nationally and globally
- Disciplinary knowledge / ways of knowing –including disciplines and scholarly tools
- Personal knowledge



Building Confidence in Identity, Belief and Self-Expression

RE and SMSCD

- * Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Understanding your own evolving beliefs and life stance in relation to the human condition

Building strength and confidence in identity, which includes belief

Expressing your sense of self and belief in constructive and positive ways – for you, and for others



"Liberated, charming and fiercely ambitious, these teenagers defy lazy preconceptions about British Muslim Women."
Helen Rumbelow, The Times Newspaper

Engagement With Religion and Belief in the Wider World and Lived Experience

- Applying subject knowledge to your relationship with others and their lived experience of religion and belief
- Building bridges in institutional contexts such as school, the workplace, the community and wider society
- Understanding and interpreting difference, including how to:
 - deal positively with controversial issues
 - handle strongly held beliefs effectively, and
 - challenge prejudice and discrimination.



The Power of SACREs' Role in RE

What we could gain:

A society which rejoices in pluralism and diversity

Human reciprocity which rejects the harms of hate and brings people together

A unified, confident, resilient, democratic nation, able to withstand world change and remain true to its values

One song,
many
different
voices, in
harmony





Wandsworth Community faith trail

Explore faith, culture and community
across Tooting and Balham

Saturday 18 July

10:30am start: Khalsa Centre, Upper Tooting Road

4:30pm finish: Balham Mandir, Balham High Road

Join us for a guided walk through Tooting and Balham
visiting local places of worship including a gurdwara,
mosques, churches and a mandir.

Suggested donation: £5 in support of the
Mayor of Wandsworth's chosen charity.

Children welcome with an accompanying adult.

Respectful clothing requested, a head covering
will be needed for some venues.



Scan the QR code
to view the route
and register
your place

Approx
4km walk
Join for all of
part of
the day



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