

## Chair's Foreword

**In the past year we have consolidated our work and have moved towards working together with the other Berkshire SACREs to create a pan-Berkshire Hub.** We hope to continue this in the coming year alongside supporting teachers and schools. We continue to be fortunate in having a strong SACRE, ongoing support from Reading Borough Council, and particularly in our advisor Jan Lever, who has been able, with other SACREs, to secure funding for our joint projects across all six Berkshire SACREs, and whose support of RE teachers in the past year is already bearing much fruit.

**Rabbi Zvi Solomons**  
**Chair of Reading SACRE**

## 2014-2015: The context

**The Autumn Term 2014** marked the start of the fourth academic year in the lifespan of the Pan-Berkshire agreed syllabus for Religious Education. This syllabus is well-received by teachers who are enjoying the challenge of teaching RE using an enquiry-based approach. The structure and key questions of the agreed syllabus help teachers order their planning and focus children and young people on the beliefs that underpin practice in the religions studied. Teachers appreciate the underpinning 3 Bs of the syllabus: Believing, Behaving and Belonging. The beliefs that underpin practice are given great attention. This approach is gaining credence in the RE world, the Church of England leading the way encouraging the teaching of 'concepts' and theological literacy.

In an education landscape of more autonomy but increasing pressure to deliver examination results and higher standards in numeracy and literacy, Religious Education, whilst statutory, sometimes struggles to maintain its rightful status and time-allowance on the curriculum.

Reading SACRE continues to keep in touch with schools and to support them to fulfil their students' entitlement to high quality RE, mindful of the pressures upon teachers and school timetables. The SACRE listens to teachers and the support it offers is informed by these conversations.

Events on the global stage have continued to bring attention to religion and its related conflicts, and education is being charged with helping to prevent radicalisation and extremism. RE has a major role to play in this process.

The SACRE has continued to appreciate the support of Reading Borough Council, the funding offered enabling support for teachers and schools to continue, and notes the support of Ian Muir, who has quietly supported the SACRE for several years in his senior adviser role with the Borough. The SACRE wishes him a well-earned retirement.

The SACRE has met once each term to progress this work and liaises with Reading Borough Council, structuring its work each year through an agreed development plan. Its membership is usually consistent, but has wavered slightly this year. We look forward to establishing a new Chair to bring continuity to the committee, and pay respects and many thanks to the dedicated Chairmanship of Rabbi Zvi Solomons who has recently retired from the post.

The Reading SACRE continues to be committed to progressing RE across the Borough, believing this subject to have major significance to children and young people's development, both personal and academic.

2014-2015: The context

The work of the SACRE in 2014-15

The role of Reading Borough Council

Teacher network meetings

Secondary RE conference

RE Subject leader training

The Pan-Berkshire Hub/annual joint SACRE conference 2015

'Crossing the Bridges'

GCSE Examination Results: Summer 2015

RE Examination results

## The work of the SACRE in 2014-15

### The role of Reading Borough Council

The support of Reading Borough Council enables the SACRE to communicate directly with schools through the regular e-newsletters, but there is still work to do to further improve communications with RE subject leaders and head teachers, to ensure schools gain the maximum benefit from the training and support the SACRE offers.

Councillors are pro-active members of the SACRE and we look forward to embedding SACRE's work into the 'bigger picture' education development plans of the Borough.

### Teacher network meetings

Primary teachers have again been afforded a termly network meeting offering them updates on both national and local initiatives in RE as well as input on aspects of RE e.g. teaching ideas and assessment in the world 'beyond levels'. These meetings also give opportunities to share good practice as well as to feed back to the SACRE on what support would be helpful.

This year the network meetings have been better attended and all the teachers present have been enthusiastic and dedicated to improving children's RE learning in their schools.

Secondary teachers also have a termly opportunity to meet together at an after-school meeting run jointly with Reading. In this time of change, these sessions offer the chance to discuss concerns, share practice and plan training although increasing pressures mean it is becoming more difficult for secondary teachers to attend after-school meetings.

Focus areas for these meetings have included: RE's contribution to the prevention of radicalisation, new examination expectations and syllabi, and the consideration of the Clarke and Woodhead Report, 'A new settlement for religion and belief in schools' (June 2015).

### Secondary RE conference

February 2015 saw the second joint Wokingham/Reading secondary RE conference. Subsidised and supported by both SACREs, and with SACRE members attending, this was a very well-received day and included a keynote speech from the ex-HMI for RE, Alan Brine, as well as workshops on Philosophical pedagogy and Christian approaches to ethical issues.

The SACRE wishes to thank the RE Department at Forest School, Wokingham, for organising and hosting the event for colleagues and the Secondary Federation managers for their help with organising the event.

### RE Subject leader training

Responding to the need to constantly ensure teachers new to RE subject leadership are well-supported, and also mindful of Ofsted and other national reports on RE which point to a lack of training for subject leaders in RE, this year saw the roll-out of a newly-designed 2-session course offered to support teachers new to this role. It covered the roles and responsibilities of the subject leader, expectations, monitoring, curriculum planning, assessing learning etc. It was appreciatively received by the teachers attending, raising their confidence to lead this subject across their schools. This was run for Reading and Wokingham teachers together.

### The Pan-Berkshire Hub/annual joint SACRE conference 2015

The December 2014 meeting of all 6 Berkshire SACRE Chairs saw all SACREs more than willing to take the Hub forward.

The first project was to extend the 'on location' training for teachers to make use of places of worship across the whole of Berkshire and to invite both teachers and SACRE members to attend in order to bring consistency in booking processes, ease of communication and to maximise the learning coming out of such visits.

Some areas of Berkshire are rich in the diverse range of places of worship on children's doorsteps, whilst others need to travel to find such a range.

However, with the 6 SACREs working together, it was felt that much more could be achieved for children and young people's learning by working together.

A successful bid to the Culham St Gabriel's Trust resulted in some funding allowing the 'Crossing the Bridges' Project to be born.

This was launched and the initial consultative work done at the annual SACRE Conference at Easthampstead Park on 15th June 2015. An interactive and productive evening brought teachers and SACRE members together for the first time at a SACRE conference enabling bridges to be built and the project launched.

### 'Crossing the Bridges'

Following the conference seminars were held in the East and West regions of Berkshire bringing together teachers and hosts and potential hosts from places of worship. These resulted in booking forms, evaluation forms and teaching/learning booklets being produced and trialled.

The Project continues into 2015-16 and in its early stages is showing great promise. The SACRE hopes this project will improve the learning experience children and young people have when visiting places of worship, and facilitate the communication and booking systems for teachers and hosts.

The materials, when trialled and finalised, will be published nationally allowing free access for all those delivering RE.

### GCSE Examination Results: Summer 2015

The pan-Berkshire Agreed Syllabus for RE requires that "All students must follow an externally accredited course leading to a qualification in 'Religious Studies' approved under Section 96 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

There is no requirement that students must sit public examinations but following such courses provides as many as possible with an opportunity to have their learning in the statutory curriculum subject of RE, accredited."

### RE Examination results

**These will be added as an appendix when the verified results are available.**