

SACRE

Wokingham Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

SACRE | Annual Report | 2023-24

Contents

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Words from the SACRE Chair
- 1.2 SACRE Overview
- 1.3 Working Groups Overview

2. Religious Education

- 2.1 The locally agreed syllabus and RE in schools
- 2.2 Standards and monitoring of RE
- 2.3 Teacher training and advice for schools

3. Collective Worship

- 3.1 Standards and monitoring of collective worship
- 3.2 Determinations
- 3.3 Teacher training provided
- 3.4 Materials and advice for schools
- 3.5 Other information
- 3.6 Advice to the Local Authority

4. Links with other bodies

- 4.1 National bodies
- 4.2 Local bodies

5. Other areas of SACRE involvement locally

6. SACRE's own arrangements

- 6.1 Professional and administrative support and how the LA supports the SACRE
- 6.2 Membership, representation, and recruitment
- 6.3 Training for SACRE members
- 6.4 Finance given to SACRE for its work

1. Introduction

1.1 Words from the SACRE Chair

Foreword by the Chair of SACRE

As Chair of Wokingham SACRE, it is my privilege to share this year's Annual Report, which reflects the dedication, hard work, and collaborative spirit of all those involved in the important work of religious education.

First, I would like to extend my thanks to the members of the Wokingham SACRE for their continued commitment to supporting the RE community across the borough. Your expertise, passion, and generosity with your time are the foundation of our success. I am also deeply grateful to our RE advisor, Angela Hill, whose professional guidance remains invaluable, and to Emily Waddilove, our local authority link officer, whose steadfast support ensures the smooth running of our work.

This has been a busy year for Wokingham SACRE. Our work on the review of the Pan-Berkshire Locally Agreed Syllabus has been a central focus. It has been inspiring to witness the input of educators and faith communities across Berkshire in shaping a resource that will continue to serve our schools and young people so well. The collaboration through the Pan-Berkshire Hub is a shining example of what can be achieved when SACREs work together toward a shared vision.

Our network meetings and training opportunities have gone from strength to strength, with high levels of engagement from primary and secondary teachers. The dedication of our school colleagues to delivering high-quality religious education deserves recognition and celebration. It is through their efforts that RE continues to enrich the lives of young people, fostering understanding, respect, and curiosity in an increasingly complex world.

As we move forward, we remain committed to reflecting on and refining our work. Membership recruitment remains an area of focus, and we are hopeful to soon welcome new voices to our SACRE, ensuring it remains diverse and representative. We also look to further strengthen our links with local and national bodies, drawing on shared wisdom to enhance the provision of RE in Wokingham. Finally, we are looking forward to launching the new syllabus.

It is my pleasure to commend this report to you, confident that it captures our achievements and our aspirations for the future.

Stephen Vegh
Chair, Wokingham SACRE

1.2 SACRE Overview

The Wokingham SACRE schedules its meetings once each term during the academic year to progress its work, structuring this through an agreed action plan. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the spring 2024 meeting did not take place, so the SACRE met twice this academic year. The Autumn 2023 meeting was held online, via Microsoft Teams, and the Summer meeting took place in person at the Wokingham Council offices, with a hybrid option to join via Microsoft Teams. The meetings were livestreamed in accordance with protocols for public council meetings. Both meetings were quorate.

Agreed Syllabus Conferences were held on 6th November and 10th June, attended by those present at the SACRE meetings of the same date.

1.3 Working Groups Overview

The SACREs of the 6 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. All three meetings focussed on the development of a new Pan Berkshire locally agreed syllabus for Religious Education.

In addition, there were several stakeholder engagement meetings in the development of the locally agreed syllabus. RE advisers from the 6 unitary authorities held several meetings to work on the development of the syllabus.

2. Religious Education

2.1 The locally agreed syllabus and RE in schools

During this academic year, SACRE has been in regular 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, and we have been preparing teachers, as far as has been possible, for changes to come with the new syllabus. 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.

The work of the SACRE this year has been highly focussed on developing a new locally agreed syllabus for RE. Teachers, and members of faith and belief groups, across the 6 unitary authorities which make up the Pan Berkshire Hub, were encouraged to take part in stakeholder engagement activities which included online meetings and opportunities to respond to drafts of the syllabus. 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.

Wokingham convened two more Agreed Syllabus Conferences this year, following the inaugural one held during the previous academic year, on 12th June 2023. The Agreed Syllabus Conferences were held on 6th November 2023 and 10th June 2024.

2.2 Standards and monitoring of RE

Results of External Religious Studies examinations - summer 2024

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.

REAL PEOPLE REAL FAITH KS1



GCSE RS:

Data in brackets is for 2023, 2022 and 2019.

Data includes both full course and short course GCSE.

| | Wokingham | National |
|---|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Grade 4 and above | 82% (89%) (91%) (70%) | 69% (73%) (76%) (70%) |
| Grade 5 and above | 72% (81%) (81%) (61%) | 59% (56%) (65%) (59%) |
| % of students entered for the GCSE | 49% (51%) (45%) (66%) | 31% (30%) (30%) (30%) |

Wokingham GCSE RS outcomes for 2024 were again strong compared to national outcomes, and compared to 2019 outcomes for the borough, despite a dip in borough outcomes compared to 2023. (Whereas national outcomes in 2024 were in line with or just slightly lower than 2019 national outcomes, Wokingham 2024 outcomes were significantly higher than 2019 outcomes.)

The percentage of students who were entered for the GCSE was again higher in Wokingham than nationally, although significantly lower than the percentage of students entered in the borough in 2019. Only one of the ten secondary schools in the borough entered no students for the GCSE. Four schools entered all, or almost all, Year 11 students for the GCSE. The remaining five schools entered between 8 and 63 students. The nine schools that entered students for the GCSE, all entered pupils for the full course, with two schools also entering some students for the short course. This is a similar picture to schools' entries in 2023.

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:

(2023, 2022 and 2019 data in brackets)

| | Wokingham | National |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Percent achieving grade A*-A | 27% (26%) (34%) (10%) | 26% (26%) (36%) (22%) |
| Percent achieving grade A*-C | 73% (83%) (91%) (65%) | 78% (79%) (88%) (76%) |
| Percent achieving grade A*-E | 95% (98%) (97%) (96%) | 97% (97%) (99%) (98%) |
| Total number of students | 37 (47) (32) (48) | |

Five Wokingham schools (compared to three schools in 2023) entered a total of 37 students for RS A Level in 2024 (compared to 47 students in 2023; 48 in 2019). 27 students (73%) achieved grades C+. This is slightly below the national percentage of 78% but above the Wokingham percentage in 2019, when 65% students achieved C+ grades. (Wokingham 2024 outcomes are significantly above 2019 outcomes in the borough, whereas nationally the difference between 2019 and 2024 outcomes is not so significant.) 27% of Wokingham students entered achieved grades A* or A, slightly above the national equivalent of 26%.



Research and analysis

Deep and meaningful? The religious education subject report

Published 17 April 2024

Monitoring of Ofsted Inspection Reports

As a SACRE, we monitor Ofsted reports for any comments about, or relating to, Religious Education and collective worship. The total number of Wokingham's schools inspected in the academic year 2023-2024 was 20. This breaks down as:

- 12 primary schools
- 3 infant schools
- 1 junior school
- 2 secondary schools
- 1 special school
- 1 hospital school

9 out of the 20 schools inspected are designated as having a religious character, all 9 being Church of England schools: 6 out of the 12 primary schools, 2 out of the 3 infant schools and the junior school. SACRE is not obliged to report on Religious Education or collective worship in schools with a religious character. However, these schools are invited to participate in 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 in any of the schools inspected. It should be noted that only 3 out of the 20 inspections undertaken this academic year were full inspections, and all of these were in schools designated as having a religious character. RE in these schools is inspected separately under Section 48 (SIAMS).

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

References to Religious Education

No references to Religious Education or learning closely connected to Religious Education were made in relation to the 2 secondary schools inspected. Neither of the schools is designated as having a religious character.

Most mention of Religious Education or learning closely connected to Religious Education was in relation to the 6 Church of England primary schools inspected, with 3 out of 6 inspection reports making mention. Each statement refers to a separate school:

Reference 1:

“Pupils are encouraged to explore different cultures and beliefs, fostering respect and tolerance.”

Reference 2:

“The school, as a Church of England institution, supports pupils in developing a “secure understanding of spirituality and their place in the wider world.” It benefits from being part of the Diocese of Oxford, with religious education aligned to the Church’s values.”

Reference 3:

“Pupils are taught to demonstrate respect for all religions, beliefs, and family types as part of their personal development and understanding of British values. This focus supports their preparation for life in modern Britain and contributes to fostering a respectful and inclusive school culture.”

Out of the 6 primary schools inspected that are not designated as having a religious character, there was brief mention of Religious Education at one of the schools, with the report stating that inspectors met with leaders in religious education and art and design. It also stated that ‘in most subjects, the curriculum is sequenced with precision, from Nursery to Year 6. It identifies the important knowledge and skills pupils are to learn. However, in a few subjects, the essential learning is not always set out clearly enough. This means that teachers are not always confident about how to help pupils build their knowledge towards achieving the challenging curriculum goals that have been set’. It is not clear whether RE has a well-sequenced curriculum or has learning that is not set out clearly enough.

No references to Religious Education or learning closely connected to Religious Education were made in relation to the 3 infant schools inspected. 2 of these schools are designated as having a religious character.

The junior school inspected is a Church of England school. The inspection report stated: “Pupils learn about a range of different faiths, cultures and world events.”

No references to Religious Education or learning closely connected to Religious Education were made in relation to the special school inspected.

The hospital school’s inspection report stated that: “Intelligently crafted personal development lessons also teach pupils about life in modern Britain. They learn that people believe in different things and how to be respectful of that.”

References to daily acts of collective worship

There were no references relevant to collective worship made in relation to the 2 secondary schools inspected. Neither of the schools is designated as having a religious character.

2 out of the 12 primary school inspection reports included a comment relevant to collect worship. 1 school is designated as having a religious character and the other is not.

In a school without a religious character, the report highlighted the school’s inclusive ethos and ‘activities such as singing in the local church’. Whilst not a direct mention this could be indicative of the school’s commitment to providing daily acts of collective worship. It may in fact also show engagement with faith and belief communities.

In reference to a Church of England primary school, inspectors reported that: “Assemblies serve as opportunities for reflection on values and celebrate pupils’ achievements collectively.”

There were no references relevant to collective worship made in relation to the infant, junior or special school settings inspected. Inspectors commented that at the hospital school: “Pupils celebrate various religious and cultural events together as a community.”

Comparative summary:

There have been a greater number of inspections this year, compared with the previous academic year. No ‘deep dives’ into RE were possible as most were not full inspections and, where full inspections did take place, they were conducted in Church of England schools where RE is inspected separately under Section 48 (SIAMS).

Although it is encouraging to see positive comments relevant to collective worship this year, it is still notable only 3 schools garnered comments on collective worship.

There were this year, proportionately, more comments relevant to RE, and it is encouraging that the comments were positive. It is of concern, however, that only 7 schools out of the 20 inspected received comment relevant to RE. Even more concerning is that 5 out of the 7 of these comments related to Church of England schools, where Ofsted had no remit to inspect RE.

SACRE is concerned that Ofsted has made more mention of RE in schools designated as having a religious character, where it has no remit to inspect RE, and paradoxically has made little reference relevant to RE in community schools where it does have a remit to inspect RE.

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 teachers' 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 took place 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.

Floor books in RE

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.

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.

REAL PEOPLE REAL FAITH KS2



Topics covered in network meetings this year include: Developing student engagement in secondary RE; Literacy and reading in secondary RE; Collecting evidence of progress in RE through imaginative and creative strategies for 3-7 year olds; Reviewing the draft Pan-Berkshire syllabus; Ofsted's subject report on RE, 'Deep and meaningful?'

Teachers are informed and reminded about useful resources to support their teaching of RE, such as the 'Real People, Real Faith' materials produced by the Berkshire SACRE Hub.

Primary RE Subject Leader training

Training for Primary RE subject leaders was attended by teachers on 26th September 2023. 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.

3. Collective Worship

3.1 Standards and monitoring of Collective Worship

Ofsted, or any other party, has 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

Wokingham SACRE provides extensive training and networking opportunities to its schools. Training requirements are determined by teacher requests at network meetings. As teachers have indicated that their training needs relate to RE, no specific training has been provided this year relating to collective worship.

In addition to locally provided training, news of training opportunities from a range of respected providers is shared in termly Local Authority newsletters and at network meetings.

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.

3.5 Other information

The SACRE is not aware of any complaints regarding collective worship in the Local Authority's schools.

3.6 Advice to the LA

The SACRE has not provided any advice to the Local Authority regarding Collective Worship this academic year.

4. Links with other bodies

Wokingham SACRE is an active member of NASACRE. 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. Angela was accompanied by a teacher member of SACRE this year.

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).

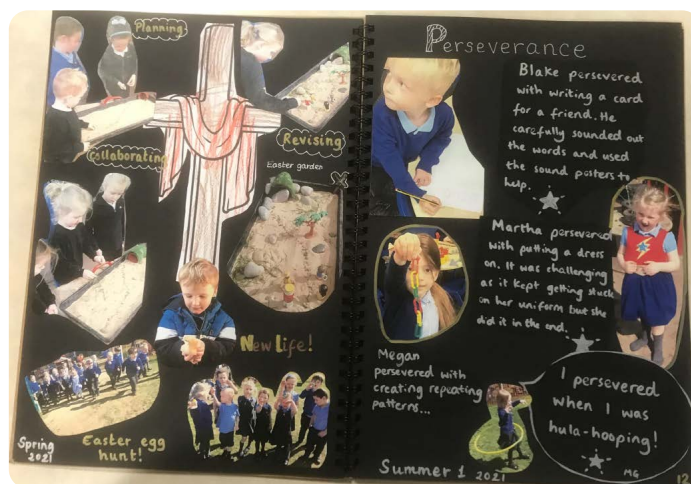
Wokingham SACRE supports Stop Ecocide International. This campaign is led by a group of international lawyers, researchers and diplomats who are working to make ecocide (damage or destruction of ecosystems) an international crime.

4.2 Local bodies

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

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.



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, Luciane Bowker, who supports the committee between meetings, and helps to recruit new members to the SACRE. 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, Emily Waddilove, 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.

REAL PEOPLE REAL FAITH KS3



The RE advisor is recruited by the LA in partnership with the SACRE chair and vice-chair. Our advisor throughout this academic year, Angela Hill, is a national adviser for RE Today Services and a highly experienced and knowledgeable RE teacher and teacher trainer. Two elected councillors, Cllr Jackie Rance and Cllr Jordan Montgomery, have been proactive members of the SACRE this year, and have whole-heartedly supported the SACRE's work. Cllr Rance was replaced by Cllr Alex Freeney 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. Also in Group A, we have Cllr Shahid Younis, our Islam member.

6.2 Membership, representation and 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. Groups C (Educationalists) and D (The Authority) had no vacancies during the year, and we have now managed to recruit a secondary RE teacher onto Group C.

SACRE now has a Humanist member on Group A, who was hitherto a co-opted member of the SACRE. The two SACRE meetings which took place this year were both quorate, with all groups represented according to the terms of the SACRE's constitution.

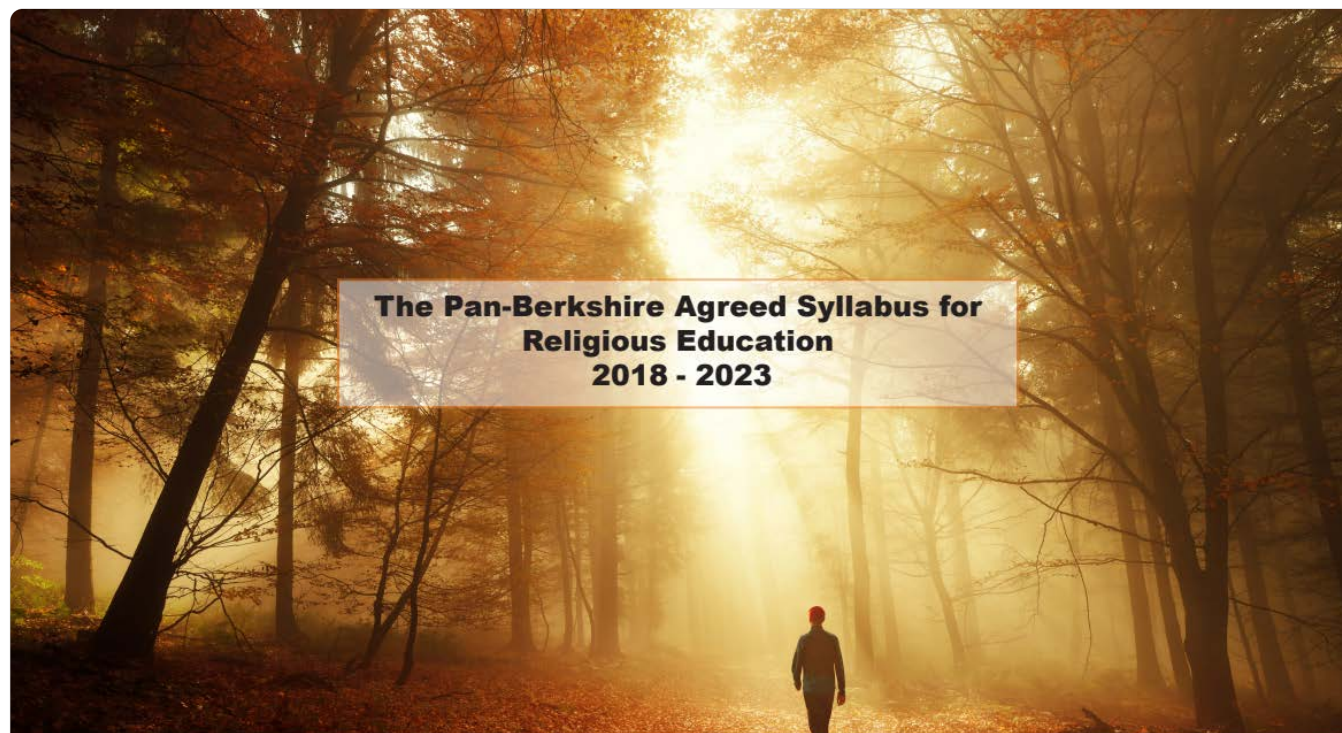
6.3 Training for SACRE members

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 the 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.

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

© Copyright of this document is the property of the 6 Local Authorities across Berkshire (Bracknell Forest, Reading, Slough, West Berkshire, Windsor and Maidenhead and Wokingham). The purchase of this copyright material confers the right on the purchasing institution to copy it for educational use within that, and no other, institution. No part of this document may be reprinted or reproduced in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, for use in any other institution or by any individual, written permission from the Chair of the SACRE (Standing Advisory Council for RE) in one of these authorities.



SACRE

Wokingham Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

SACRE | **Annual Report** | 2023-24