

Agenda

Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)

Date: **Wednesday 25 March 2026**

Time: **10.00 am**

Place: **Conference Room 2 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE**

Notes: For any further information please contact:
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Agenda for the meeting of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)

Voting membership

Chairperson	Geoff Sallis	Humanism representative
	Carolyn Ault	Bahá'í faith representative
	Louise Barker (Vice-Chairperson)	Secondary school teacher representative
	Mark Harrington	Church of England representative
	Samira Kairo	Muslim faith representative
	Jatinderpal Loyal	Sikh faith representative
	Jonathan Nicholas	Church of England representative
	Councillor Rob Owens	Herefordshire Council
	Councillor Justine Peberdy	Herefordshire Council
	Raoul Smith	Jewish faith representative
	Ruth Stanier	Quaker faith representative
	Barry Stevens	Church of England representative
	Councillor John Stone	Herefordshire Council
	Tracy Westlake	Primary school teacher representative

Agenda

	Pages
1. WELCOME AND THOUGHT FOR THE DAY To welcome members to SACRE and to receive a thought for the day from the Chairperson.	
2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE To receive any apologies for absence.	
3. NAMED SUBSTITUTES To receive details of any substitutes nominated to attend the meeting in place of a member of SACRE.	
4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2025 and to note any matters arising.	9 - 14
5. WRITTEN PUBLIC QUESTIONS To respond to any written questions from members of the public received in advance of the meeting.	
6. HEREFORDSHIRE SACRE ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25 Further to the discussion at the last meeting (minute 17 refers), to note the revised SACRE annual report 2024/25; this has been updated to include the Chair's foreword, minor amendments made at the last meeting, and Appendix 3: Herefordshire examination results.	15 - 28
7. LOCAL RE AWARD Further to the discussion at the last meeting (minute 20 refers), a local RE award sub-group of SACRE will meet remotely on Friday 27 March 2026 at 10.00 am. To provide the opportunity to launch the scheme at the conferences, SACRE is invited to delegate authority to the sub-group to confirm the criteria and other arrangements for the award.	
8. THREE COUNTIES SECONDARY RE CONFERENCE To note arrangements for the Secondary RE Conference to be held on Tuesday 30 June 2026; flyer and booking form attached.	29 - 32
9. HEREFORDSHIRE PRIMARY RE CONFERENCE 2026 To discuss arrangements for the Primary RE Conference to be held in July 2026; draft flyer attached.	33 - 34
10. NATIONAL RE UPDATES To receive National RE Updates for SACRE from RE Today, Spring 2026 for Herefordshire SACRE.	35 - 42

11. ROUNDTABLE UPDATES

To receive any verbal updates on religious education matters in Herefordshire from members of SACRE.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next scheduled meeting is [Monday 22 June 2026, 10.00 am](#).

SACRE will be invited to consider options for subsequent meeting dates in 2026/27.

The public's rights to information and attendance at meetings

You have a right to:

- Attend all council, cabinet, committee and sub-committee meetings unless the business to be transacted would disclose 'confidential' or 'exempt' information.
- Inspect agenda and public reports at least five clear days before the date of the meeting. Agenda and reports (relating to items to be considered in public) are available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/meetings
- Inspect minutes of the council and all committees and sub-committees and written statements of decisions taken by the cabinet or individual cabinet members for up to six years following a meeting.
- Inspect background papers used in the preparation of public reports for a period of up to four years from the date of the meeting (a list of the background papers to a report is given at the end of each report). A background paper is a document on which the officer has relied in writing the report and which otherwise is not available to the public.
- Access to a public register stating the names, addresses and wards of all councillors with details of the membership of cabinet and of all committees and sub-committees. Information about councillors is available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/councillors
- Have access to a list specifying those powers on which the council have delegated decision making to their officers identifying the officers concerned by title. The council's constitution is available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/constitution
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The seven principles of public life

(Nolan Principles)

1. Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

2. Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

3. Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

4. Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

5. Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

6. Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

7. Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and treat others with respect. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Notes of the meeting of Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) held in Conference Room 2 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Monday 10 November 2025 at 10.00 am

Chairperson:

Geoff Sallis Humanism representative

Voting members present in person:

Carolyn Ault	Bahá'í faith representative
Louise Barker	Secondary school teacher representative
Mark Harrington	Church of England representative
Jonathan Nicholas	Church of England representative
Councillor Justine Peberdy	Herefordshire Council
Ruth Stanier	Quaker faith representative
Barry Stevens	Church of England representative
Councillor John Stone	Herefordshire Council
Tracy Westlake	Primary school teacher representative

Support officers:

Ben Baugh	Herefordshire Council
Pamela Howell	Herefordshire Council
Stephen Pett	Consultant to SACRE

12. WELCOME AND THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

The Chairperson welcomed attendees to the meeting and shared a thought for the day about the importance of compassion and inclusivity, with references made to: the impacts of fatalities during the First World War upon many neighbourhoods; the c. 53 'thankful villages' in England and Wales where all service personnel had returned from the First World War (no similar villages had been identified in Scotland or Ireland); and how Middleton-on-the-Hill, as one of the 14 'doubly thankful villages' where all service personnel had returned from the Second World War also, honoured and remembered the losses of other communities. Councillor Stone, as the ward member for Leominster North, welcomed the reference to the village and provided further local context.

13. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Jatinder Loyal (Sikh faith representative) and Raoul Smith (Jewish faith representative).

14. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

None identified.

15. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2025 were received.

The following matters arising were noted:

- i. Pam Howell confirmed that an email had been sent to schools with a link to the revised syllabus; and

- ii. Stephen Pett agreed to provide a list of publications referenced at the Agreed Syllabus Launch: Secondary Schools; this was circulated to SACRE members following the meeting.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairperson.

16. WRITTEN PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No written questions had been received.

17. DRAFT SACRE ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25 DISCUSSION

Attention was drawn to a further iteration of the draft SACRE Annual Report 2024/25, including the addition of the Chair's foreword and updates from the Diocese of Hereford (paragraph 2.3.2); this had been circulated to SACRE members on 7 November 2025.

SACRE members suggested amendments, including:

- Paragraph 4.2, the inaugural biennial Interfaith Peace Service for International Day of Peace had been held at Hereford Cathedral, but it had also been held in other venues subsequently.
- Reference could be made to the joint lunch and chat sessions held by Herefordshire Interfaith Group and SACRE members.

The Chairperson requested that SACRE members identify any further amendments within the next week. It was noted that final examination results data would be needed prior to the publication of the Annual Report 2024/25.

18. PLANNING FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY CONFERENCES 2026

Secondary conference 2026

Stephen Pett reported that consideration was being given to a 'three counties' secondary conference, involving Herefordshire, Worcestershire, and Gloucestershire schools. It was recommended that the conference could focus on GCSE, potentially with the participation of experienced examiners.

SACRE members welcomed the proposal, noting that schools would appreciate the focus on raising attainment and the opportunity to work collaboratively. The Chairperson commented on the value of sharing knowledge and experiences across schools and counties.

Stephen Pett said that consideration would be given to a date at the end of June 2026 and to the venue; SACRE members noted the need for good access to the road network.

Primary conference 2026

SACRE members discussed options for the primary conference, the main points included:

- i. With attention drawn to the comment in the draft annual report 2024/25 that 'SACRE has found it hard to monitor collective worship', the potential to include collective worship was questioned. Given that requirements could vary by type of school, it was considered preferable to signpost schools to practical guidance and support through the local authority bulletin.

- ii. It was suggested that there could be focus on good examples of schools embedding the agreed syllabus and sharing best practice, including approaches to assessment.
- iii. It was also suggested that the breadth and depth of teaching could be explored.

Stephen Pett agreed to develop an outline, invited participants to identify examples to showcase, and said that a date would be identified in July 2026. It was noted that The Bishop of Hereford's Bluecoat School would be prepared to host the conference again.

19. TEACHER SUPPORT - NETWORK MEETINGS

Matters discussed by SACRE members during this item included:

1. Examples of pupil voice around RE were circulated in the meeting room by Tracy Westlake. These had been captured during primary school visits and demonstrated the high quality and creativity of the work being undertaken.
2. Access to genuine artefacts used by faith communities was problematic for some schools and this could limit engagement with pupils. SACRE members discussed the benefits and limitations of local loan collections. The Chairperson suggested that the list of speakers/visitors could identify people that were able to bring artefacts with them, particularly as this could enhance personal testimony and lived experience examples.
3. It was noted that many teachers were comfortable with Christianity units but were sometimes less confident with other units.
4. The limited time available to teachers to prepare for sessions and the challenges around active participation in online meetings. It was suggested that details of forthcoming network meetings could be circulated to schools via the local authority.

20. CELEBRATING RE - IDEAS FOR A LOCAL RE AWARD

Attention was drawn to a draft flyer promoting an RE award in a neighbouring local authority area which was free for schools to take part in; this had been circulated to SACRE members on 31 October 2025. Stephen Pett commented on discussions around launching a scheme in Herefordshire. Similar to a model used elsewhere, this could take the form of bronze and silver awards initially, with a gold award to be developed subsequently; each level would require evidence of the completion of a range of activities and initiatives.

SACRE members welcomed this suggestion, with comments made about the potential to raise the profile of the subject and to celebrate excellence in local schools.

It was agreed that a sub-group of SACRE should be convened to consider the matter further, including branding, award criteria, and moderation arrangements.

21. NATIONAL RE UPDATES (AUTUMN 2025)

Stephen Pett presented National RE Updates for SACRE from RE Today.

Curriculum and Assessment Review

It was reported that, on 5 November 2025, the conclusions and recommendations of the independent panel had been published: [Curriculum and Assessment Review Final Report: 'Building a world-class curriculum for all' \(link\)](#).

Attention was drawn to headlines in relation to RE (page 109):

- 'The Review believes that RE should be moved to the national curriculum to improve access to high-quality provision and to prevent further diminishment'
- 'The Review ultimately wishes to see RE in the national curriculum, but it recognises that it is unrealistic for this to be achieved immediately. We therefore believe that a staged approach to reform is the most appropriate way forward. To this end, we recommend that the Government invites the sector to establish an independent task and finish group made up of representatives from faith bodies, secular groups and experts from the teaching and wider education sector, to develop a draft RE curriculum.'
- 'The group should also consider whether there would be benefit in changing the name of Religious Education.'

SACRE was advised that timelines had not been established to date, the National Content Standard for RE in England had been recognised as receiving 'consensus from across the sector and laid strong foundations for change' but was likely to be tested rigorously, and legislative changes would be required.

The inclusion of RE in the national curriculum was discussed and it was noted that agreed syllabuses were likely to remain in place for the next few years.

Initial Teacher Training (ITT) bursary for RE

It was reported that the ITT bursary for RE, re-introduced for the academic year 2024/25, would be withdrawn by the Department for Education from September 2026. It was noted that the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE) was campaigning to reverse the decision given the national shortage of RE teachers and the risks to university training courses.

Examination Results 2025

SACRE was advised about unvalidated data which showed Herefordshire GCSE results against nearby counties, the West Midlands and England. It was noted that the data indicated a decrease in upper grades, reinforcing the need to focus on GCSE at the secondary conference.

Overviews were provided on the other matters referenced in the update paper, including Ofsted's 'Renewed education inspection framework' and associated toolkits which clarified the place of RE as part of the basic curriculum.

22. ROUNDTABLE UPDATES

SACRE members provided verbal updates, the principal points included:

- i. The Bishop of Hereford had recently hosted an interfaith event to mark the beginning of Interfaith Week 2025.
- ii. A number of Herefordshire schools were included in the list of Statutory Inspection of Anglican & Methodist Schools for the year 2025/26.
- iii. There had been an increase in the numbers of parents withdrawing pupils from school trips to mosques, prompted by misinformation about potential protests.

23. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as [Wednesday 25 March 2026, 10.00 am](#).

The Chairperson invited members to identify candidates for vacant positions on SACRE. It was noted that some faith group representatives had not been present for a number of meetings and it was suggested that remote attendance could be facilitated if necessary; however, such participants would not be able to vote on any decisions taken.

The meeting ended at 11.40 am

Chairperson



Herefordshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Annual Report September 2024 - August 2025

Foreword

As Chair of the Herefordshire SACRE, it gives me great pleasure to provide the introduction to this report as we reflect on another year of helping to ensure that all pupils in our schools develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally as well as academically.

I am grateful for the Committee that has worked hard over the last year and continue to be grateful for the diversity and commitment that is represented. I would also like to thank Stephen Pett, who in his role as Professional Advisor and Ben Baugh as Clerk, for providing invaluable support to both SACRE and to me personally, as well as working hard to support our school RE leaders.

I would like to offer my thanks to our SACRE members and the teachers and community members who have worked so hard to support RE in Herefordshire in the year covered by this report. I would also like to thank Herefordshire Council for its support in hosting SACRE meetings over the past year.

SACRE actively seeks to ensure all children in Herefordshire have access to high quality and challenging religious and non-religious beliefs. Against this positive background there is still the concern that the number of specialist RE teachers entering the profession and the amount of curriculum time devoted to RE does not always provide pupils with the depth of knowledge they need to live in a complex world.

Going forward we have our locally agreed syllabus for 2025/30, which explicitly identifies religious and non-religious concepts. We had received a clear steer from schools that we did not need a radical overhaul of its content as the existing Syllabus was still largely appropriate. However, it was clear that a greater emphasis on a wider view of world religions and beliefs was required to give a better understanding of the richly diverse society that is Britain today.

Our Directory of Places of Worship which encourages visits continues to grow, and pupils' learning in RE has been enhanced by such visits. SACRE believes they also allow our children to experience exciting learning opportunities, promote an ethos of respect for others and build understanding of their own and other cultures and beliefs.

Finally, I would like to thank those members, including Peter Fawcett, who left us during the year for all their contributions to help and enhance our children and young people's education.

Geoff Sallis
Chairperson, Herefordshire SACRE
March 2026

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1. Introduction

1.1. Overview of the work of SACRE

1.1.1. The Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) is a statutory body set up to advise the Local Authority on matters related to religious education and collective worship. Its members are drawn from teachers, Local Authority representatives including Councillors, faith representatives from the Church of England and a range of Christian denominations, and representatives from other religious and non-religious groups represented in the region.

1.1.2. SACRE's key functions include monitoring the provision and quality of RE, and providing advice and support on the effective teaching of RE in accordance with the agreed syllabus. This includes advice on methods of teaching, choice of teaching material and provision of teacher training. This is primarily done through the review and implementation of the locally agreed syllabus, a process which is required every five years. This is followed by on-going monitoring of its effectiveness in the light of changing national education policy.

1.1.3. SACRE endeavours to offer maximum support to schools through its use of conferences and local groups. This year, SACRE held three meetings at Herefordshire Council Offices, Plough Lane, Hereford: Friday 15 November 2024, Friday 28 March 2025 and Friday 11 July 2025.

1.1.4. The Local Authority officer is Pamela Howell, School Improvement Advisor.

1.1.5. Standing items in meetings:

- Welcome and thought for the day
- Apologies for absence
- Named substitutes (if any)
- Minutes and matters arising
- Response to written public questions
- Any other business

1.1.6. A brief overview of each meeting can be found below:

15 November 2024

- Agreed Syllabus Conference feedback
- Proposed outlines for RE launch conferences 2025
- SACRE Annual Report discussion
- Three Counties secondary conference feedback
- Teacher Support (network meetings)
- SACRE training
- National SACRE news update

28 March 2025

- Update on the Agreed Syllabus
- Agreed Syllabus Launch: Primary Schools
- Agreed Syllabus Launch: Secondary Schools
- National SACRE news update
- 2025 Herefordshire school workforce data and results

11 July 2025, SACRE

- Agreed Syllabus Launch: Primary Schools
- Agreed Syllabus Launch: Secondary Schools
- National SACRE news update
- Round table updates

2. Religious Education (RE)

2.1. The locally agreed syllabus and RE in schools

- 2.1.1. The revised Herefordshire agreed syllabus was approved in 2024 and launched in 2025. It is an updated version of the 2020 agreed syllabus, based on the model from RE Today and licensed to the Local Authority for use in their schools. It is built around a purpose, aims and a pedagogy that enables pupils to make sense of religious and non-religious worldviews, understand their impact in people's lives, and make connections between their learning and their own lives. It offers a spiral curriculum model, where pupils build on prior learning, with a particular focus on core concepts at the heart of religious (and non-religious) traditions.
- 2.1.2. Adaptations take account of developments in RE, including the interest in 'ways of knowing' (See Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) research review 2021), and also around the religion and worldviews approach advocated by the RE Council and its 2024 Handbook for Curriculum Writers. The revised syllabus incorporates guidance on a religion and worldviews approach, and embeds icons representing different 'ways of knowing' in the unit page plans.
- 2.1.3. Changes also include a focus on Humanism as an example of an identifiable non-religious worldview, three new optional units that explore contemporary issues (anti-racism and the climate crisis), and additional model long-term plans.

2.2. Standards and monitoring of RE

- 2.2.1. Herefordshire SACRE does not ask for schools to report on attainment in RE at Key Stages 1-3. However, formative assessment should be ongoing and schools should have their own individual summative assessment procedures termly, at the end of each year and Key Stage to inform their reports and school development plan.
- 2.2.2. The syllabus contains a section on assessment, which is related to end of Key Stage expectations. Learning outcomes within the syllabus support teachers to judge whether pupils are on track to meet these expectations.
- 2.2.3. GCSE and A level Religious Studies examinations data can be seen in Appendix 3 below. At present, exam results from 2025 are unvalidated. SACRE thanks teachers who support students and prepare them for examinations.
- 2.2.4. SACRE regularly reviews school workforce survey data when it is available, reviewing school websites and surveying schools to explore provision further.
- 2.2.5. Ofsted reports can also provide a way of monitoring RE. The 2019 Ofsted inspection framework and RE research review appear to be bringing a renewed focus on RE in schools where RE was struggling to get sufficient curriculum time, although we are yet to see the impact of changes from November 2025, including the removal of 'deep dives'.

2.3. Teacher training and materials and advice for schools

Network meetings

2.3.1. SACRE teacher representative, Tracy Westlake, has been running a NATRE-affiliated local group each term. These are held online to allow for maximum participation, given the distance for travel across the county. Sessions are sometimes attended by teachers from neighbouring Shropshire and Worcestershire. Sessions have included the following items:

- The School Linking Programme with the Faith and Belief Forum
- Maximising the value from visits
- Responding to conferences and resources provided by RE Today

2.3.2. The Diocese of Hereford runs regular online and in-person training sessions throughout the year.

- The Diocese of Hereford's education team has provided training to both church and community schools, as well as academies in Herefordshire. There are 37 Church of England schools in the county, including two secondary schools. The team offers advice to various maintained schools, single academies, and multi-academy trusts.
- During the academic year 2024-2025, the team provided training and support to Religious Education (RE) leaders and class teachers. This included courses focused on subject knowledge development for Islam, Hinduism, and Judaism, training for new RE leaders, teaching ideas for world religions, and refresher training for Understanding Christianity. Several schools received tailored support to redesign their RE curriculum maps and to conduct RE moderation of work. This support also extended to training governors on incorporating pupil voice in RE.
- Additionally, the team offered collective worship training that explored how to celebrate the church year, as well as strategies for planning and evaluating collective worship for educators and church visitors supporting schools. The cathedral conducted workshops for students that explored the Bible through drama.
- As church schools undergo inspections under the SIAMS framework, the education team provided support and training for both governors and schools, specifically focusing on the RE and worship elements of these inspections.

SACRE primary RE agreed syllabus launch, 10 July 2025

2.3.3. The primary RE agreed syllabus launch took place in person at The Bishop of Hereford's Bluecoat School on 10 July, 9.00am-3.30pm. 75 delegates attended from 56 schools. It was led by Stephen Pett and Debbie Yeomans from RE Today.

2.3.4. The programme included active sessions on the following:

- Introducing the revised Agreed Syllabus: key features
- Applying 'ways of knowing' in RE
- Long-term planning
- Engaging pupils' personal worldviews

2.3.5. Feedback indicated that 68% of delegates rated the event as 'excellent' and 32% as 'good'.

2.3.6. Representative feedback on the revised syllabus included:

- *Like that it responds to changes in our community dynamic as well as responding to the demands of Ofsted.*
- *Very good. I felt the teaching ideas are superb and it covers the learning outcomes well.*
- *Good to see that essentially, not much has changed but what has been added reflect what is happening in society with hopefully, a view to change it.*
- *Very excited to get started as RE subject leader.*
- *Love the new thematic units like caring for Earth as this links to the sustainable development goals.*
- *I like the new units I feel it is more reflective on the children we teach in today's society.*
- *Having not used the syllabus for a few years, and never having attended training, it was thorough with changes made very obvious and good, clear links to the material that has changed.*
- *An excellent update which takes into account the modern world views on religion's relevance (or lack of it) for people.*

2.3.7. Representative feedback on the conference included:

- *Very well presented and helpful. Glad we've been able to talk about aspects we've been querying as a school.*
- *Highly informative and thought provoking*
- *Good to meet up with like minded people to share experiences and problems - also good to have experts on hand to answer questions.*
- *Really clear delivery. Useful having materials online. Passionate speakers. Inspiring and exciting content.*
- *Presenters we're incredibly clear with well-researched information. Presented clearly to enable planning to be straight forward.*
- *Great conference with easily adaptable classroom ideas. I am leaving with lots of motivation and inspiration to go and make R.E even better at my school.*
- *Well organised, staff were fantastic, great venue and lunch options - thank you.*
- *Thank you a helpful, clear day. I am new to the role and have appreciated going through the syllabus.*

SACRE secondary RE agreed syllabus launch conference, 25 June 2025

2.3.8. Herefordshire SACRE collaborated with Worcestershire SACRE to put on this launch event. This was an afternoon event, 1.30-4.30pm, held at the University of Worcester. 31 delegates from 21 schools attended, including 6 Herefordshire secondary schools.

2.3.9. Feedback shows that 73% of delegates rated the conference as 'excellent' and 27% as 'good'. Sample responses to the revised syllabus included:

- *Reflects the changing demographic of students well. Worldviews approach is a positive step forward for RE. Ways of knowing seems to open up opportunities to actively engage students in their learning more.*
- *I feel the Worldviews aspect reflects the cohort of children I teach.*
- *Pleased there isn't a huge change, like the focus on disciplinary knowledge & the organisation of the syllabus.*
- *I like the ways of knowing icons and links to syllabus. I think this will be really helpful to promote skills and critical thinking about topics studied*

2.4. Other information

2.4.1. There were no formal complaints to SACRE about RE during the year.

2.5. Advice given to the local authority

2.5.1. No advice was given to the local authority.

3. Collective worship

3.1. Standards and monitoring of collective worship

3.1.1. SACRE has found it hard to monitor collective worship over the past few years.

3.2. Determinations

3.2.1. No applications for a determination (to alter the character of collective worship for some or all pupils in a school) have been requested in the year 2024-25.

3.3. Teacher training provided

3.3.1. No SACRE training on collective worship has been provided in 2024-25, although the Diocese of Hereford continues to support its schools in this area.

3.4. Other information

3.4.1. There were no formal complaints to SACRE about collective worship during the year.

3.5. Advice given to the local authority

3.5.1. No advice was given to the local authority.

4. Links with other bodies

4.1. National bodies

- Herefordshire SACRE is a member of NASACRE. Its newsletters are circulated to all members.
- Stephen Pett, RE Today, connects SACRE with NATRE, and provides national updates at each meeting. Reports from NATRE, including the School Workforce Data and primary and secondary surveys have proved useful to SACRE when monitoring schools.
- Information from the RE Council has been used in meetings and shared with schools where appropriate.

4.2. Local bodies

- Hereford Diocese provides excellent support to SACRE and local schools.
- Several members of SACRE are members of Herefordshire Interfaith Group, which runs a number of events each term, as well as organising a biennial Interfaith Peace Service for International Day of Peace. Occasional joint lunch and chat sessions are organised by Herefordshire Interfaith Group and SACRE members.

5. SACRE involvement in the local area

- 5.1.1. SACRE updates governors and headteachers on resources and training via a bulletin.

6. Managing SACRE and partnership with the local authority

6.1. Professional and administrative support

6.1.1. Clerk to SACRE

- Ben Baugh
Democratic Services Officer, Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane, Hereford, HR4 0LE

6.1.2. Local authority officer

- Pam Howell
School Improvement Advisor, Children and Young People Directorate, Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane, Hereford, HR4 0LE

6.1.3. Adviser to SACRE

- The local authority has a contract with RE Today Services. Stephen Pett is the RE Today national adviser who delivers the contract to Herefordshire local authority and SACRE.
RE Today Services, S5-S6 1 Devon Way, Longbridge, Birmingham B31 2TS

6.2. Membership, representation and attendance

- 6.2.1. SACRE regularly reviews membership and seeks representation from local communities. Current vacancies, and repeated absences are discussed by the Chair and local authority officer.

- 6.2.2. All groups have been represented according SACRE's terms of reference at each meeting.

6.3. Training for SACRE members

- 6.3.1. The SACRE Chair, local authority officer, clerk and RE adviser are on hand to advise SACRE members.

- 6.3.2. All members are invited to attend the training provided for schools. Several SACRE members attend the primary conference each year, providing support to the RE adviser and spending time meeting and supporting teachers. Members often attend NASACRE CPD and the Southwest SACRE conference, reporting back to members.

6.4. Finance

- 6.4.1. Herefordshire Council supports SACRE with an annual budget of £5000. This covers the cost of the support from RE Today Services, who have supported Herefordshire SACRE for over a decade, and 20% of it accumulates to cover the cost of agreed syllabus renewals every five years.

Appendices

[Appendix 1: SACRE membership](#)

[Appendix 2: Circulation details for this annual report](#)

[Appendix 3: Herefordshire examination results](#)

Appendix 1: SACRE membership

Group	Representative	15 Nov 2024	28 Mar 2025	11 Jul 2025
Group (A):				
Bahá'í faith	Carolyn Ault	✓	✓	Pete Hulme (sub)
Buddhist religion	<i>Currently no representative</i>			
Hindu faith	<i>Currently no representative</i>			
Humanism	Geoff Sallis (Chair)	✓	✓	✓
Jewish faith	Raoul Smith (from Mar 2025)		✓	
Muslim faith	Samira Kairo			
Other Christian denomination	<i>Currently no representative</i>			
Quaker faith	Ruth Stanier	✓	✓	✓
Other faiths as a whole	<i>Currently no representative</i>			
Roman Catholic	<i>Currently no representative (Peter Fawcett stood down in November 2024)</i>			
Sikh faith	Jatinderpal Loyal			
Group (B): Church of England representatives				
	Barry Stevens			✓
	Mark Harrington	✓		
	Jonathan Nicholas		✓	
Group C: Teacher representatives				
Primary sector	Tracy Westlake	✓		
Secondary sector	Louise Barker (Vice-Chair)	✓	✓	✓
Special education sector	<i>Currently no representative</i>			
Group D: Herefordshire Council members				
	Cllr Rob Owens		✓	✓
	Cllr Justine Peberdy	✓	✓	Remote attendance
	Cllr John Stone	✓	✓	✓
In attendance				
Clerk to SACRE	Ben Baugh	✓	✓	✓
Local authority officer	Pam Howell	✓		
Adviser to SACRE	Stephen Pett, RE Today	✓	✓	✓

Appendix 2: Circulation details for this annual report

Copies of this annual report will be sent electronically to the relevant individuals and bodies below:

- Tina Russell, Corporate Director Children and Young People, Herefordshire Council
- Cllr Ivan Powell, Cabinet Member Children and Young People, Herefordshire Council
- The Department for Education (Central Government)
- National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (NASACRE)
- Headteachers and governing bodies of Herefordshire schools
- All members of Herefordshire SACRE, for distribution to the bodies / communities they represent



Appendix 3: Herefordshire examination results

The unvalidated data shows Herefordshire GCSE results against nearby counties, the West Midlands and England. There were 532 entries in 2025. [Map of GCSE \(9 to 1\) grade outcomes by county in England](#) Results for all ages.

Grades	Herefordshire % (532)	Gloucestershire % (2310)	Worcestershire % (1560)	West-Midlands	England %
1+	98.1	98.3	98.7	97.6	97.9
2+	91.6	93.7	94.2	92.1	93
3+	82.2	87	86.2	83.5	85.2
4+	64.5	75.1	73.7	70.4	73.1
5+	49.5	63.9	61.2	59.6	62.3
6+	32.7	50.4	45.8	45.7	48.3
7+	17.8	33.5	28.5	29.3	31.7
8+	6.5	21	16.3	17.2	19
9	3.7	9.1	5.8	7.6	8.4

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KS4 Grade Summary by Subject

Subject: Religious Studies (4610) / Exam: GCSE (9-1) Full Course (391)

Centre	NOR	NOE	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Q	U	X	9-5	9-4	9-1	Avg	9-5 %	9-4 %
National (State Funded)	624180	104460	7130	10130	12990	17560	14930	11310	13770	8610	4960		2330	730	62740	74060	101400	5.0	60.1%	70.9%
LA (State Funded incl. PRU)	1817	532	18	17	53	80	92	77	95	51	32		14	3	260	337	515	4.5	48.9%	63.3%
The Bishop of Hereford's Bluecoat School	202	16	3	2	1	3	1	2	3	1	-		-	-	10	12	16	5.8	62.5%	75.0%
The Hereford Church of England Academy	89	88	2	1	8	12	9	16	13	11	8		6	2	32	48	80	3.8	36.4%	54.5%
Weobley High School	102	52	1	1	9	14	17	6	2	2	-		-	-	42	48	52	5.4	80.8%	92.3%
St Mary's RC High School	149	149	5	5	16	24	22	22	29	13	9		4	-	72	94	145	4.4	48.3%	63.1%
Earl Mortimer College	84	78	-	1	4	8	10	14	19	12	7		3	-	23	37	75	3.6	29.5%	47.4%
Kingstone High School	130	17	2	2	3	2	2	-	-	4	2		-	-	11	11	17	5.1	64.7%	64.7%
Wigmore School	88	24	2	1	3	2	7	2	7	-	-		-	-	15	17	24	5.1	62.5%	70.8%
John Kyrle High School and Sixth Form Centre Academy	221	75	2	3	8	12	20	11	14	1	2	-	1	1	45	56	73	4.8	60.0%	74.7%
Queen Elizabeth High School	70	19	-	1	-	-	3	2	6	4	3	-	-	-	4	6	19	3.2	21.1%	31.6%
Whitecross Hereford	182	14	1	-	1	3	1	2	2	3	1		-	-	6	8	14	4.3	42.9%	57.1%
Herefordshire (Full Course)		894	29	30	87	128	156	128	170	85	55		22	4	430	558	868			
															48.10%	62.40%	97.10%			

A-level results 2025



KS5 Grade Summary by Subject

Subject: Religious Studies (4610) / Exam: GCE A level (111)

Percentage achieving

School/College	NOE	*	A	B	C	D	E	Q	U	X	A*-A	A*-B	A*-E	Avg Pts
Hereford Cathedral School With A Junior School	8	-	25.0	-	37.5	37.5	-	-	-	-	25.0	25.0	100.0	31.3
Hereford College of Arts	1	-	-	-	100.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100.0	30.0
Hereford Sixth Form College	24	4.2	33.3	29.2	16.7	16.7	-	-	-	-	37.5	66.7	100.0	39.2
John Kyrle High School and Sixth Form Centre Academy	6	33.3	-	33.3	33.3	-	-	-	-	-	33.3	66.7	100.0	43.3

Number achieving

School/College	NOE	*	A	B	C	D	E	Q	U	X	A*-A	A*-B	A*-E
Hereford Cathedral School With A Junior School	8		2		3	3					2	2	8
Hereford College of Arts	1				1						0	0	1
Hereford Sixth Form College	24	1	8	7	4	4					9.0	16.0	24.0
John Kyrle High School and Sixth Form Centre Academy	6	2		2	2						2.0	4.0	6.0

Percentage achieving

	NOE	*	A	B	C	D	E	Q	U	X	A*-A	A*-B	A*-E
England	14045	6.3%	20.0%	30.4%	24.0%	12.6%	4.8%	0.0%	1.5%	0.4%	26.3%	56.8%	98.1%

Number achieving

	NOE	*	A	B	C	D	E	Q	U	X	A*-A	A*-B	A*-E
England	14045	886	2812	4275	3365	1765	675		214	53	3698	7973	13778

Three Counties Secondary RE Conference

Tuesday 30 June 2026

University of Worcester

Room JLG010, Jenny Lind Building, Farrier St, Worcester, WR1 3BZ

Refreshments will be provided. Delegates will need to pay for city centre parking, e.g.
www.worcester.gov.uk/parking/parking-sites/moors-car-park

This will be a practical conference to explore theory and practice, with a focus on GCSE. Experienced teachers share their insights into winning commitment, raising achievement, engaging with texts and other practical ideas for making KS4 a rich and rewarding experience.

9.00	Registration and refreshments
9.30-10.30	Going beyond the proof text at GCSE <i>Karen Steele, University of Worcester</i> The 2024 Ofsted RE report calls on schools to move from surface-level engagement with religious texts to a more nuanced approach that considers historical, cultural and personal contexts. This session explores ways of doing just this!
10.45-11.45	Winning commitment for GCSE RS <i>Alice Weavill, Thomas Keble School</i> Successful strategies for recruiting students for GCSE, and for keeping them hooked/interested/engaged through the course.
12.00-1.00	Raising achievement at GCSE <i>Tom Playfair, Bournside School</i> Practical strategies for supporting students to up their game for learning through the course and delivering in the exam – with some specific tips for raising boys' achievement.
	Lunch
2.00-2.30	News and resource updates <i>Stephen Pett, RE Today</i> This is a time of potential change for RE, including for the drafting of new GCSE specs. This session will bring the latest national news and contexts for RE for the next few years, along with updates on new resources.
2.30-3.20	TeachMeet Bring along one or two ideas that really work – strategies, resources, activities and student responses – GCSE-focus would be good, but KS3 and 6 th form also welcome here. We'll get in touch when you book to see if you have something to bring!
3.20-3.30	Evaluations

You will receive an electronic copy of all resources used on the day to take away, with additional material available to download afterwards. A wide range of resources from RE Today Services will be available to purchase or order on the day at discounted prices.

Fee: £100 per delegate; £170 for two delegates from the same school.

Book here: www.retoday.org.uk/school-support/professional-development-courses/Three-Counties-Secondary-re-conference-2026/

Why should I attend this conference?

- An opportunity to meet colleagues and share ideas
- Receive a rich variety of resources for classroom use
- Receive up-to-date, creative and inspiring training on things that matter in RE

But don't just take our word for it!

95% of attendees in 2024¹ rated the conference as excellent! (The other 5% rated it as good...)

- Always thought-provoking – lots of new ideas as ever
- Lovely opportunity to meet and reflect on our practice. Resources from RE Today are great.
- It has been fantastic for a non-specialist – everyone has been amazingly helpful
- Excellent – really insightful. My brain hurts, but in a good way! I'm excited to take this on as I start my teaching career. Thank you to everyone for such a great day.
- Really positive – affirming, encouraging and motivational
- Really inspiring! Lots of new ideas which are easily accessible and will really engage students. The speakers made me think outside of the box, and want to go back to school and evaluate the curriculum.
- A day of reflection, inspiration and networking. So lovely to have face to face training again! RE is experiential and cannot always be delivered over a screen. Final session was exceptional.
- As always, an amazing and inspirational day. So many useful and practical ideas for the classroom.

100% of attendees in 2023 rated the conference excellent!

- An excellent opportunity to consider and develop practice as usual!!
- Great ideas, great refresher, great to network just great! Thank you so much
- The variety of discussion and practical advice was stimulating and thought provoking. It has provided me with much to take back to both department and school. 'Letters and papers from prison' (Bonhoeffer) - the reason I have done this job for nearly 30 years!!
- Excellent resource ideas - great presenters - all very engaging and enthusiastic
- As always a great conference, jam packed with ideas and practical strategies for the classroom.
- Just excellent, so many points made throughout that I hadn't thought of before.
- As always, a great day! I always learn so much at the conference and this year is no different. Especially the practical help with lesson ideas.
- Some really interesting and practical ideas on how to bring diversity and world views into the classroom! Already planning mentally how I am going to add the resources used into our curriculum!

100% of attendees in 2022 rated the conference excellent!

- Thank you so much for giving up your time. Really enjoy/interested in research behind worldviews and how to explore worldviews. Practical examples modelled by Lat - thank you! Loved how we explored ideas and turned methods upside down.
- This is my annual 'plugin'! I love meeting other RE teachers and gaining such amazing knowledge and understanding.
- Superb as usual. Inspirational and directly relevant to RE now. Lovely update on current dialogue and looking ahead.
- Excellent day full of useful ideas and links to learning. Good to be able to plan in some more up to date ideas. Good to share with others, making links.
- Fantastic day to really 'hone in' on key skills. Great content on both pedagogy and faith / worldview. World views was great to get to grips with. I liked the practical suggestions for use in the classroom.
- So good to be able to work collectively and in the real world again. I met some stimulating and supportive colleagues which is vital.
- Really enjoyed the segment on world views and excited to see how this develops. The venue was excellent! Really enjoyed the depth of the content on Sikhi.

¹ We're not hiding the 2025 evaluations – the Three Counties conference made way for syllabus launches...!

**Booking form:
Three Counties Secondary RE Conference
Tuesday 30 June 2026
University of Worcester**

Fee: £100 per delegate; £170 for two delegates from the same school

Full Name(s):											
School Name:											
School Address:											
	Postcode:										
Telephone:											
Admin email address:											
Attending teacher emails:											
Payment details:											
<input type="checkbox"/>	Please invoice the school										
Invoice/ Credit Card billing address:											
											Postcode:
<input type="checkbox"/>	I enclose a cheque, payable to RE Today Services										
<input type="checkbox"/>	I will pay by Visa, Mastercard or Switch										
Card number:											
Expiry Date:					Start Date:						
Security code <small>(last 3 numbers on signature strip)</small>					Issue no. (Switch)						
Signature:											
Date:											

YES! I will bring some ideas and contribute to the TeachMeet!

<p>Send to: RE Today Services, S5-6 1 Devon Way, Birmingham, B31 2TS Tel: 0121 458 3313 Email to: mark@retoday.org.uk</p>
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Making progress in RE: deepening subject knowledge

3rd, 9th or 10th July 2026 TBC

Venue: TBC

A day of inspiring support and ideas for your RE classroom. A suite of practical ideas and guidance for implementing the revised 2025 agreed syllabus, from current theory to classroom practice. Clear advice on what makes for rich, engaging RE for you and your pupils. Time to ask questions and keep up to date on the world of RE.

The day will be led by Stephen Pett, RE Today, with Tracy Westlake, Burley Gate CE Primary.

Welcome and introduction Geoff Sallis, Chair of SACRE

Session 1: Disciplinary knowledge/ways of knowing in RE

Interest is growing in supporting pupils not just to learn *about* religious and non-religious worldviews, but to learn *how* to find out about them. This session looks at how use of ways of knowing can begin and develop across the age range, with examples for EYFS to Y6 connected to the agreed syllabus units.

Session 2: Green religion: case studies on caring for the Earth

Texts, stories, images and voices to stimulate learning about religious and non-religious responses to caring for the environment, supporting new optional unit in KS2. (You may have your own examples you can share?)

Session 3: Bringing diverse, authentic voices into the classroom

Current RE looks to balance the teachings and practices of traditions with the lived experience of adherents. This session looks at how to bring voices from diverse traditions into the classroom, showcasing resources and models available for EYFS upwards.

Session 4: Build vocabulary, empower learning in RE (and everywhere else)

Research shows that the wider pupils' vocabulary and the stronger their grasp of meanings of key words, the better their reading, learning and progress. This session will dig into some of the big words that help to unlock learning in RE, and suggest strategies for applying this model.

Refreshments and lunch provided

Copies of all resources used on the day will be available to take away, and electronic copies available to download afterwards. A range of resources will be available to purchase or order on the day.

Who is it for?

The conference is aimed at teachers of RE from primary schools, including subject leaders and head teachers. It will also be valuable for governors to find out about and explore best practice in RE.

Aims:

- To explore excellent practice for implementing the Herefordshire Agreed Syllabus for RE, in the context of Ofsted's inspection framework, the Ofsted RE research review, and the RE Council's National Statement of Entitlement 2024
- To provide practical support and guidance to schools in thinking about planning creative, challenging, thoughtful RE in line with the Herefordshire syllabus, increasing pupils' knowledge and understanding, as well as their personal development
- To give teachers confidence in planning and delivering great RE, deepening subject knowledge and skills
- To model examples of thoughtful RE, challenging all pupils and promoting deeper thinking

Cost: £100 or £170 for two teachers from the same school

Booking form online here:

National RE Updates for SACRE from RE Today Spring 2026 for Herefordshire SACRE

Curriculum and Assessment Review

The Curriculum and Assessment Review published their long-awaited report into changes to the curriculum in November 2025. Key comments from the report are:

‘Having evaluated the evidence, we are of the view that RE’s importance is not currently reflected in its standing in the curriculum. The Review believes that RE should be moved to the national curriculum to improve access to high-quality provision and to prevent further diminishment’ - page 109

‘The DfE should consider the legislative framework for RE, including, for example, what any changes to its status in the curriculum would mean for functions such as Standing Advisory Councils on RE (SACREs). A long-term plan for implementing potential changes to legislation should be drafted’ - page 111

‘Following any changes, attention may also need to be given to the subject content of the optional GCSE in Religious Studies’ - page 110

In response to the recommendations from the Curriculum and Assessment Review the DfE have stated:

‘We welcome the Review’s work on RE and the careful consideration that the Panel has given, both to how better 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 what 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.’

The CaAR has proposed a phased, four stage approach

Stage 1	Consensus Building: Independent task and finish group
Stage 2	Drafting and Testing: Very possibly based around the RE Council National Content Standard
Stage 3	Legislative and Structural Review; Define the future role of SACREs and ASCs
Stage 4	Implementation and Support: National Guidance, Exemplification and CPD

EBacc and Accountability

The Curriculum and Assessment Review reported that the EBacc has constrained pupil choice post 14 (page 124). The DfE has committed to reviewing Progress 8 and Attainment 8 with a breadth area made up of four GCSEs which will have to include subjects from two of the following

- Humanities (including Religious Studies)
- Creative Subjects
- Languages

The DfE are also consulting on a fourth group which would include subjects such as computer science.

Alongside this the DfE have noted that GCSE content will be reviewed in all subjects including religious studies for first teaching in either 2029 or 2030 and corresponding changes to AS and A Level from first teaching in either 2031 or 2032.

Message from Dr. Vanessa Ogden OBE about the Expert Advisory Group

On 17th December, Dr. Vanessa Ogden OBE published a letter with an update on developments from the Curriculum and Assessment Review in relation to the future of RE. Phase One was to establish an Expert Advisory Group to discuss and make recommendations about RE and the National Curriculum.

In the letter, Dr. Ogden made note that the Expert Advisory Group is now in place, with membership based on curriculum expertise and school leadership. She is also establishing two key reference groups, a Religion and Belief Reference Group led by Sarah Lane Cawte, the Chair of the RE Council and an RE Teacher Reference Group led by Katie Freeman, the Chair of the NATRE.

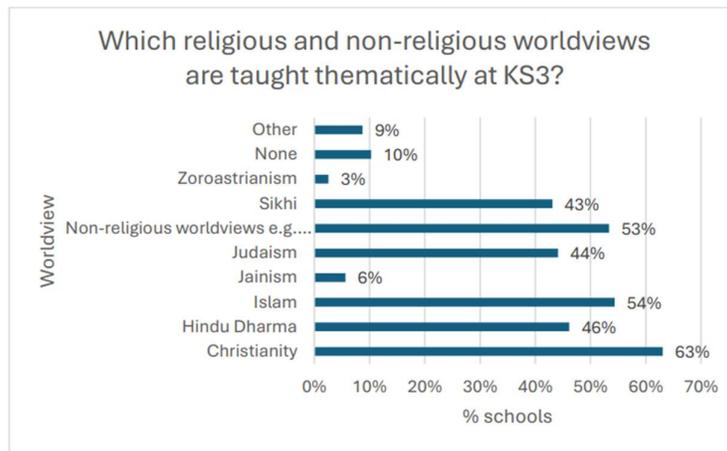
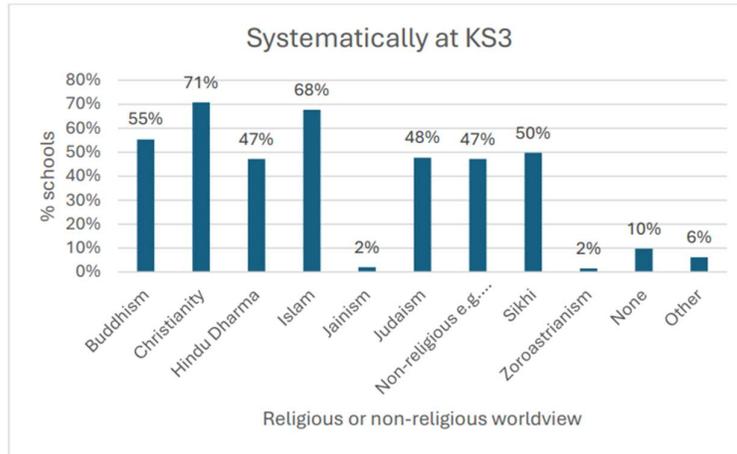
NATRE Secondary Survey published

NATRE carries out a survey of secondary schools every two years. The results of the 2025 survey are now out. The 2025 findings confirm an increasingly polarised landscape: schools that value and invest in RE sustain strong provision, while others have reduced or removed it entirely. Despite these pressures, teachers continue to demonstrate high professional commitment.

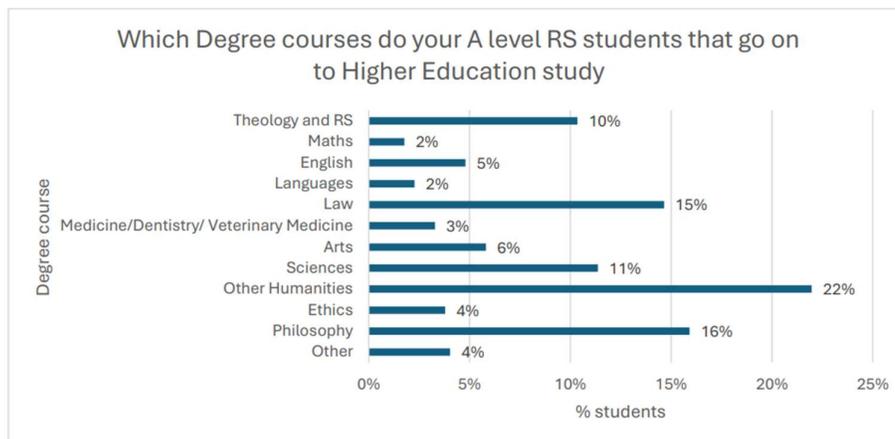
219 schools responded: 130 academies and free schools, 37 community schools using a local agreed syllabus, 31 schools with a religious character, 20 independent schools and one sixth form college.

The key findings at a glance:

- **Staffing:** 22 % of schools increased RE specialist staff, 20 % decreased, 58 % unchanged – identical to 2023.
- **Teaching by teachers who mainly teach another subject:** 82 % of schools use teachers who are not RE specialist for at least part of their provision (up 3 percentage points since 2023).
- **Subject leadership:** 10% of academies/free schools have no subject leader.
- **Curriculum time:** One-third of schools provide no RE for non-examined KS4 pupils.
- **Compliance:** Are statutory requirements met?
 - Overall, KS3 = 93% yes / 7% no; schools with religious character: 100% yes.
 - Overall, KS4 = 56% yes / 39% no; schools with a religious character: 90% yes.
- **Systematic/thematic teaching at KS3:**



- **GCSE RS:** in 56% of schools, entries increased, mainly because of increased student uptake (86%) or moving from option to full course for all (6%). Content overload remains the top concern; 44 % request content reduction.
- **A level:** entries relatively stable but cohort sizes shrinking in many centres. A level students go on to a wide range of degree courses in Higher Education:



- **Workload & retention:** 39% report barriers to staying in post – mainly workload and subject devaluation.
- **CPD:** Almost half (47%) had no in-school RE CPD; 41% none externally.
- **Resources:** 64 % satisfied overall; gaps persist for Dharmic faiths, SEND, and worldviews materials.

You can read the full report here: <https://natre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/NATRE-survey-report-final-for-publication.pdf>

NASACRE and Local Government Reorganisation

NASACRE is raising awareness with the Local Government Association and the Department of Education about the impact that the reorganisation of local government will have on SACREs. They have produced guidance for SACREs about the impact of this which can be downloaded from [Advice-for-SACREs-about-Local-Government-Reorganisation.pdf](#)

The NASACRE Conference and AGM

The annual conference and AGM for NASACRE is to be held at the Hilton Liverpool City Centre Hotel on 18th May 2026. The speakers at this event will include Dr. Vanessa Ogden, the CEO of Mulberry Schools Trust and Carrie Alderton, CEO of the Faith and Belief Forum. Bookings are open now for subscribed and non-subscribed SACREs.

The theme of the conference is ***Bringing Communities Together***.

NASACRE Training

NASACRE (National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education) continues to work to celebrate, support, strengthen and promote the work of local SACREs and represents their interests at a national level, including training for SACRE members.

NASACRE offer training throughout the year to support the work of SACREs and for those undertaking specific roles in a SACRE. Places can be booked by emailing admin@nasacre.org.uk

- **25 June 2026: 6:30-8pm: So, you've joined your local SACRE...**
Free session for any SACREs to attend specifically for new members of SACRE

UK Supreme Court Rules on RE and Worship in Northern Ireland Schools

The UK Supreme Court unanimously held that the Religious Education and collective worship provided in a Northern Ireland grant-aided controlled primary school breached Article 2 of Protocol 1 (A2P1) read with Article 9 ECHR. Both the High Court and Court of Appeal in Northern Ireland had already found that the provision for Religious Education, based on the Department of Education's core syllabus, was not delivered in an objective, critical, and pluralistic manner; this finding was not appealed.

The key issue was whether the Northern Ireland statutory right to withdraw could remedy that lack of objectivity and pluralism. The Supreme Court ruled that it could not. Exercising the right would have placed an undue burden on the parents and risked stigmatising the child, so it was not an adequate safeguard. The Court also confirmed that non-pluralistic religious teaching and indoctrination are legally inseparable: teaching that is not objective, critical, and pluralistic amounts to pursuing the aim of indoctrination.

On the Department's cross-appeal, the Court reaffirmed that both parents and children hold rights under A2P1 and Article 9, and their claims must be considered separately. The Supreme Court therefore allowed the appeal, dismissed the cross-appeal, and reinstated the High Court's declaration of a breach. [In the matter of an application by JR87 and another for Judicial Review \(Appellant\) - UK Supreme Court](#)

The relevance of this to schools in England is to remind teachers that teaching in RE must be ‘objective, critical, and pluralistic’, and that schools should understand that the right of withdrawal is a legal right for parents, who do not have to meet any criteria before their request is granted.

Events and publications to note

Hannah Rich, *Beyond the Classroom: Informal Religion and Worldviews Education in the UK* (Theos, 2025)

This report shows that people learn about religions, beliefs and worldviews not only in schools but throughout everyday life — in youth and community work, arts and culture, public services, sport, the media, higher education and interfaith activity. It maps where this informal religious education is happening across the UK and highlights strong local examples alongside significant gaps.

Provision varies widely: diverse areas tend to offer more natural encounters and stronger interfaith networks, while elsewhere there is often hesitation or uncertainty about discussing religion and belief. The report argues that improving confidence and religious literacy across all sectors would create more opportunities for informal learning and help build a more cohesive society.

The report is available at: www.theosthinktank.co.uk/research/2025/11/13/beyond-the-classroom-informal-religion-and-worldviews-education-in-the-uk

Westhill Awards

There is still another year for your SACRE to consider whether to bid for funding from the **Westhill Endowment Fund**; the deadline for the next round of applications is **28 February 2027**.

The new 2-year cycle allows for SACREs to take more time over projects, creating the opportunity to develop ideas more fully and to bid for a larger grant. NASACRE hopes that this will allow for projects to have greater impact and leave a greater legacy. More information about the bid process and the criteria for the 2027 round will follow soon.

Ramadan Guidance

Ramadan will start approximately Tuesday 17th February 2026 from roughly 5.29 am to 5.24 pm. The precise date, is as ever, dependent on the siting of the moon. The holy month of Ramadan will end with Eid-ul-Fitr which is due to be either 19th or 20th March. Local masjid will produce timetables to help schools appreciate the impact of the change on the lives of the pupils.

Jewish Culture Month

The Board of Deputies has launched Jewish Culture Month from 16th May – 14th June 2026 – the Jewish month of Sivan. This is to accentuate the positive experiences of the British Jewish Community and the contribution to wider society. Support will be provided to Jewish centres, including synagogues, schools and charities in support of the Jewish Culture Month.

YouGov data on belief in God

YouGov has been collecting and collating data on beliefs about God. The data is displayed over a few years from 2019 to 2025 in relation to believing in a God/Gods, having no belief in God/Gods

and that there is no God but there is a belief that there is something spiritual in the world. The data can be filtered in terms of age, gender, region and social background. The data is available on the following link [Brits' beliefs about God\(s\)](#)

Religious Media Centre updates

The Religion Media Centre is an impartial and independent organization aiming to increase further cohesion and understanding in society by helping the media report and understand religion and belief. It does not promote any one religion or belief and has no editorial line other than religion matters. Instead, it exists to provide accurate, timely and relevant information to the media, enabling the public to be better informed. You can sign up for a weekly bulletin that will keep you up to date with the latest news relating to religions and faith. It also has 130 factsheets ideal for subject knowledge for SACRE members or teachers.

<https://religionmediacentre.org.uk/>

Training and support for teachers

Farmington scholarships

Every year Farmington supports around 30 primary and secondary teachers (including head teachers) working in RE or associated subjects (for example, philosophy or moral and ethical education, SEND) to have up to 30 days out of the classroom to pursue a project of their own. It provides a supportive supervisor and access to a university library, if needed, as well as running an Induction Day for new scholars. Scholars attend the Annual Conference the year before they hold their scholarship, and the Conference at the end of the year, where they have to present their research. Scholars also arrange a presentation of their research at their school – to other teachers, to governors, and to other interested people from the locality.

Applicants must have the written support of their head teacher and must have worked at their current school for two years when they start the scholarship. They accept joint applications from two or more teachers working on the same project (not necessarily at the same school), but both teachers must fill in an application form.

Farmington pays costs for a cover teacher for the school, as well as all costs for the conference, travel and the induction day.

A scholar based in the West Country may be designated that year's **St Luke's Farmington Scholar**, through a partnership with the St Luke's College Foundation which provides generous support.

Their partnership with the Temple Grove Schools Trust allows them to offer up to 6 **Temple Grove Farmington Scholarships** each year. These are available to primary teachers in any subject, with the aim of promoting excellence in primary teaching.

Applications for Farmington Scholarships and St Luke's/Farmington Scholarships for 2026–2027 are now Closed and will reopen in Autumn 2026 for 2027–2028 Scholarships. To register your interest please email: institute@farmington.ac.uk

RE Hubs

Don't forget that the RE Hubs website offers extensive and growing links to people and places, locally and nationally. www.re-hubs.uk

Upcoming RE Today courses for the Summer Term and beyond!

RE Today supports a number of SACREs, and offers a variety of training courses to teachers as well. See more details on any of these courses at www.retoday.org.uk/school-support/professional-development-courses/

Primary

- **The Ways of Knowing Toolkit: Confident Classroom Practice**
25th March 2026 (4.00-5.30 pm) – Julia Diamond-Conway
- **Big questions, big answers: using disciplines in RE**
14th April 2026 (4-5.30pm) – Stephen Pett

Secondary

- **Using disciplines in RE: tools, methods and resources**
15th April 2026 (4.00-5.30 pm) – Stephen Pett
- **Understanding Christianity – Secondary**
7th July 2026 (9.30 am – 3.30 pm) – Stephen Pett

A new series of **subject knowledge briefings** for primary and for secondary teachers is available – 90 minutes of high-quality support for deepening knowledge and understanding about matters of central importance in six major traditions. Details available [here](#).

RE Today also offers bespoke training and support for schools. See [here](#) for more information.

SACRE National News Updates from RE Today
March 2026

