

Reading SACRE report 2017-8

Chair's Foreword

This is a most impressively prepared report and is well worth reading with considerable attention. The Reading SACRE and Reading Borough Council have good cause to be very grateful for the hard work and dedication of our Consultant, Mr. David Rees. The Report reflects a wide spectrum of achievements during the past year. I also want to thank here the vital support of Mo Galway, our Link Officer with Reading Borough Council, who has been a trusty friend and advocate to the SACRE since she came into post.

The SACRE continues to organize Teacher Network Meetings to bring teachers together to share ideas and to be updated about the latest national developments. Also, the SACRE provides training for those who have recently become a R.E. subject leader, both in primary and in secondary schools. This Continuing Professional Development is virtually the only source of such regular training available, and it is free to all teachers! The Network Meetings are now being arranged to occur on the same day and at the same venue as the SACRE Meetings themselves. Having them segue from one to the other offers more opportunities for teachers to attend the SACRE Meetings, which follow on, or for members of the SACRE to arrive earlier and attend the Network Meetings. Thus, there is the chance for members and teachers to become acquainted.

The Reading SACRE is part of the Pan-Berkshire SACRE Hub, which meets each term before the SACRE Meeting, and consists of the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Berkshire SACREs together with other interested SACRE members. The Consultants from the various SACREs also all attend. The Hub was chaired for eight years by Jan Lever, who was very much the power house behind the Hub and to whom we owe a debt of gratitude for her hard work and dedication. She has now stood down, because of pressures from her other extensive professional tasks. So, at the last Hub Meeting it was decided to appoint two joint chairs to continue guiding and directing the Hub. These are Anne Andrews (previously the stalwart Vice Chair) and David Rees. They have produced the new Hub Plan, which will influence the direction of SACREs' work for the next two to three years. The Plan will be discussed at the forthcoming SACRE Meetings.

The Hub has worked in conjunction with the individuals SACREs across Berkshire to produce the new and more slimline Statutory R.E. Syllabus, which was successfully launched in the Summer. This now contains a more flexible curriculum and it has been particularly cited by the Humanist Association for praise for including Humanism at Key Stage Three. The Chair of Reading SACRE was recently interviewed by Paul Coia on Radio Berkshire with Dr. Anthony Lewis, Regional Humanist Officer, who commended the Hub and declared it to be 'the most forward looking in the country' in the design of its Revised Syllabus. It is most gratifying to know we are at the leading edge. I want to take this opportunity to thank not only David Rees for his sterling work but also those members of the Reading SACRE who gave their time to attend the Hub Meetings and provide their input there, as well as the way members were proactive at the SACRE Meetings, in finalizing the shape of the Statutory Revised Syllabus for R.E.

The new Hub Plan will provide many challenges for the SACRE during the coming two to three years, and the SACRE must address issues that include improving and raising its own profile across Reading, as well as becoming more involved with teachers in schools, and to draw the SACRE closer into communication with the wider local community. We also must have regard of the recommendations of the Commission on R.E. Report 2018, which has proposed major changes to R.E. in the country and to its enhancement, with SACREs playing a substantial role. We have a considerable number of new and recently joined members who have shown already that they wish to commit time and energy to the work of the SACRE. Thus, we can look forward to achieving much more in the months and years ahead.

Michael Freeman
November 2018
Current Chair of the SACRE
2017-8: The Context

The Autumn Term 2017 marked the end of the review year for the Pan-Berkshire agreed syllabus for Religious Education. The existing syllabus had been well-received by teachers who have enjoyed the challenge of teaching RE using an enquiry-based approach and are now taking this further by considering how well they can enable pupils' religious literacy to develop through their ability to question and critically evaluate. The challenge this year was to build on this in the new syllabus and make the necessary adjustments to incorporate changes in the RE landscape over the last five years.

Recommendations from the 'Commission on RE' and the 'REC' indicate that this is a crucial time in the RE world. Religious Education, whilst statutory, still struggles to maintain its rightful status and time-allowance on the curriculum but most Reading schools recognise it as a key contributor to the anti-radicalisation and community cohesion agenda as well as the British Values and SMSC (spiritual, moral, social and cultural) development challenges. The new syllabus continues to encourage challenging, enquiry based RE that will lead not only to educational success but to the holistic development of each young person.

The Reading SACRE considers its support role in this very seriously and works closely with the Borough Council to offer support to schools, especially vital now the advisory team no longer has an RE specialist.

The 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 through network meetings, training events where possible and the teacher representatives on the SACRE, and the support it offers is informed by these conversations. 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 Mo Galway, who continued to support the SACRE in her senior role with the Borough. Reading has a diverse community and thereby many resources on its doorstep to offer children and young people access to living religion and belief. This year has seen the Reading SACRE consolidate the previous year's efforts to mobilise the local community in working to benefit RE learning both in Reading and across Berkshire. The SACRE has met once each term to progress its work and liaises with Reading Borough Council, structuring its work each year through an agreed action plan. The Reading SACRE has had a settled membership although the role of chair was passed from Rabbi Zvi Solomons, to Michael Freeman with Fiona Murray taking over as Vice-Chair in the Summer term. This year has shown increased links between the six SACREs across Berkshire and the Oxford Diocese, continuing to develop some very exciting and innovative work.

The work of the SACRE in 2017

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. SACRE is particularly grateful for this as it enables effective communications with RE subject leaders and head teachers, to ensure schools gain the maximum benefit from the training and support the SACRE offers remains a focus for the coming year. 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.

Represented nationally

The Reading SACRE always has representatives at the annual NASACRE (National Association of SACREs) AGM (annual general meeting) and conference. This year the AGM was held in London and was attended by Michael Freeman and the RE Adviser David Rees. Information was then feedback to SACRE at the following full meeting.

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. developing religious literacy and tackling controversial and sensitive issues in RE. A key focus this year has been discussing the format and content of the new agreed RE syllabus, ensuring that teachers were fully informed of the process and had the opportunity to make suggestions to enable the formation of sharper key questions. These meetings also gave opportunities to share good practice as well as to feed back to the SACRE on what support would be helpful. This year the teachers present at the network meetings have been enthusiastic and dedicated to improving children's RE learning in their schools. Attendance at these meetings has been improving however SACRE accepts that sometimes it is simply not possible for teachers to attend due to school functions or excessive workload.

SACRE members are always welcome at these meetings and have begun to attend, thus building relationships with schools, gaining insight into their needs and sharing their successes and commitment. The networks are now run immediately before the full SACRE meetings enabling SACRE members to attend and make connections, this also means that the RE Adviser can directly report back verbally to SACRE about any issues faced or raised. This format is working well.

Secondary teachers' networks were dropped last year however some secondary teachers did attend the primary networks which enabled a clear picture of progression to be discussed. It is hoped that some secondary teacher support could be offered as the new GCSE implications have raised some needs particularly in the development of a deeper religious literacy and understanding of core texts.

RE Subject leader training

In previous years a joint training session with Wokingham has been offered to help support primary subject leaders new to post. New subject leaders need to understand the responsibilities of the role and to be offered support to carry it well. Leading a subject across a school is no mean feat. Each year there is a considerable turn-over in RE subject leaders in primary schools, so this annual training seems vital. Hopefully Reading SACRE can discuss the possible reinstatement of this training event.

The Pan-Berkshire joint SACRE conference 2017

For the last two years there has been a joint SACRE conference held in September at the Holiday at Winnersh Triangle. The meeting involved teachers, SACRE members and members of Pan Berkshire faith and worldview communities and also became a launch event for the Crossing the Bridges Project. This year the conference was shelved to ensure that the Pan Berkshire hub could focus on the review of the Agreed Syllabus culminating in it's successful launch in July 2018.

The Pan-Berkshire SACRE Hub and Agreed Syllabus Conference.

The Hub came into being in December 2014 and has developed into an excellent way for the Pan Berkshire SACREs to communicate and plan events together. It therefore seemed the natural vehicle for the Agreed Syllabus Conference meetings when reviewing and writing the new RE syllabus. The hub, with Jan Lever at the

Provisional A/S level results 2018

School Name	A*	A	B	C	D	E	U
UTC							
Maiden Erlegh School							
WREN School							
Highdown School					1		
Reading Girls' School							
Reading School							
Prospect School							
Blessed Hugh Faringdon Secondary School						1	
Kendrick School		3	3				
John Madejski Academy							
Thames Valley School							
The Avenue Special School							
Phoenix College							
The Holy Brook School							

Provisional A level results 2018

School Name	A*	A	B	C	D	E	U
UTC							
Maiden Erlegh School							
WREN School							
Highdown School		1		1			
Reading Girls' School							
Reading School							
Prospect School							
Blessed Hugh Faringdon Secondary School			3	2			
Kendrick School			2				
John Madejski Academy							
Thames Valley School							
The Avenue Special School							
Phoenix College							
The Holy Brook School							

David Rees

RE Adviser to Reading SACRE

November 2018