



Herefordshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Annual Report September 2023 - August 2024

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 ensure that all pupils in our schools develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally as well as academically.

I am grateful for the committee I inherited from Lama Choesang in March 2024 and continue to be grateful for the diversity and commitment of the SACRE committee she had built. I would also like to thank Stephen Pett, who in his role as Professional Advisor and Henry Merricks-Murgatroyd as Clerk, for providing invaluable support to both SACRE and to me personally, as well as working hard to support our primary school RE leaders.

I would like to offer my thanks to our SACRE members as well as 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 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 agreed to our updated locally agreed syllabus for 2025/30, which explicitly identifies religious and non-religious concepts. We had received a clear steer from schools that we should not carry out 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 Lama Choesang and 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
December 2024

Contents

Foreword.....	2
1. Introduction.....	4
1.1. Overview of the work of SACRE.....	4
2. Religious Education (RE).....	5
2.1. The locally agreed syllabus and RE in schools.....	5
2.2. Standards and monitoring of RE.....	5
2.3. Teacher training and materials and advice for schools.....	6
2.4. Other information	8
2.5. Advice given to the local authority	9
3. Collective worship.....	9
3.1. Standards and monitoring of collective worship.....	9
3.2. Determinations	9
3.3. Teacher training provided.....	9
3.4. Other information	9
3.5. Advice given to the local authority	9
4. Links with other bodies	9
4.1. National bodies	9
4.2. Local bodies.....	9
5. SACRE involvement in the local area.....	9
6. Managing SACRE and partnership with the local authority	10
6.1. Professional and administrative support.....	10
6.2. Membership, representation and attendance.....	10
6.3. Training for SACRE members	10
6.4. Finance	10
Appendices.....	11
Appendix 1: SACRE membership	12
Appendix 2: Circulation details for this annual report.....	13
Appendix 3: Herefordshire examination results	14

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 17 November 2023, Friday 15 March 2024 and Friday 5 July 2024. On two of these dates the Agreed Syllabus conference also met.
- 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:

17 November 2023, SACRE

- Finances
- Annual SACRE report discussion
- School workforce data
- SACRE constitution
- Evaluations on primary conference 2023
- Proposed outline on primary conference 2024
- Proposed outline on secondary conference 2024
- Election of Chair and Vice-Chair
- National SACRE news update

15 March 2024, Agreed Syllabus Conference

- Herefordshire SACRE Agreed Syllabus Review 2024

15 March 2024, SACRE

- Election of Chair
- Follow up on finances
- School workforce data
- SACRE constitution
- National SACRE news update
- Outline on primary and secondary conferences 2024
- How to support primary and secondary schools
- Teacher support (network meetings)

5 July 2024, Agreed Syllabus Conference

- Agreed Syllabus Conference

5 July 2024, SACRE

- RE conferences
- National SACRE news update
- Teacher support (network meetings)

2. Religious Education (RE)

2.1. The locally agreed syllabus and RE in schools

- 2.1.1. The Herefordshire agreed syllabus was launched in 2020, during the pandemic and is due for renewal for September 2025. The current syllabus is one of the models developed by 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 beliefs, 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. SACRE formed an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) in March 2024. The syllabus has been in place for four years, and conversations with teachers informed SACRE/ASC that there was no appetite for wholesale changes, especially as the Covid pandemic had disrupted the amount of time the syllabus was able to be taught in schools. However, SACRE members have been keeping track of the developments in RE around the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) categories of knowledge (substantive, ways of knowing and personal) and also around the religion and worldviews approach advocated by the RE Council and its 2024 Handbook for Curriculum Writers. Members of the ASC felt it was important to maintain continuity as far as possible, to enable schools to embed the syllabus in their curriculums so that pupils could make progress through the school. The ASC also wanted teachers to be made aware of some of the developments, and prepared and supported for inspections.
- 2.1.3. The ASC heard from RE Today about their update to the syllabus model currently used in Herefordshire, and looked closely at the changes. These draw attention to different ways of knowing, offer guidance on a religion and worldviews approach, updates information (e.g. census data) and expands the local links. The ASC recommended that the LA relicence with RE Today for their updated syllabus for 2025-2020. The launch will take place in summer 2025.

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 2024 are unvalidated. SACRE thanks teachers who have supported students and taught them in extremely difficult circumstances.
- 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 new 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.

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. V Sessions have included the following items:
 - ECT training provision
 - Using visual resources in the classroom
 - Exploring the RE Hubs website
 - Multidisciplinary RE
- 2.3.2. The Diocese of Hereford runs regular online and in-person training sessions throughout the year.
 - The Diocese of Hereford education team have provided training to both church and community schools and academies from Herefordshire. There are 37 Church of England schools in the county including two secondary schools. During the academic year 2023-24 they provided training and support to RE leaders and class teachers. This included the following courses, 'Global Christianity', '101 new to leading RE', 'Understanding Christianity Refresher' and 'An Introduction to Worldviews'. Several schools were given bespoke support to redesign their RE curriculum and to run RE moderations for groups of schools.
 - Collective worship training exploring how to celebrate the church year, plus planning and evaluating collective worship.
 - As church schools also receive a SIAMS inspection support and training courses were also provided for governors and schools for the RE and worship elements of the inspection. The diocese also undertook a research project about children's ideas about prayer and reflection which has been published nationally.

SACRE primary RE conference, 1 July 2024

- 2.3.3. The annual primary RE conference took place in person at the Hereford Academy. 25 teachers attended, along with 6 SACRE members. It was led by Stephen Pett from RE Today, and Tracy Westlake, primary head teacher and SACRE member.
- 2.3.4. The programme included workshops on the following:
- Ways of knowing in RE
 - Adaptive teaching in RE
 - Sequencing for progression
- 2.3.5. The final session involved teachers meeting SACRE representatives from five different traditions - Bahá'í, Buddhist, Humanist, Muslim and Sikh.
- 2.3.6. Representative feedback included:
- *It was really helpful to listen to Tracy talk about how just simply using questioning to adapt can deepen and extend learning. Love the do less, better quote and the boxes to connect learning.*
 - *Informative, interesting, lots of practical ideas that can be used across key stages. Thank you. Projector was difficult to see from the back, but great paper and online resource is.*
 - *Great, informative day allowing us to share ideas with others who are passionate about RE.*
 - *Well run, full of practical ideas to take straight back to school. Really inspiring. I really enjoyed seeing the real-life examples from Tracy's classroom. Super venue - good lunch!*
 - *The whole day has been very informative and really useful. I have taken away lots of useful strategies and ideas.*
 - *All parts of the conference have been extremely useful and have given me lots of ideas to try out myself and to share with colleagues. It was also a great opportunity to network with other RE leaders.*
 - *All parts of the conference have been well delivered and helpful. The venue has been great. A really enjoyable day. Thank you! I will look forward to receiving the slides so that I can share that day with colleagues.*
 - *Really important for RE. The teaching, learning and our professionalism. Friendly. Supportive - sense of 'we are here alongside you... you might like to try coming this way'. Glad the local authority were there to see it - would be worth them endorsing this work, though, at events like this.*
 - *Well organised and informative day! The only downside was not enough time to ask questions during the speed dating activity!*
 - *Lots of useful ideas to feedback at school, especially ways to help with sticky knowledge. Will fit in with our action from Ofsted. The meeting worldview reps was extremely useful play some really informative.*
 - *A really well organised conference with a mixture of discussion and activities which can be used back in the classroom. Being face to face has been useful to talk to other teachers of RE. Will help to develop next steps of the curriculum.*

SACRE secondary RE conference, 25 June 2024

- 2.3.7. Herefordshire SACRE collaborates with Gloucestershire and Worcestershire SACREs in putting on a secondary conference each year. The venue was Puckrup Hall Hotel near Tewkesbury. 30 delegates attended from the three counties.

2.3.8. The programme, and evaluations, were as follows:

	excellent	good	satisfactory
Explaining atheism: getting to grips with non-religion <i>Stephen Pett</i>	95%	5%	
Rich study of Islam at KS3 for exam excellence at GCSE and beyond... <i>Ian Nicholson</i>	75%	20%	5%
Worldviews: current research, excellent practice <i>Dr Chris Hancock</i>	58%	42%	
Beyond the spec: developing a coherent GCSE curriculum <i>Ian Nicholson</i>	65%	30%	5%
Encountering Jews, Hindus, Christians and Sikhs at KS3: real lives, real living <i>Stephen Pett</i>	67%	28%	5%
Venue: how do you rate it?	100%		
Overall value of the conference	95%	5%	

2.3.9. Representative feedback included:

- *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.*
- *The level of knowledge assumed re Islam was too academic! As a newbie, it lost me so I didn't manage to access this bit.*
- *This has been really interesting for meeting other professionals in RE, and thinking about curriculum design through a worldview perspective was particularly 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.*
- *Wow! Could we please have more on Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhi, etc?*
- *Amazing content! The only issue is the applicability to groups with low ability/lack of basic knowledge.*
- *Always useful to meet others. And interact and share ideas. Such a wealth of ideas and knowledge among us.*

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 2023-24.

3.3. Teacher training provided

3.3.1. No SACRE training on collective worship has been provided in 2023-24, 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 at Hereford Cathedral.

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

- Henry Merricks-Murgatroyd (March 2023 - November 2024)
- Ben Baugh (November 2024 -)
Democratic Services Officer(s), Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane,
Hereford, HR4 0LE

6.1.2. Local authority officer

- Alison Naylor has been the nominated local authority officer and was represented at meetings by different members of her team.
- Pam Howell has now taken the local authority officer role from Summer 2024. 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 to 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	17 Nov 2023	15 Mar 2024	5 Jul 2024
Group (A):				
Bahá'í faith	Carolyn Ault		✓	✓
Buddhist religion	Lama Choesang (Chair to Nov 2023)	✓		
Hindu faith	<i>Currently no representative</i>			
Humanism	Geoff Sallis (Chair from Mar 2024)		✓	✓
Jewish faith	<i>Currently no representative</i>			
Muslim faith	Samira Kairo		Observing	✓
Other Christian denomination	<i>Currently no representative</i>			
Quaker faith	Ruth Stanier	✓	✓	✓
Other faiths as a whole	<i>Currently no representative</i>			
Roman Catholic	Peter Fawcett	✓		✓
Sikh faith	Jatinderpal Loyal	✓		
Group (B): Church of England representatives				
	Barry Stevens (Jul 2024-)		✓	✓
	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 (Spring 2024-)		✓	✓
	Cllr Justine Peberdy	✓	✓	✓
	Cllr John Stone	✓	✓	✓
In attendance				
Clerk to SACRE	Henry Merricks-Murgatroyd (Mar 2023 - Nov 2024)	✓	✓	✓
Local authority officer	Alison Naylor (-March 2024) Pam Howell (July 2024-)	Ian Sockett (sub)	Louise Tanner (sub)	✓
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 provisional data GCSE Religious Studies outcomes show:

2024	% achieving	
GCSE grade	England	Herefordshire
9-5	60%	52%
9-4	71%	67%
9-1	97%	97%