

# SACRE

Wokingham Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

SACRE | Annual Report | 2024-25

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## 1. Introduction

### Foreword by the Chair of SACRE

I'm privileged to share this year's Annual Report with you. It's tribute to the hard work, commitment and willingness to cooperate of all those involved in the important work of religious education.

I would like to start by thanking the members of the Wokingham SACRE. They freely give their time to support Wokingham's RE community because they want to see our children well-equipped to navigate the complexities of differing understandings of the world. Thanks especially to Stephen Vegh who chaired the SACRE through challenging times, including the Covid pandemic, and has now stepped down for some well-deserved rest.

I also want to say how much we appreciate our LA link officer, Emily Waddilove and our Clerk, Luciane Bowker, who both provide essential stability to our SACRE. Finally, thanks to Ian Nicholson, our RE advisor, for his knowledge and insight.

As you read this report you will see that it has been a busy year. It hasn't always been an easy one: producing the new Locally Agreed Syllabus for Wokingham involved our SACRE in lengthy discussions as we worked to further develop the syllabus produced by the pan-Berkshire SACRE Hub, and agree a syllabus for Wokingham schools that our members felt was as strong as possible. We are very pleased to have produced a syllabus that Wokingham SACRE feels best reflects religions and their practices and provides excellent support for teachers.

We continued to support RE teachers through training and networking opportunities. We monitored schools in both the provision of RE teaching and its effectiveness. We ensured that acts of Collective Worship took place in all our schools. We advised on speakers who are suitable to come into schools. We signposted places of worship which welcome school visits.

Looking ahead, these are exciting times for RE teaching. Schools will be preparing for our new Locally Agreed Syllabus. This might be the last such local syllabus, as the Government considers a recommendation to put RE on the National Curriculum. Leaders in Wokingham Borough Council, together with leaders of other councils in the Thames Valley, are progressing plans to pursue a mayoral strategic authority for the region. This may affect the way in which SACREs in the area organise their work.

We intend to continue our review of the work we do as SACRE so we can continue to improve and ensure the very best RE provision for children and young people in Wokingham.

We are only too aware that we don't have representation on our SACRE from all the major religions from the borough. In particular, we have been looking for a Buddhist member for a while, but we are now searching for Hindu and Roman Catholic representatives as well.

It's my pleasure to commend this report to you.



Nigel Harman  
Chair, Wokingham SACRE

## Overview of the work of SACRE 2024-2025

Since 1988, each Local Authority (LA) has been required by law to have a Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE).

The remit of a SACRE is principally to oversee the Religious Education (RE) and collective worship within the authority, and principally to:

- advise the Local Authority upon matters connected with Religious Education and Collective Worship in community schools and in foundation schools which do not have a religious character. Religious Education in these schools is to be given in accordance with the Agreed Syllabus;
- advise the Local Authority on teaching methods, choice of materials and teacher training in Religious Education and Collective Worship;
- require the Local Authority to review the locally agreed syllabus for religious education at least every five years.

The Wokingham SACRE schedules its meetings once each term during the academic year to progress its work, structuring this through an agreed action plan.

SACRE met on three occasions during the academic year 2024 – 2025. Minutes for these meetings are available on the Wokingham Borough Council website ([these can be found at SACRE](#)).

The Agreed Syllabus Council was convened at the SACRE meeting in November, and a further two meetings of the Agreed Syllabus Council were held on the 22nd April and the 12th May.

The SACRE has achieved two significant pieces of work this year: reviewing and updating the SACRE's constitution and producing a new Locally Agreed Syllabus.

### Standing items for all SACRE meetings include:

Update on Wokingham schools

Development plan and budget

Feedback from teacher networks and training opportunities

National updates relating to education and RE

Feedback from Berkshire SACRE Hub meetings

Member presentations - about their faith or worldview/ about collective worship at their school.



## What is humanism?

curious

## 2. Religious Education

### The Locally Agreed Syllabus and RE in schools

RE is not part of the national curriculum. Each LA is required to produce an Agreed Syllabus for RE. Each LA is required to begin reviewing the current Agreed Syllabus within five years of its production.

The Wokingham Agreed Syllabus for RE was reviewed in the period covered by this report and an Agreed Syllabus was recommended by the Agreed Syllabus Conference to the Council, which accepted this as the basis of religious education in maintained schools and academies without a religious character where it was chosen as the basis for RE.

Schools in the borough have until January 2027 to fully implement the new syllabus.

### Standards and monitoring of RE

### Results of External Religious Studies examinations - summer 2025

*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.*

### Wokingham provisional GCSE RS data 2025

Data includes both full course and short course GCSE.

Data in brackets is for 2024, 2023, 2022 and 2019.

Wokingham GCSE RS outcomes for 2025 were again strong compared to national outcomes, and compared to 2019 outcomes for the borough. (Whereas national outcomes in 2025 were just slightly above 2019 national outcomes, Wokingham 2025 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

	<b>Wokingham</b>	<b>National</b>
<b>Grade 4 and above</b>	<b>86%</b> (82%) (89%) (91%) (70%)	<b>71%</b> (69%) (73%) (76%) (70%)
<b>Grade 5 and above</b>	<b>78%</b> (72%) (81%) (81%) (61%)	<b>60%</b> (59%) (56%) (65%) (59%)
<b>% of students entered for the GCSE</b>	<b>41%</b> (49%) (51%) (45%) (66%)	<b>33%</b> (31%) (30%) (30%) (30%)

the ten secondary schools in the borough entered no students for the GCSE. Three schools entered all, or almost all, Year 11 students for the GCSE (compared to four schools in 2024). One school entered around half of their Year 11 cohort for the GCSE. The remaining five schools entered between 11 and 24 students.

### **Wokingham provisional A level RS data 2025**

(2024, 2023, 2022 and 2019 data in brackets).

	<b>Wokingham</b>	<b>National</b>
<b>Percent achieving grade A*-A</b>	<b>32%</b> (27%) (26%) (34%) (10%)	<b>21%</b> (26%) (26%) (31%) (22%)
<b>Percent achieving grade A*-C</b>	<b>88%</b> (73%) (83%) (91%) (65%)	<b>78%</b> (78%) (79%) (86%) (76%)
<b>Percent achieving grade A*-E</b>	<b>100%</b> (97%) (100%) (97%) (96%)	<b>98%</b> (97%) (98%) (99%) (98%)
<b>Total number of students</b>	<b>34 (3.4%)</b> (37/4%) (46) (32) (48)	<b>4.6%</b> (5%)

A total of 34 students were entered for RS A Level in Wokingham in 2025, compared to 37 in 2024. 88% of these students achieved grades C+. This is significantly above the national equivalent of 78%, and is a higher percentage than achieved C+ grades in Wokingham in the previous two years. 32% of Wokingham students entered achieved grades A\* or A, significantly above the national equivalent of 21%.

### **Monitoring of Ofsted inspection reports**

Ofsted reports are monitored as part of the requirement for the SACRE to have oversight of standards in religious education in the Borough.

13 primary, infant and junior schools were inspected during the academic year 2024-25 – including 4 schools with a religious character (3 Church of England and 1 Roman Catholic); 3 secondary schools were inspected. Comments relating to RE were included in five of the reports on primary phase

settings (including two schools with a religious character) and two of the reports on secondary settings.

Comments relating to RE included in reports of inspections in primary schools are:

- *The school provides ample opportunities for pupils to learn about diverse cultures, perspectives and lifestyles.*
- *Pupils learn about different faiths. This includes the commonalities that religions share, such as special festivals and moral values.*
- *Pupils also learn about different cultures and religions. They enjoy listening to their friends talking about their religious beliefs and traditions. Pupils develop a secure understanding of treating others with respect.*
- *The school promotes the importance of diversity. Pupils explore a wide range of different cultures and beliefs. These help pupils to develop respectful attitudes and to value differences.*
- *Pupils understand different faiths, cultures and beliefs, and show great respect for one another.*

Comments relating to RE included in reports of inspections in secondary schools are:

- *Pupils enjoy debating and exploring their own views on spiritual and moral issues.*
- *Unless they choose it as a GCSE option, religious education (RE) is taught to older pupils through the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme. This means that all pupils do not receive their statutory entitlement to study a suitable RE curriculum. The curriculum does not include RE and computer science for all pupils. As a result, many pupils do not develop their understanding of different beliefs and values... The school must ensure that it develops and teaches a suitable curriculum in RE and computer science to all pupils.*

SACRE is in communication with this school to ensure staff have the support needed to develop their provision as required.

### **Teacher training materials and advice for schools**

Training has been delivered to schools throughout the borough on a virtual basis. All sessions were provided free of charge to teachers in maintained schools and academies. Very positive feedback was received from teachers attending all sessions.

A cross phase network meeting took place on the 22nd January, with a focus on the new syllabus.

A training session for new subject leaders in primary schools was offered in February: 'Effective leadership of RE in primary schools'.

During March, network meetings were offered for both primary and secondary school teachers, with a focus on the pedagogy behind the new Berkshire syllabus (ways of knowing - including substantive, disciplinary and personal knowledge).

What areas might be covered in Collective Worship?



## How to be an effective RE subject leader.

Julie Childs  
Debbie Yeomans

An additional training session was also offered in March on the pedagogy of the new syllabus. This was a face to face training event open to colleagues in all phases.

As well as training events organised by the SACRE, information about training opportunities from a range of respected providers is shared in Local Authority newsletters and at network meetings.



## Advice given to the Local Authority

Advice was given to the local authority in relation to the Constitution of the SACRE.

The new Locally Agreed Syllabus was provided to the Local Authority in June for their adoption.

## Section 3: Collective worship

No training was provided focusing on collective worship in the period covered by this report due to the focus on the new Agreed Syllabus for RE, although a presentation on Collective Worship was given to SACRE members to support their understanding.

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. No determinations were requested during the period covered by this report.

## Section 4: Links with other bodies

### National Bodies

Wokingham SACRE is pleased to be linked with national bodies and receive national updates from Ian Nicholson, our RE adviser. Wokingham SACRE has links with NASACRE (National Association of SACREs). A member of SACRE attended the NASACRE annual conference and AGM and gave useful feedback at the following SACRE meeting.



Information from the National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE) and the RE Council has been used in meetings and shared with schools where appropriate.

SACRE members regularly attend NASACRE webinars.

### Local bodies

The Wokingham SACRE is a long-standing member of the Pan Berkshire SACREs Hub.

Local places of worship are well represented on the SACRE.

The Oxford Diocesan Advisor, Katie Dickens, is now a member of Wokingham SACRE.

## Section 5: SACRE involvement in the Local Area

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 and federation of secondary schools; 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.

### Governor and headteacher links

Headteachers regularly receive information about RE, and particularly about the development of the new locally agreed syllabus, via the weekly schools' newsletter and via monthly leadership drop in meetings held via Teams. A member of Committee C who represents Wokingham Primary Headteacher Association acts as the link between the SACRE and his primary headteacher colleagues.

## Section 6: Managing the SACRE and partnership with the Local Authority (LA)

### Professional and administrative support

During the reporting period, clerking of SACRE was undertaken by Luciane Bowker of Democratic Services at Wokingham Borough Council.

The Local Authority provided funding to support SACRE activity 2024 – 2025. This was largely used to fund the services of an RE Adviser from RE Today Services to support the SACRE and the Agreed Syllabus Conference, and to provide training to schools. Ian Nicholson from RE Today fulfilled the role of RE advisor.

Emily Waddilove, a member of the Education Partnership team at Wokingham Borough Council, holds responsibility for SACRE support and liaises with the RE advisor.

### Membership

SACRE membership during this academic year is shown below:

#### Group A:

##### **Christian denominations other than the Church of England:**

Beth Rowland – Free Church (Vice-Chair)

Nigel Harman – Free Church

Catherine Jinkerson – resigned during the year - **Vacancy**

**Vacancy**

#### **Religions other than Christianity:**

Hinduism	<b>Vacancy</b>
Islam	Shahid Younis
Judaism	Dr Shira Lewin Solomons
Sikhism	Kiran Hunjan
Buddhism	<b>Vacancy</b>
Humanism	Clare Walsha

#### Group B:

##### **The Church of England**

Linda Galpin

John Sutton

Reverend Becky Medlicott – resigned Feb 25 – replaced by Katie Dickens

#### Group C:

##### **Teachers, Teaching Unions and Educationalists (representing both Primary and Secondary education)**

Stephen Vegh (Chair – LA Education officer)

Philip Theobald (WPHA representative – Primary headteacher)

Julie Easton (Primary teacher)

Sarah Whitethread (Secondary teacher)

Sam Lawless (Primary teacher)

Nick Barnett (Soulscape)

#### Group D:

##### **The Authority - 2 members**

Cllr Alex Freeney

Cllr Jordan Montgomery

- Replaced during the year by:

Cllr Stephen Newton

Cllr Alison Swaddle

#### **Other SACRE roles:**

LA Link/RE Adviser: Ian Nicholson

Clerk: Luciane Bowker

LA Officer with responsibility for the SACRE: Emily Waddilove

### **Finance**

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.

# SACRE

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