



**WOKINGHAM  
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

# SACRE

## SACRE Annual Report

September 2022- July 2023



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## Wokingham Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

### SECTION 1: Introduction

#### 1.1 Words from the Chair of SACRE

It's been another busy year for the Wokingham SACRE and once again I would like to offer my sincerest thanks to the members of the Wokingham SACRE, who are dedicated to supporting the RE community across Wokingham and also across Berkshire, through our ongoing partnership with the Pan-Berkshire Hub. We are indebted to Angela Hill, our RE advisor, for her professional advice and contributions without which we would not be able to do our work. Finally, I would like to thank Emily Waddilove, our link LA officer, who continues to fully support the work of the SACRE. Education is for improving the lives of others; RE is a subject that does indeed improve the lives of others, it is transformative for a young person and for communities. This can only happen as a result of the hard work and dedication of all the school-based staff who provide quality teaching of RE.

As a SACRE we have adapted and evolved as a result of the pandemic. We meet twice online each year, which has proved to be convenient for members, especially during the colder winter months, and once face to face in the summer. Much SACRE activity has taken place this year, including many network meetings and training courses, which have been well-attended by colleagues across Wokingham.

This year the Wokingham SACRE undertook a self-evaluation review, using the toolkit provided by NASACRE. It highlighted many areas of good practice across our SACRE and also gave us some ideas of things we could do to improve.

Membership of Wokingham SACRE has been stable for many years. This year we did have some vacancies and most have been successfully filled. We are still actively looking for a Buddhist to join our SACRE. We continue to work in partnership with our friends across the other Berkshire SACREs by playing a full part in the Pan-Berkshire Hub. One of the most exciting projects for any SACRE is the review of the syllabus. We started this work in the summer and are now in full syllabus review mode. It's been a great year for the SACRE and this exciting work is set to get even better.

I commend this report to you which contains more detailed descriptions of the work of this SACRE.

Stephen Vegh, Chair: Wokingham SACRE

## SECTION 1: Introduction *continued*

### 1.2 SACRE Overview

The Wokingham SACRE met once each term during the academic year to progress its work, structuring this through an agreed action plan. Two of the meetings for the academic year 2022 – 2023 took place online, via Microsoft Teams; the summer term meeting took place in person. The meetings were livestreamed in accordance with protocols for public council meetings. Two out of three meetings were quorate.

An Agreed Syllabus Conference was held on 12th June, attended by those present at the preceding SACRE meeting of the same date.

### 1.3 Working Groups Overview

The SACREs of the six unitary authorities across Berkshire, namely, West Berkshire, Reading, Bracknell Forest, The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and Wokingham, have a well-established working group, called the Pan Berkshire SACRE Hub. Wokingham SACRE is an active member of the Hub. Wokingham SACRE's Chair and Vice Chair as well as its RE Advisor, attend Hub meetings, representing the SACRE. Hub meetings are usually held termly and there were three Hub meetings during this academic year.

contact with its schools, through teacher networks and via written correspondence seeking teacher and leader voice. SACRE believes that most, if not all, academies in the borough are using the Pan Berkshire Locally Agreed Syllabus. The syllabus, and proposed developments under the syllabus review, are regularly discussed at teachers' network meetings, with the training elements of these meetings often focussing on aspects of the syllabus. The Pan Berkshire Hub Westhill Award project, 'Real People: Real Faith', has continued to produce videos and resources directly linking to key questions in the syllabus, which now encompass greater denominational diversity, and Humanism as a non-religious belief system. Teachers have access to extensive resources, freely available, to support them to teach the syllabus effectively. The Hub continues to produce these resources to enable engagement with a broader range of faiths in the local communities of Berkshire.

Review of the locally agreed syllabus is well underway following a decision to postpone due to the impact of the pandemic in schools, and also to enable proper consideration of the new thinking and debates around RE. Teachers and members of faith and belief groups across the six unitary authorities which make up the Pan Berkshire Hub were encouraged to complete surveys. Teacher responses gave SACREs greater insight into the extent to which the Pan Berkshire Locally Agreed Syllabus is being utilised to create RE curricula in schools, and this is informing the development of the new or revised locally agreed syllabus for RE. SACRE members of Group A and B (faith and belief representatives) were also asked to feed back their views in writing as well as having opportunities to attend meetings chaired by RE advisers, to discuss their views of what should be taught in RE lessons.

Wokingham convened its Agreed Syllabus Conference on 12th June 2023, and will feed back to the Pan Berkshire Hub in the first instance. The development and construction of the new syllabus will take place in the coming academic year.

### 2.2 Standards and monitoring of RE

#### Monitoring of Ofsted Inspection Reports

The SACRE monitors Ofsted reports for any comments about collective worship and RE. Our annual reports enable us to share any comments identifying good practice in Wokingham schools. During the academic year 2022-2023, a total of 15 Wokingham schools were inspected by Ofsted:

- 8 primary schools
- 2 junior schools
- 3 secondary school
- 1 pupils referral unit
- 1 special school

(Two of the primary schools and one of the junior schools that were inspected are designated as having a religious character (one primary school and one junior school is Church of England, and one primary school is Roman Catholic). We are aware that SACRE is not obliged to report on Religious Education or Collective Worship in Church of

## REAL PEOPLE REAL FAITH KS1



The Pan-Berkshire SACRE Hub's work this academic year has been focussed primarily on reviewing the currently shared Locally Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education. There has also been further work done to develop and extend the Real People: Real Faith project to better reflect diversity of religious and non-religious worldviews. This project was originally funded by the Westhill Endowment.

## SECTION 2: Religious Education

### 2.1 The locally agreed syllabus and RE in schools

During this academic year, SACRE has been in regular

England schools as this comes under Section 48. However, schools with a religious character are invited to participate in all of the support provided by the Wokingham SACRE, so it seems appropriate to include these schools in our monitoring of inspection reports).

There were no 'deep dives' into Religious Education. Two of the inspection reports mention Religious Education or refer to learning closely connected to Religious Education. Both references were made in relation to primary schools:

**Reference 1:**

“Several pupils have given inspiring talks about their experiences with their additional needs, such as autism or having a stammer. Others have helped to develop understanding and appreciation for their faith or country of origin”.

**Reference 2:**

“Inspectors met with leaders to discuss the curriculum and review pupils’ work in design and technology, art and design and religious education.”

A further comment made by inspectors at this primary school may relate to RE:

“Currently, a handful of foundation subjects are timetabled for very short blocks of time within the school year, sometimes for no more than one or two weeks at a time. This means that there are very long gaps of time between pupils’ experiences of these subjects. Consequently, some pupils find it difficult to reconnect with or recall previous learning. As a result, they are not building their knowledge securely or deeply enough in these subjects. Leaders need to review their current arrangements for the implementation and timetabling of the foundation subjects to address this.”

None of the inspection reports indicate non-compliance in terms of Religious Education or Collective worship.

**Results of External Religious Studies examinations - summer 2023**

*NB Comparisons are not made with 2021 or 2020 outcomes when centre assessment grades or teacher assessed grades were used in place of examinations due to the coronavirus pandemic. In 2022, students were given some advance information about the content of exams, and grading was more lenient than in 2019. In 2023, there was a return to pre-pandemic standards for GCSEs and A levels, with protection built into the grading process to recognise the disruption that students have faced. It was expected that performance in 2023 would generally be lower than in 2022. The more meaningful comparison is with 2019 data than with 2022 outcomes.*

GCSE RS: (2022 and 2019 data in brackets)		
	Wokingham	National
Grade 4 and above	85% (91%) (74%)	71% (88%) (71%)
Grade 5 and above	79% (81%) (62%)	60% (64%) (59%)
Grade 7 and above	53% (47%) (28%)	29% (33%) (29%)
<b>% of students entered for the GCSE</b>	<b>43% (45%) (66%)</b>	<b>30% (30%) (33%)</b>

Wokingham GCSE RS outcomes for 2023 were again strong compared to national outcomes, and compared to 2019 outcomes for the borough. (Whereas national outcomes in 2023 were in line with or just slightly higher than 2019 national outcomes, Wokingham 2023 outcomes were significantly higher than 2019 outcomes, especially at Grade 7 and above.)

The percentage of students who were entered for the GCSE was again higher in Wokingham than nationally, but significantly lower than the percentage of students entered in the borough in 2019. All entries in Wokingham were for full course GCSE, rather than the short course. Only one school in the borough entered no students for the GCSE. Three schools entered almost all Year 11 students for the GCSE. The remaining six schools entered between 12 and 71 students.

It is a legal requirement for schools to teach RE at KS4, but schools are not obliged to enter students for an accredited examination. The pan-Berkshire Agreed Syllabus for RE states that, during KS4: “All pupils must receive Religious Education and should follow an externally accredited course for Religious Studies e.g. GCSE, or an alternative, well-structured and challenging programme of Religious Education. Schools are encouraged to facilitate examination entry for as many students as possible.”

A Level RS: (2022 and 2019 data in brackets)		
	Wokingham	National
Percent achieving grade A*	2% (9.4%) (0%)	6% (9.8%) (4.5%)
Percent achieving grade A*-A	26% (34.4%) (10.4%)	25.7% (31.4%) (22.2%)
Percent achieving grade A*-B	69.5% (68.8%) (31.2%)	55.9% (64.1%) (50.5%)
Percent achieving grade A*-C	82.6% (90.6%) (64.5%)	79.4% (85.8%) (76.3%)

A Level RS: (2022 and 2019 data in brackets)

	Wokingham	National
<b>Percent achieving grade A*-D</b>	95.6% (96.9%) (87.5%)	92.5% (95.1%) (91.9%)
<b>Percent achieving grade A*-E</b>	100% (96.9%) (95.8%) (98%)	98.1% (98.5%)
<b>Total number of students</b>	46 (32) (48)	

Three Wokingham schools entered a total of 46 students for RS A Level in 2023. 38 students (82.6%) achieved grades C+. This is strong when compared to national outcomes (79.4% students achieved C+ grades nationally) and when compared to 2019 outcomes in Wokingham, when 64.5% students achieved C+ grades. A higher number of students were entered for the A Level in Wokingham in 2023 compared to 2022, with the number of entries being in line with 2019 numbers.

## 2.3 Teacher training and materials and advice for schools

### Training and networking opportunities for teachers provided by Wokingham SACRE

#### Teacher network meetings

The SACRE arranges for three RE network meetings per academic year for teachers in each phase. There are two online primary-specific network meetings, two online secondary-specific network meetings and one cross-phase meeting, which is face-to-face, with the intention of bringing as many teachers as possible together in a friendly and informal space in which they can discuss issues relating to the provision of RE in their schools, share good practice and find ways to support one another, cross-school.

All network meetings offer updates on both national and local developments in RE, as well as providing a training focus for teachers based on their present needs and priorities. Teachers continue to appreciate the network meetings which are well attended by primary colleagues. The SACRE is exploring ways to improve attendance at



networks for secondary teachers. Unfortunately, this year, industrial action has particularly affected the secondary network, with one meeting needing to be re-arranged.

The training focus for each meeting continues to be decided democratically by the teachers attending the previous network meeting. Teachers attending the network meetings are always enthusiastic. They openly share good practice with one another as well as exchanging ideas and discussing concerns. Teachers of varying experience continue to participate at network meetings, which provide a constructive and supportive forum for teachers to develop their practice in the teaching of RE and engagement with collective worship.

#### Primary RE Subject Leader training

Training for Primary RE subject leaders was well-attended, with 10 teachers participating. In response to teacher feedback, this training now takes place in September instead of March. Teachers reported that the training was of a high standard and equipped them with useful information and resources for embarking upon or developing their role as RE subject leader at their school, or as a reminder of the main responsibilities of the role.

All training and network meetings have received overwhelmingly positive feedback from teachers. All sessions were provided by Wokingham SACRE, free of charge to schools and were led by Angela Hill, SACRE's RE Advisor.

## SECTION 3: Collective Worship

### 3.1 Standards and monitoring of Collective Worship

Ofsted have not raised any concerns with regards to the compliance with the law or standards in relation to collective worship in Wokingham's schools.

### 3.2 Determinations

Wokingham SACRE has not received any applications for determinations.

### 3.3 Teacher training provided (locally, or national training circulated to schools)

Wokingham SACRE provides extensive training and networking opportunities its schools. Training requirements are determined by teacher requests at network meetings. As teachers have indicated that their training needs relate

## The Role of the RE Subject Leader

Angela Hill

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Thursday, 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2022



to RE, no specific training has been provided this year relating to collective worship.

### 3.4 Materials and advice for schools

The SACRE has distributed all relevant information relating to supporting collective worship in schools via termly network meetings, and via the Local Authority's newsletter for schools.



## SECTION 4: Links with other bodies

### 4.1 National bodies

Wokingham SACRE is an active member of NASACRE (National Association of SACREs). SACRE members are given the opportunity each year, paid for by SACRE, to attend the NASACRE Conference and AGM, as well as NASACRE's programme of online training events. The SACRE's RE Advisor, Angela Hill, represents Wokingham SACRE at NASACRE's Annual Conference and AGM. Wokingham SACRE has worked closely with RE Today to provide a varied and extensive programme of training to teachers. It actively encourages teachers and schools to become members of NATRE (National Association for Teachers of RE).



Wokingham SACRE supports Stop Ecocide International. This campaign is led by a group of international lawyers, researchers and diplomats who are working to make ecocide (damage or destruction of ecosystems) an international crime.

### 4.2 Local bodies

The Wokingham SACRE has established and active links with the Pan Berkshire SACREs Hub. Teachers are also aware of RE-Hub for Southeast England, led by Justine Ball.

## SECTION 5: Other areas of SACRE involvement locally

Through its members, in addition to links with places of worship and faith groups, schools and the Local Authority, the SACRE has links with the local Primary Headteachers' association; with 'RE Inspired', a local organisation teaching Christianity in schools; and 'Soulscape', a charity working in partnership with local schools to give young people the space to reflect, and to ask big questions.

## SECTION 6: SACRE's own arrangements

### 6.1 Professional and administrative support and how the LA supports the SACRE

The LA provides the SACRE with an annual budget to fund its work, enabling it to fulfil its statutory duties as well as

deliver training and network meetings free of charge to teachers, and contribute funding to the Berkshire SACRE Hub. The LA provides a clerk to the SACRE who, in addition to clerking meetings, shares information with SACRE members between meetings and helps to recruit new members. A colleague in the Children's Services administration team communicates with teachers of RE, sharing useful information, reminding them about meetings and courses, and keeping the SACRE/RE area of the Wokingham Schools Hub website updated with training materials and guidance documents. An LA officer who is part of the Education Partnership team also provides much support to the SACRE and liaises with the RE advisor to support her work. The RE advisor is recruited by the LA in partnership with the SACRE chair and vice-chair. Our current adviser, Angela Hill, is a national adviser for RE Today and a highly experienced and knowledgeable RE teacher and teacher trainer. Two elected councillors, Cllr Jackie Rance and Cllr Adrian Mather, have been proactive members of the SACRE this year, and have whole-heartedly supported the SACRE's work. Cllr Mather was replaced by Cllr Jordan Montgomery in June of this year. In addition to elected members who sit on Group D, another elected member, Beth Rowland, is a member of Group A, representing Christian denominations other than the Church of England. In May 2023, Beth was elected as Wokingham Borough Mayor. Also in Group A, we have Cllr Shahid Younis, our Islam member.

### 6.2 Membership, representation & recruitment

The SACRE is active in recruiting members to represent all groups. It also considers co-opting those with skills, knowledge and experience who can help to develop its work.

Membership vacancies are discussed at meetings alongside the SACRE development plan. During this academic year, the SACRE had two vacancies in Group A: one for Christian denominations other than the Church of England and one for a Buddhist member. Despite all our efforts, we were not able to recruit to these vacancies. The year began with two vacancies for Church of England (Group B) members. However, during the year we were successful in recruiting a Church of England

representative, meaning that we now have two members in this group. This should assist with ensuring meetings are quorate. Groups C (Educationalists) and D (The Authority) had no vacancies during the year. SACRE also co-opted a Humanist member this year, and Wokingham LA is taking steps to afford the Humanist representative full SACRE membership within Group A.

Two out of three SACRE meetings during the year were quorate, with all groups represented according to the terms of the SACRE's constitution.

### 6.3 Training for SACRE members

All new SACRE members receive a guide to SACRE and the responsibilities associated with SACRE membership. The SACRE Clerk, LA Officer and RE Advisor are on hand to advise SACRE members.

All members are invited to attend all training provided for schools. They are also offered a place at the NASACRE Conference and AGM, paid for by the SACRE, and are also encouraged to attend the online training events provided

by NASACRE throughout the academic year. In addition, SACRE meetings sometimes incorporate presentations from the SACRE's RE advisor, as in the case of the November 2022 meeting, where there was an item on 'worldviews'.

In spring 2023, two meetings took place to review the SACRE's work using NASACRE's self-evaluation tool. The meetings were attended by the RE advisor, Chair, Vice-chair, LA link officer and interested SACRE members. Following these meetings, feedback on the discussions was provided to SACRE members. Several actions were agreed to develop the SACRE's work.

### 6.4 Finance given to SACRE for its work

The LA provides an annual budget to the SACRE. Members shape the use of this funding, and are provided with budget updates by the LA Officer at each SACRE meeting.



## The Pan-Berkshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2018 - 2023

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