

# **Rochdale SACRE Annual Report to NASACRE 2024-25**

## **1. Chair's introduction and context**

Words of Welcome from our Chair – Reverend Margaret Smith

2024/25 has been a challenging year for Rochdale SACRE. Membership of the group has changed reflecting the ongoing developments of education, schools and community life. With the appointment of two new LA Representatives, SACRE has benefitted from their experience and a refreshment of ideas and commitments. A great deal of work has gone into preparing for and launching the new RE Syllabus. After consultation with teachers, it was a strategic decision to stay with REToday because it has been an effective syllabus, teachers were confident with it and the Anglican Diocese have implemented the same one which will facilitate shared resourcing and training.

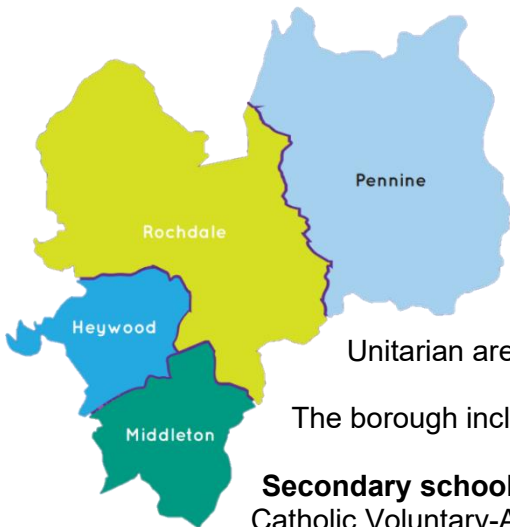
Education management and especially RE provision is challenging everywhere to say the least; SACRE recognise the pressure that schools and RE teachers especially are under. The SACRE budget is not excessive so we have tried to carefully manage this in supporting the continuing education provision of staff and encouraging networking where possible. This is positively reflected in the pupils attitude and receptivity to RE. SACRE have a webpage resource within the council education Engage page and this is proving both popular and effective.

Looking ahead, SACRE will be developing a strategic plan for 2025-2028 which will include encouraging more pupil voices and a wider community representation.

To conclude, I want to thank first of all the SACRE members who have positively engaged with the SACRE responsibilities and importantly thank all the teachers working within RE, then last not definitely not least thank all the pupils who are committed to developing their RE knowledge and apply it across their ongoing education.



*Margaret*



## Context

Rochdale SACRE (Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education) serves a diverse borough with a significant Christian and Muslim population, alongside smaller communities of Hindu, Humanist, Jewish, and Mormon followers. Non-conformist Christian denominations such as Methodist, Baptist, URC, and Unitarian are also well-represented.

The borough includes a range of faith-based schools:

**Secondary schools:** 2 Roman Catholic Voluntary-Aided, 1 joint Anglican/Roman Catholic Voluntary-Aided

**Primary schools:** 18 Church of England Voluntary-Aided (including 1 joint Church of England/Methodist), 11 Roman Catholic Voluntary-Aided

Given Rochdale's recent history, SACRE prioritises fostering integration and cooperation among faith communities. It maintains strong representation across its four statutory groups—Church of England, other faiths and denominations, teaching associations, and the Local Authority—and has robust links with both the local Anglican community and the Rochdale Council of Mosques.

SACRE benefits from active participation from both primary and secondary education sectors and collaborates regionally through the North-North-West SACRE Hub.

## 2. Advice to Statutory Bodies

### Government or other statutory bodies

During the academic year 2024–25, Rochdale SACRE did not provide any formal advice to the Local Authority, government, government bodies, or other statutory organisations.

Rochdale SACRE advises Rochdale schools on quality and standards of Religious Education.

### Support for Teachers and Schools: SACRE Website

Rochdale SACRE has developed an online platform to support schools and teachers in delivering high-quality Religious Education. [Welcome to Rochdale SACRE \(Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education\) | Engage Rochdale](#)

#### **Website Features**

- **Teaching Resources** – easy access to high-quality RE materials.
- **Training Opportunities** – information on CPD available both within and beyond the Local Authority.
- **Guidance Documents** – relevant policies and best practice advice.
- **Communications** – copies of key updates sent to headteachers.
- **About SACRE** – general information on SACRE’s role and responsibilities.

SACRE actively monitors engagement with the site, which shows a steady stream of traffic, indicating consistent use by educators and stakeholders.

### 3. Standards and quality of provision of RE

#### GCSE Religious Education Provision

Most secondary schools in Rochdale offer GCSE Religious Education. However, it is noted that:

- Edgar Wood Academy did not have a Year 11 cohort during the reporting period and therefore did not offer GCSE RE.
- Redwood School, a special school, did not offer GCSE RE as this was not felt to be appropriate for the cohort.

This context is important when considering borough-wide data on RE provision and outcomes.

#### GCSE RE Examination Results 2025

School	Number of Pupils Entered	Average Point Score	% Grade 4+	% Grade 5+	Pupil Premium % Grade 4+	SEN K % Grade 4+	EHCP % Grade 4+
Cardinal Langley RC High	203	3.7	52%	47%	46%	33%	30%
Falings Park	260	4.2	52%	34%	56%	26%	40%
Hollingworth Academy	53	6.0	91%	77%	92%	100%	100%
Holy Family RC and CE College	131	4.5	66%	53%	63%	17%	NA
Kingsway Park High	78	4.4	64%	53%	68%	33%	N/A
Matthew Moss	100	4.4	63%	51%	54%	33%	50%
Middleton Technology	7	2.7	43%	14%	25%	N/A	N/A
Newhouse Academy	25	3.9	52%	40%	30%	33%	N/A
Oulder Hill Leadership Academy	79	5.0	77%	63%	66%	25%	N/A
St Anne's CE Academy	25	4.5	76%	44%	78%	100%	0%
St Cuthbert's RC	210	4.1	55%	46%	43%	33%	0%
Wardle Academy	23	4.0	57%	52%	50%	0%	100%
Rochdale LA	1198	4.3	61%	47%	54%	31%	35%

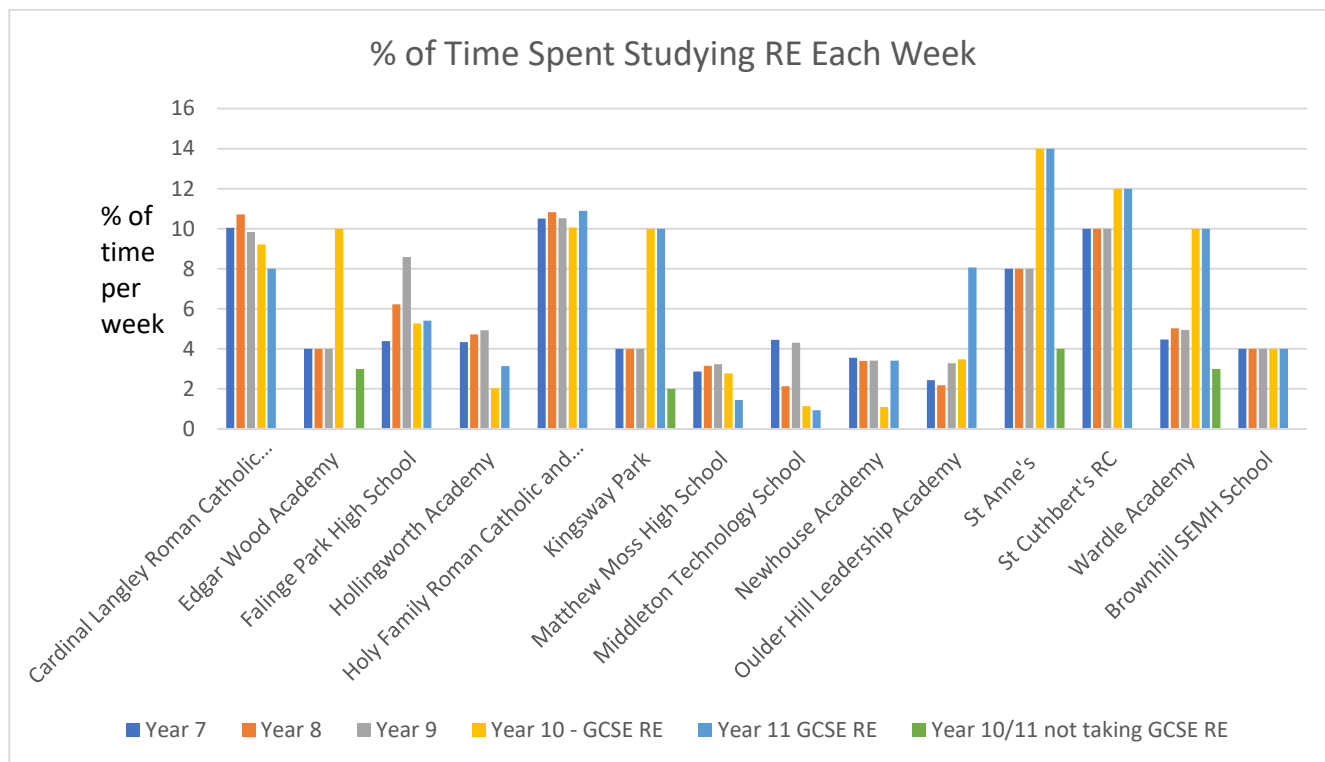
A total of 1,198 young people sat the Religious Studies GCSE last year. Of these, 158 were identified as receiving SEN Support and 23 had an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan. This means that 6.7% of candidates had SEND, indicating that young people with SEND are underrepresented among those taking Religious Studies GCSE in the local authority.

#### Special Schools and Religious Education

Rochdale is home to a number of special schools that provide adaptive curricula tailored to the needs of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These schools are specifically organised to deliver specialised educational provision.

Access to appropriate Religious Education remains an essential part of the curriculum in these settings, ensuring that all pupils—regardless of ability—have meaningful opportunities to explore religious and non-religious worldviews in a way that is accessible and relevant to them.

### Study of RE in secondary schools



### Analysis of RE Curriculum Time Across Schools

The data presents the percentage of weekly curriculum time allocated to Religious Education (RE) across different year groups in various secondary schools in Rochdale. Key trends include:

#### 1. Consistent RE Time in Lower Key Stage 3

- Most schools allocate a **similar proportion of time** to RE in **Years 7, 8, and 9**, suggesting a broadly consistent approach to RE provision in Key Stage 3.
- Year 7 and Year 8 often show slightly higher percentages than Year 9, possibly reflecting a stronger emphasis on foundational RE learning.

#### 2. Variation in GCSE RE Provision

- There is **significant variation** in RE time for **Year 10 and Year 11 students taking GCSE RE**. Some schools allocate a substantial portion of time, while others show more modest percentages.
- This may reflect differences in how schools' religious character and their structure.

#### 3. Limited RE for Non-GCSE Students

- For **Year 10/11 students not taking GCSE RE**, the percentage of curriculum time is generally **lower**, indicating that RE provision for non-exam groups may be more limited or integrated into other subjects.

#### 4. School-Specific Differences

- There are clear differences between schools in how much time is allocated to RE across all year groups. This could be influenced by factors such as:
  - School ethos or religious designation
  - Staffing and curriculum priorities

- Student cohort needs and timetabling constraints

## 5. Special Cases

- As previously noted, **Edgar Wood Academy** did not have a Year 11 cohort, and **Redwood School**, a special school, did not offer GCSE RE. These exceptions are reflected in the data and should be considered when interpreting borough-wide trends.

## Inspection Monitoring

Rochdale SACRE, through the Local Authority's School Improvement Team, reviews inspection outcomes to monitor the quality of Religious Education across the borough. This includes:

- Scrutiny of **Ofsted inspection reports** for references to SMSC, Religious Education, Collective Worship, British Values, PSHE, and relevant comments within the Personal Development, Behaviour and Wellbeing sections.
- Review of **SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools)** reports and **Roman Catholic Diocesan inspection reports**, which are carried out on Ofsted's behalf.

This process ensures that SACRE remains informed about RE-related strengths and areas for development across the borough and can provide targeted support and guidance accordingly.

During the period of this report 16 schools received Ofsted inspections. The following table highlights where there were mention of comments relevant to RE.

Ofsted Reports	
School	Mention of comments relevant to RE
All Saints Church of England Primary School	Pupils demonstrate considerable compassion when discussing sensitive issues, including the differences that exist among people. They readily learn about different cultures and faiths. Pupils are well-prepared to grow up in a modern and diverse Britain
Belfield Community School	Pupils are respectful of other faiths and cultures. They know what is right and wrong, as well as what makes a healthy relationship. Pupils are well prepared for life beyond school. Pupils are respectful of other faiths and cultures. They know what is right and wrong, as well as what makes a healthy relationship. Pupils are well prepared for life beyond school.
Deeplish Primary Academy	The school helps pupils to be responsible British citizens. As a result, pupils can explain the meaning of words such as democracy and prejudice. Throughout the school, pupils see respect for others as a core value to uphold.
Healey Foundation Primary School	Through the curriculum, pupils learn about difference and diversity in British society. They are proud to be members of the school council and social action group.
Kingsway Park	The programme to promote pupils' personal development has recently been enhanced. Pupils learn to respect and celebrate different cultures through various events such as 'culture day' and community events.
Middleton Parish Church School	Pupils have a deep understanding about how different people live. They use this to find ways to make sure everyone in the school community feels welcome and valued. Pupils make valuable contributions to their local community in a range of ways
Newhouse	Monitoring Visit
Newlands School	The provision for pupils' wider development is a strength of the school. Pupils have opportunities to visit a variety of different places. Opportunities to join the school council help to develop pupils' confidence and understanding of democracy.

Oulder Hill Leadership Academy	The school ensures that pupils are prepared well for life beyond school. Their learning about different faiths and cultures helps to ensure that they are tolerant and accepting of others. Pupils develop confidence by embracing opportunities to develop new talents and interests.
St Edward's Church of England Primary School	The programme to promote pupils' personal development does not ensure that pupils are fully prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils struggle to recall their learning about other faiths or about people who are different to themselves. Pupils do understand important concepts such as tolerance and respect.
St Luke's Church of England Primary School	The 'Pupil Offer Promise' sets out termly experiences for each pupil. This includes visitors to school, outdoor learning, arts and cultural experiences and trips within the local area and beyond.
St Michael's Church of England Primary School, Alkrington	The school provides well for pupils' personal development.
St Peter's Roman Catholic Primary School, Rochdale	The school has a rich programme to provide for pupils' personal development, which is interwoven seamlessly into school life. Pupils take active roles in supporting the well-being of their classmates, and in contributing to the school and wider community. For example, pupils have responsibilities as 'Mini Vinnies', buddies, school councillors and well-being ambassadors. Pupil chaplains lead whole-school collective worship.
St Thomas More Roman Catholic Primary School, Middleton, Rochdale	Across the school, pupils know what it means to be 'the best they can be'. Leaders have carefully thought about how the school's curriculum and wider offer helps pupils to develop into positive citizens, who make contributions to wider society.
Stansfield Hall Church of England / Methodist Church Primary School	The school provides many extra-curricular clubs, including cross-country and singing. Trips and visits help to open pupils' eyes to the world around them. Pupils regularly visit the local church and enjoy taking part in community events. They learn about different faiths and religions.
Woodland Community Primary School	Pupils learn how to develop safe and healthy relationships. They find out about people's views and beliefs that might be different to their own. Pupils learn what it means to live in a modern and diverse society.

During the reporting period, five Roman Catholic schools in Rochdale underwent Diocesan inspections. All were rated 'Good', reflecting positively on the standards of Religious Education in those settings.

<b>Diocese of Salford - Catholic Schools Inspection Outcomes</b>	
School	Outcome
Holy Family Roman Catholic Primary School	2
St Gabriel's Roman Catholic Primary School	2
St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School Rochdale, a Voluntary Academy	2
St Peter's Roman Catholic Primary School	2
Cardinal Langley Roman Catholic High School	2

SIAMS inspectors take the particular context of the school into account and base their evaluation on the outcomes rather than the process. Inspectors make one of two judgements:

- The inspection findings indicate that the school is living up to its foundation as a Church school, and is enabling pupils and adults to flourish.
- Or
- The inspection findings indicate that the school has strengths, but that there are also issues that leaders need to address as a matter of priority.

SIAMS Inspection Outcomes	
School	Outcome
St James' CE Primary School, Wardle	School is living up to its foundation as a Church school, and is enabling pupils and adults to flourish
St Thomas' CE Primary School, Newhey	School is living up to its foundation as a Church school, and is enabling pupils and adults to flourish

### The quality of Religious Education provision in schools

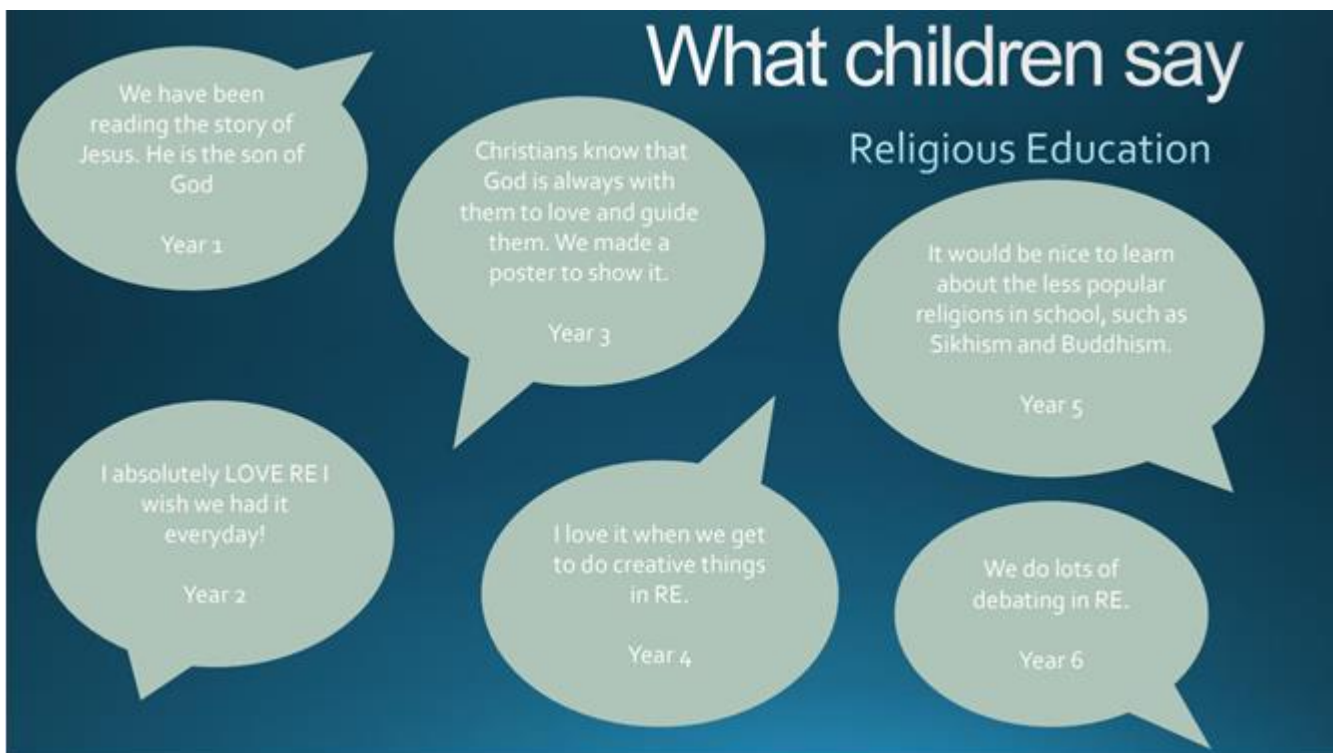
Twenty-three schools responded to Rochdale SACRE's annual Religious Education return. Of these, twenty-three were primary schools, and none were secondary schools.

SACRE considers this a reasonable dataset from which to draw conclusions about:

- The teaching and assessment of Religious Education
- The delivery and provision of collective worship
- The relationship of RE to whole-school policy, including a broad and balanced curriculum, SMSC development, and the promotion of British Values in Rochdale school

Strengths of Religious Education in Rochdale Primary Schools

- **Achievement of the Gold Quality Mark in RE** in some settings.
- **Rights Respecting School status** achieved in some schools, with work mapped to RE.
- **Strong links with local faith leaders**, bringing RE to life in the classroom.
- **Visits to religious settings**, enriching pupils' understanding.
- **Use of 'floor books'** to capture whole-class RE experiences and learning.
- **Children confidently articulate their learning** to adults, including Ofsted inspectors.



**Pupil voice from Hollin Primary School**

### Withdrawal from RE

Rochdale SACRE guides and advises Rochdale schools regarding parental applications to withdraw their children from Religious Education. Documentation regarding this matter can be access from the SACRE website.

### Complaints about Religious Education

During the academic year 2024–25, **no complaints** were received regarding Religious Education provision in Rochdale schools. Additionally, **no complaints** were made about Rochdale SACRE to either the Local Authority or Ofsted.

#### 4. Locally Agreed Syllabus

Rochdale SACRE collaborated with RE Today to revise and enhance the Locally Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education. The updated syllabus builds on the strengths of the previous version and introduces several key developments aimed at improving the quality and coherence of RE across all key stages. These include:

- A clearly defined progression of **substantive knowledge** from Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) through to Key Stage 4
- Greater emphasis on **disciplinary knowledge** and the different “ways of knowing” within Religious Education
- Opportunities for pupils to engage with **authentic voices** from both religious and non-religious worldviews
- Comprehensive **curriculum planning** guidance to support high-quality RE delivery in all schools

The introduction to the new Rochdale RE Syllabus, written by GCSE RE pupils attending Middleton Technology College reads:

*“As pupil representatives of Rochdale schools, it is with great pride and privilege that we introduce the 2025 Locally Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education (RE).*

*Rochdale has long been a community rich in cultural and religious diversity, where people of all faiths and none live together in harmony, united by a shared sense of belonging. It is a place where differences are celebrated, and neighbours stand hand in hand, aiming to build a stronger community together. This syllabus is more than just an educational framework- it is a tool to prepare young people not only for life within our borough but also for a globally connected world. By fostering an understanding of individual beliefs, faiths, and broader worldviews, it equips students with the knowledge and empathy needed to navigate the complexities of modern life.*

*This syllabus supports us in becoming our best selves--it helps us form friendships, understand their roles in life, and develop their unique identities. It encourages them to learn as informed digital citizens and as members of a vibrant, multifaith community. The values and skills cultivated through this curriculum will help lay the foundations for stronger communities, both now and in the future.*

*Together, we take on a journey of learning, understanding, and growth, confident that this syllabus will inspire young people to engage with the world and contribute to its betterment.”*

The syllabus was launched at the **Rochdale Agreed Syllabus Conference** on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June. The conference, well attended by primary and secondary colleagues, as well as SCARE members, provided:

- Opportunities for participants to gain insight into the new curriculum and pedagogy
- Training and resources from RE Today
- Practical strategies for staff to use in their schools
- Preparation for inspections and upcoming curriculum developments.

#### **Syllabus Review**

A review of the syllabus will take place in 2027/28.

## 5. Collective Worship

### Standards and Monitoring of Collective Worship

Rochdale schools are committed to providing high-quality collective worship. They recognise and value its role in fostering a strong sense of community and in expressing the school's Christian vision. Collective worship is seen as a central element of school life, contributing to spiritual development and shared values.

*"Children participate confidently and joyfully in liturgy, they are energised and inspired by prayer then often galvanised into action as a result. There is a secure knowledge and understanding of a wide variety of ways to pray and children know a comprehensive range of traditional Catholic prayers by heart. Time is given for reflection, contemplation and sharing age appropriate responses."*

Head Teacher, St Peter's RC Primary School

*"When we have assembly we sometimes learn about stories from The Bible. Some have a message in them. They tell us how to treat other people and how to be a good person. I like The Good Samaritan. Everyone can enjoy the assembly even if you don't go to church or even if you don't believe."*

Year 2 pupil, Sandbrook Primary School

*"We have been using some of our collective worship time to support the mental wellbeing of pupils focusing on themes such as kindness, resilience, mindfulness and gratitude. Children are then given time to reflect at the end of the session."*

Head Teacher, Harwood Park Primary

### Determinations

Rochdale SACRE advises schools on the process for applying for a determination, which allows schools to lift the requirement for collective worship to be "wholly or mainly of a Christian nature." SACRE provides:

- Clear guidance on the circumstances under which a determination may be appropriate
- A pro-forma application document for schools to complete and submit
- A formal review and decision-making process upon receipt of applications

In 2025, two schools applied for a determination, and their applications were considered by SACRE in line with established procedures.

The following pupil voice is from one of the two schools that has a determination.

*"I enjoy learning about different religions"*

*"I like talking about Islam"*

*"Some things are the same in different religions"*

*"School provides children the experience of learning through workshops and lessons led by different faith leaders."*

Head Teacher, Brimrod Primary School

## 6. Management of SACRE

The structure of Rochdale's SACRE is defined by law, and is made up of four groups or committees.

### Committee membership

Committee A: Christian denominations and other religions reflecting the principal religious traditions of the area

Committee B: The Church of England

Committee C: Professional Teaching Associations and RE networks

Committee D: The Local Authority

### Membership 2024 -2025

#### Group A: Christian denominations other than Church of England and other religions

Rev Margaret Smith (Town Centre Chaplain and Chair of SACRE)

Graham Gordon (Jewish Representative Council)

Ghulam Rasul Shahzad (Rochdale Council of Mosques)

Irfan Chishti MBE (Muslim representative)

#### Group B: Church of England

Anne Gilbert (Acting Area Dean, Vicar of St Chad's, St Mary in the Baum and St Edmund's Rochdale with St Luke's Deeplish and St Peter's Newbold.)

#### Group C: Associations representing teachers

Ruth Merrick (RE Co-ordinator St Andrews CE Primary School)

Stacey Searle (Head of RE Falinge Park High School)

Fay Lowe (Head of RE Middleton Technology School)

Clair Kitching (Regional Schools Worker for The Young Leaders Award)

#### Group D: Local Authority

Councillor Rachel Massey (Lead Portfolio for Children's Services and Education)

Councillor Angela Smith (Rochdale Borough Council)

### Recruitment to SACRE

Rochdale SACRE is pleased to report the recruitment of five new members to the board, all joining **Group C** (teacher associations). These new appointments will begin their roles in September 2025 and ensure that SACRE has educational representation from schools across all townships of the borough, strengthening its borough-wide perspective and engagement.

### SACRE Governance and Activity Summary

Rochdale SACRE is a legally constituted body under the Local Authority, responsible for overseeing Religious Education (RE) and Collective Worship in community schools, Voluntary Controlled foundation schools without a religious character and trust schools.

During the last academic year, the full SACRE board convened three times—two meetings were held online and one in person. All meetings were quorate and well attended. Additionally, a subcommittee met to collaborate with RE Today in the development of the Locally Agreed RE Syllabus.

### Key Areas Discussed in Full SACRE Meetings

- **Membership and Representation** – ensuring balanced and inclusive SACRE membership.
- **Support for Schools** – identifying and strengthening mechanisms to assist schools in delivering high-quality RE and collective worship.
- **Standards in RE and Collective Worship** – monitoring and promoting best practice.

- **Development and Review of the Locally Agreed RE Syllabus** – ongoing updates and improvements.
- **Updates from Local, Regional, and National RE Contexts** – sharing developments and guidance.
- **Review of Ofsted and Diocesan Inspection Outcomes** – considering findings relevant to SACRE's remit.

### Chair's School Engagement

Rochdale SACRE's Chair, Rev Margaret Smith, leads an annual programme of school visits across both primary and secondary sectors. These visits provide tailored advice and guidance to support schools in delivering high-quality Religious Education.

Rev Smith also contributes directly by leading assemblies, acts of collective worship, and RE lessons, strengthening the quality and relevance of RE provision across the borough. She actively encourages schools to attend and participate in key community events, including:

- The **School Service** and **Civic Armistice Service** in November
- **St George's Day Service**
- **VE Day 2025 Commemoration**

In addition, Rev Smith regularly leads collective worship assemblies for significant occasions such as **Harvest, Christmas, Remembrance, Easter, and VE Day** within Rochdale schools.

### SACRE Projects

- **Development of an online platform** to provide schools with CPD opportunities, advice, and guidance.
- **Launch of the new agreed syllabus** for Religious Education.

## **7. Contribution of SACRE to the wider Local Authority agenda**

The Rochdale Agreed Syllabus for RE supports the wider Local Authority **Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)** in several key ways:

### **1. Promotes Pluralism and Equal Respect**

The syllabus explicitly states that RE must:

- Reflect the fact that religious traditions in Great Britain are mainly Christian while taking account of other principal religions represented in Great Britain.
- Convey information in a pluralistic manner and accord equal respect to different religious convictions and non-religious beliefs (e.g., Humanism).

This ensures compliance with the PSED requirement to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity by treating all beliefs fairly.

### **2. Inclusive Curriculum**

The syllabus is designed to be inclusive and wide-ranging, exploring both religious and non-religious worldviews. It emphasises that RE is not about proselytising but about understanding diversity, which aligns with the duty to foster good relations between people of different faiths and beliefs.

### **3. Embeds Equality Principles in Learning**

Through its aims and guidance, the syllabus encourages:

- Respect for diversity and sensitivity to others' beliefs.
- Open-mindedness and critical thinking, helping pupils challenge prejudice.
- Fairness and self-understanding, promoting confidence in identity while valuing others.

These attitudes directly support the PSED goal of creating an environment where discrimination is reduced and mutual respect is strengthened.

### **4. Practical Implementation**

Schools are required to:

- Teach RE to all pupils, including those with SEND, ensuring equitable access.
- Include non-religious worldviews alongside major religions.
- Provide opportunities for pupils to explore issues like racism, equality, and environmental responsibility through key questions (e.g., *What can be done to reduce racism? Can religion help?*).

This report was submitted to NASACRE and to the Department for Education December 2025 and constitutes the annual report for Rochdale SACRE for 2024-2025. The report will also be submitted to Rochdale SACRE at their second meeting of the academic year.

**Rev Margaret Smith**  
Town Centre Chaplain  
Chair of SACRE

**Esther Logue & Erica Field**  
School Improvement Officers  
LA Representative to SACRE

**Candice Taylor**  
Business Support  
Clerk to SACRE