

Staffordshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education-

33rd Annual Report September 2023 - September 2024

From the Chair of SACRE

Chair's Introduction to SACRE's Annual Report for 2023-24



This Report covers the work of SACRE from September 2023 to September 2024, a year in which schools were continuing their journey towards a new post-covid "normal". Staffordshire SACRE is deeply appreciative of the sustained work of RE teachers in Staffordshire schools during the year to strengthen coherence and pupil progression in RE alongside, for many, the ongoing implementation of the county's newly revised Agreed Syllabus in RE.

Nationally, the Religious Education Council has issued further material in support of a "world-view" approach to Religious Education, with a proposed National Content Standard for RE and a resources toolkit. Your SACRE has taken note of these developments, which are largely compatible with our Agreed Syllabus, albeit with a note of caution around turning Religious Education into an ethics and philosophy exercise and moving away from engaging directly with faiths and the life of faith.

In this respect, your SACRE's workshops for schools in our "Explore–Engage-Reflect" programme, focussing on Islam and Christianity, have been invaluable for pupils and teachers, and have been enthusiastically received by many schools. Your SACRE is directly commissioning these workshops, Entrust no longer being able to resource input on Islam. This input is now being led by Hifsa Iqbal, OBE, with Stafford churches' Youth Net continuing to provide the input on Christianity.

The County's RE Adviser, Mary Gale successfully won a highly prestigious grant from the Culham St Gabriel Trust to develop with your SACRE a project for school leaders' strategic training on equality, diversity and inclusion linked with the delivery of the Agreed Syllabus in RE. This project is already energising and enhancing leadership training in Staffordshire schools, and it has given Mrs Gale a national profile. SACRE applauds her for this well-earned distinction, and for her unstinting work at all times on behalf of RE and the pupils and schools SACRE serves.

With full academisation potentially in view, questions inevitably arise about the future of SACREs and Agreed Syllabuses. As statutory bodies, SACREs continue to be given formal recognition within the funding received by local authorities from central government. They are active partners within the burgeoning network of regional RE Hubs. With the sad demise of the Inter Faith Network, through the withdrawal of government funding, SACREs remain one of the few places where people of all faiths and none can meet together in goodwill and in a common endeavour.

In our complex modern world, this kind of context is more needed than ever, and your SACRE will continue vigorously to promote and to model "education into diversity" through high quality and compelling R.E.

Richard R. Fletzalf

Rev. Prebendary Michael Metcalf Chair Staffs SACRE

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1. Introduction

This report covers the work of the Staffordshire SACRE during the academic year from September 2023 to September 2024. Three meetings were held during the period covered by the report.

This report is sent to the headteachers of all schools in the County, to the teachers' associations, to the local faith communities and NASACRE. Further copies are available from:

The Clerk to SACRE, Democratic Services, Martin Street, Stafford ST16 2LH.

The statutory duties of the SACRE are given in Appendix 1Page 22The membership of the SACRE is given in Appendix 2Page 23

2. A summary of the work of the SACRE September 2023-2024

- The SACRE worked in line with the SACRE Development Plan. (See Appendix 5)
- Eight face-to-face meetings were held in schools to give direct support.
- Three online meetings were held in conjunction with the local NATRE group, one per term. Eight- ten people attended these meetings.
- The Agreed Syllabus was monitored by SACRE.
- Long term planning grid has been provided for Middle schools (Year 5- Year 8)
- Early Years planning has been revamped to take into account the changes to the EYFS framework.
- Spring and Summer planning have been altered to take into account world views.
- Monitoring of Staffordshire schools RE provision was carried out through evaluations after workshops and training on the Agreed Syllabus (AS). The outcome is that the AS supports effective RE. Also, through a review of school websites.
- Monitoring of Staffordshire Secondary school RE was carried out through scrutiny of the work force census data. In addition, reviews of school websites were carried out.
- The Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus recommends that students at KS4 study an approved examination syllabus.

The summary below states the key outcomes from examinations in 2023.

Key outcomes

Staffordshire % achieving grades 9-4 for the full Religious Studies course in 2020 was 76.4% and 2021 was 77.5% with a fall to 2022 was 73.4% and a further fall to 66.1% in 2023. A fall of 7.3% It is to be noted that this is now in line with the pre-pandemic results of 2019, and this serves as a benchmark for further comparisons.

England % achieving grades 9-4 for the full RS course in

2020 was 80.5% 2021 was 80.2% with a fall to 76.7% in 2022 and a fall to 72.6 in 2023. A fall of 4.1% It is to be noted that this is now in line with the pre-pandemic results of 2019, and this serves as a benchmark for further comparisons.

Therefore Staffordshire % of students achieving grades 9-4 for the full RS course in 2023 was over 6.5% lower than the England average in 2023.

- 25 schools in Staffordshire entered pupils for A levels an increase of 4 schools from 2022 this represented all types of schools with a total of 226 entries an increase of 62 entries from 2022. The average grade was B, which is inline with the national average
- Staffordshire in comparison with the top grades is nearly 7.5% below the National at A*-A
- Staffordshire, in comparison is just below the National comparing A*-C grades in 2023.
- It is to be noted that this is now in line with the pre-pandemic results of 2019 and serves as a benchmark for further comparisons.
- The Westhill Engage project in conjunction with YouthNet and partially through the MEAS team and an independent consultant supported over 800 pupils across Staffordshire to gain a greater understanding of Christianity and Islam and living with diversity.
- A face-to-face programme of CPD to support RE teachers in their schools was available. Four schools asked for this support. In addition, three webinars in conjunction with NATRE were provided which were moderately well attended. Bespoke support was provided in response to individual school requests, this was mostly addressed through email correspondence and school visits.
- Support for Maintained schools and MATS who wished to further their understanding on Equality/Equity, Diversity and Inclusion was offered. This was either through webinars or through face-to-face meetings. This was sponsored by a charity grant from Culham St Gabriel.
- There was training and discussions on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
- Staffordshire SACRE continues to be represented at the NASACRE (the National Association of SACREs) AGM, NATRE Conference and AREIAC meetings. Some of these meetings have been held in the virtual environment.
- The partnership with NASACRE remains strong.
- No determinations have been requested during this academic year.

3. Standards and quality of RE and Collective Worship (CW) provision

3.1 Monitoring

Monitoring for this academic year continued to take place via email conversations, three online meetings, face to face school visits with evaluation questionnaires regarding the revised Agreed Syllabus, and scrutiny of examination results and school websites.

Where SACRE is concerned about the provision offered by schools then a formal procedure is followed. See Appendix 3.

General comments

• The Staffordshire Agreed (AS) syllabus is used in the majority of Staffordshire schools of which there are 500 plus, those who do not use the syllabus are Catholic

or Church of England Aided schools, or in a Multi Academy Trusts. (Many MATS use the AS)

- Schools are exploring ways to assess learning of RE many feel the revised syllabus provides support in this area.
- Local faith leaders contribute to CW in some areas of the county particularly where there are youth leaders to support this.
- Staff confidence in delivering collective worship continues to develop well.
- Leader confidence in Church of England schools regarding the delivery of CW improved with the help of resources from SACRE. Some leaders stated that the delivery of CW continues to improve.
- Worship teams (pupils) organise worship more compared to 2020.
- Varied weekly timetables of collective worship are the norm in schools.
- Allocation of budget resources to RE has decreased in many schools due to a general lack of funds. Schools have been sign posted to charity grants to support them eg Jerusalem Trust Grants
- RE makes a positive contribution to SMSC in most schools, as evidenced through face to face meetings and training evaluations.
- Three schools have achieved the Gold award for the RE quality Mark. (REQM)

Primary and Secondary Monitoring headlines:

- Collective worship is led by a variety of staff.
- The variety regarding the provision for collective worship varies from school to school with schools operating across key stages or class/form or whole school.
- Collective worship continues to take many forms including thought for the day, with the inclusion of Relationship and Health Education, and well-being aspects.
- Withdrawal from CW is only took place in a handful of schools mostly involving Jehovah Witnesses.
- The majority of schools have reviewed their collective worship provision in the past 2 years,
- Schools agreed that the Revised Agreed Syllabus of 2023 clearly provides what is required by their school in RE.
- The majority of schools contacted stated that they had reviewed their RE provision due to the Revised Agreed Syllabus and that planning now covered World Views

Provision for high schools/workforce data.

Workforce data report for 2022-2023. This report is always one year out of date.

This data was reported by schools to the DfE as part of the school census in November. Hours taught for years 7 to 13, in subjects RE, philosophy and all subjects, reported by state-funded secondary schools with electronic timetabling software are published.

There has been an increase in provision of RS/RE in some schools since the previous years and a decrease in others. The good news is that out 61 schools recorded, 21 have increased their provision. Which is good news. Last year only 16 schools increased the time allocated to the teaching of RE/RS.

10 have decreased their provision. Some of those schools are middle schools.

There is an improving picture of provision. The SACRE investigated the following:-

- The 0 hours allocations- anywhere in the list. This included 3 schools, the previous year this was 7 schools.
- The schools where there were dots- showing no hours recorded for RE/RS.

It is the general feeling that this is not essentially a true account as the census form may have been populated incorrectly.

Some of these are Catholic schools and we are certain that RE/RS is taught as they have examination results.

The advisor to the SACRE scrutinised websites and visited schools where it appears that no RE/RS were taught. The overall picture was more positive for the three schools and only one school was not teaching RE/RS as per the statutory regulations.

3.2 Standards

In the Staffordshire AS for Religious Education, legal requirements state that RE should be provided as part of the basic curriculum for all registered pupils attending a maintained school, this includes high schools.

Academies and Free schools are contractually required through the terms of their funding agreement to make provision for the teaching of RE. They are able to choose to do this by using a syllabus which best suits their needs- this may not be the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus.

Background

At Key Stage (KS) 4 all pupils should fulfil their entitlement by following as a basis an accredited specification (from a recognised examination board) in Religious Studies. Schools should provide reasonable time for pupils to complete this and if appropriate, to attain an external qualification.

At KS5 pupils may follow the programme of study provided within the Agreed Syllabus or an accredited specification (from a recognised examination board) in Religious Studies. Schools that do not offer this opportunity to their students are requested to apply to the SACRE for a variation of practice.

Standards at GCSE and A levels 2023

Staffordshire SACRE reviews and discusses standards and achievement in RE during meetings as appropriate. Please note there were no external examination results for the summer of 2021 due to the pandemic. These resumed in summer 2022 with some modifications and in 2023 normal exam practice resumed.

Throughout 2023-24 Religious Education network meetings were arranged online (schools choose to attend). These meetings included a discussion on standards across year groups and resources to support schools with the judgements they make against the revised 2023 Agreed Syllabus Age Related Expectations.

a) Public examination entries in Religious Education (RE) and Religious Studies (RS) for 2023

In the 2023 Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus (AS) for Religious Education, legal requirements state that RE should be provided as part of the broad and balanced curriculum for all registered pupils from Reception to 6th Form.

Background

At Key Stage (KS) 4 many pupils fulfil their entitlement by following as a basis an accredited specification (from a recognised examination board) in Religious Studies (RS). Schools

should provide reasonable time for pupils to complete this and if appropriate, to attain an external qualification.

At KS5, pupils are encouraged to follow the programme of study provided within the Agreed Syllabus (AS) or an accredited examination scheme.

Staffordshire SACRE recognises the independence of Academies and Free Schools. However, it commends the Agreed Syllabus to them as a constructive and collaborative way to meet their legal requirements in Religious Education.

Update on summer 2023 external examination results

b) Overall GCSE results and things to note

The GCSE system continues to use the grading of 9-1, with 9 being the exceptional grade. Across the UK, a greater proportion of students achieved good passes in religious studies in 2023 compared to all GCSE subjects. A total of 72.6% of pupils achieved grade 4 or higher in religious studies compared to 68.2% for all subjects.

More girls than boys were entered for the RE GCSE exams in 2023, there has been no change in this for a number of years.

NB Grades were awarded following different processes in 2020 and 2021 after public exams were cancelled this led to a large increase in the share of top grades awarded.

2022 saw the start to return to pre pandemic processes but there was still some lea way with regard to marking and awarding the top grades.

In 2023, we saw a return to pre-pandemic processes in line with 2019.

RS saw the smallest drop in top grades compared to other subjects.

See below for the 2023 results.

c) Religious Studies GCSE 2023

Staffordshire information

Overall figures to report for 2023 in comparison to 2022.

	Number of candidates	Grade 9 and above - %	Grade 8 and above - %	Grade 7 and above - %	Grade 6 and above - %	Grade 5 and above - %	Grade 4 and above - %	Grade 3 and above - %	Grade 2 and above - %	Grade 1 and above - %
England 2022	178,890	8.4	23.8	37.7	53.2	65.0	76.7	89.9	95.7	98.9
Staffordshire 2022	3,394	6.5	14	23	55	61	73.4	85.7	95.4	99.2

2023 data

	Number of candidates	Grade 9 and above - %	Grade 8 and above - %	Grade 7 and above - %	Grade 6 and above - %	Grade 5 and above - %	Grade 4 and above - %	Grade 3 and above - %	Grade 2 and above - %	Grade 1 and above - %
England 2023	168,270	8.3	19.4	31.6	48.3	62.2	72.6	86.5	94.0	97.8
Staffordshire 2023	3,703	3.7	11.4	20.5	39.2	54.6	66.1	84.2	93.6	98.3

The number of pupils taking GCSE Religious Studies increased in Staffordshire but fell in the rest of England.

Key outcomes

Staffordshire % achieving grades 9-4 for the full RS course in
2020 was 76.4% and
2021 was 77.5% with a fall to
73.4% in 2022
and a further fall to 66.1% in 2023. A fall of 7.3%
England % achieving grades 9-4 for the full RS course in
2020 was 80.5%
2021 was 80.2% with a fall to
76.7% in 2022
and a fall to 72.6 in 2023. A fall of 4.1%
Therefore Staffordshire % of students achieving grades 9-4 for the full RS course in 2023 was over 6.5% lower than the England average in 2023.

Historically 2019 National Average 9 to 4 2019 Staffordshire Average 9 to	72.3% 65.9%
2020 National Average 9 to 4	80.5%
2020 Staffordshire Average 9 to 4	76.4%
2021 National Average 9 to 4	80.2%
2021 Staffordshire Average 9 to 4	77.5%
2022 National Average 9 to 4	76.7%
2022 Staffordshire Average 9 to 4	73.4%
2023 National Average 9 to 4	72.6%
2023 Staffordshire Average 9 to 4	66.1%

Data shows a stabilising of results back to pre-pandemic levels of 2019- see bold above. This is a more realistic comparison.

Schools which had the highest amount of entries (see number in brackets) and their grades include the following:-John Taylor High (246) 9 to 4 78% Higher than National

Thomas Alleyne's High (224)	9 to 4	51.4%
Painsley Catholic (211)	9 to 4	81% Higher than National
Wolgarston High (200)	9 to 4	69%
Alleynes academy (218)	9 to 4	64.7%
Erasmus Darwin Academy (183)	9 to 4	60.1%
King Edward VI (192)	9 to 4	62%
St John Fisher Catholic College (192)	9 to 4	55.2%
The Rawlett School (176)	9 to 4	59.7%
Cardinal Griffin Catholic College (171)	9 to 4	57.3%
The Kings CE Academy (146)	9 to 4	30.1%
Blessed William Howard (146)	9 to 4	78.8% Higher than National
Paget High (107)	9 to 4	43.9%

Here are some additional comments to support...

- Grade 5 plus in 2022 for Staffordshire was 61% compared to the National of 65% and in 2023 was at 54% compared to the national of 62.2%. This is a drop.
- In 2023 John Taylor High School entered the most students with 246 entries (a drop of 10 from 2022) 20% achieved grades 8 and 9 (a drop of 5%) and 78% achieved the Grades 9-4 a drop of 4%.
- Closely followed by Thomas Alleynes High with 224 (a drop of 35 from 2022) entries. 6% achieved grades 8 and 9 (a drop of 4% from 2022) and 51.4% achieved the Grades 9-4 (a drop of 3.9% from 2022).
- Painsley Catholic High school achieved the highest gradings for its 211 entries (a drop of 3 from 2022) entries, with 22.7% achieved grades 8 and 9 (21% in 2022) 81% achieved the Grades 9-4 a slight drop from 82.2% in 2022.
- Alleyne's High School Stone entered 218 students a slight increase from 2022. 11.4% achieved grades 8 and 9 compared to 7% in 2022. 64.7% achieved the Grades 9-4- very similar to 2022.
- Blessed William Howard entered 146 students (an increase of 6 from 2022) and in 2023 28.1% achieving grades 8 and 9 (an increase from 25% in 2022) and at grades 9 to 4, 78.8% which is higher than National and increase on the school's 2022 results of 76.4%.

	Number of entries	A*-A	A*-C	A*-E	Average Grade
Staffordshire 2022	164	32.6%	88.2%	97.8%	В
National 2022	15, 220	36.2%	87.5%	98.7%	В
	Number of entries	A*-A	A*-C	A*-E	Average Grade
Staffordshire 2023	226	18.0%	77.2%	97.5%	В
National 2023	14, 720	25.5%	78.5%	97.3%	В

d) Religious Studies A-level 2023 in comparison to 2022.

At KS5 the information in the table shows the picture for A level results in 2023. 25 schools in Staffordshire entered pupils for A levels an increase of 4 from 2022 this represented all types of schools with a total of 226 entries an increase of 62 pupils from 2022.

- $\circ~$ The table shows that Staffordshire in comparison with the top grades is nearly 7.5% below the National at A*-A
- This shows that Staffordshire, in comparison is just below the National comparing A*-C grades in 2023. In 2022 we were just above.

- Here are some noteworthy results....
- ✓ John Taylor High School entered the most candidates- 37 entries (an increase of 1 from 2022). 27% achieved A*-A (a decrease from 56% in 2022) and 65.8% achieved the A*-B a decrease from 80.6% in 2022) but 83.7% achieved A*- C compared to the National of 78,5%
- ✓ King Edward VI entered 16 candidates, 18.8% achieved A*-A and 37,6% achieved the A*-B, but 81.4% achieved A*- C compared to the National of 78,5%
- ✓ Blessed William Howard entered 12 candidates. 8.3% achieved A*-A and 41.6% achieved the A*-B, and 66.6% achieved A*- C;
- ✓ Walton High School entered 20 candidates. 25% achieved A*-A an increase of 10% from 2022 and 45% achieved the A*-B, but 55% achieved A*- C
- Newcastle and Stafford Colleges group entered 26 candidates. 15.4% achieved A*-A and 65.4% achieved the A*-B but 88% achieved A*- C compared to the National of 78,5%
- ✓ Erasmus Darwin entered 15 candidates. 6.7 % achieved A*-A and 20% achieved the A*-B and 80% achieved A*- C compared to the National of 78,5%
- ✓ The remaining schools entered between 1-9 candidates.
- 14 out of 25 schools achieved gradings of A*-A- a drop of 3 from 2022.

The increase in the number of entries suggests that candidates continue to recognise the value of RS A-level for Higher Education entry, graduate employment, and as a valuable life skill.

Staffordshire SACRE reviews and discusses standards and achievement in RE during meetings as appropriate.

Throughout 2023-24 Religious Education network meetings were provided. Face-to-face development opportunities were also offered to schools. This was facilitated in 5 schools,

3.3 Quality of teaching, quality of leadership and management

Informal monitoring revealed a picture in the primary schools that responded with a high number of schools engaging in regular reviews of their RE provision. The picture was equally positive for provision in the secondary sector with most schools demonstrating that they reviewed their provision.

Schools have the option to purchase further bespoke support and evaluation of their leadership of RE from Entrust. This is a voluntary option. Five schools in 2023-2024 requested face-to-face support for leadership, and email support for leadership was provided to twelve schools following requests. The majority of requests involved support for planning and support regarding whether their RE provision met the needs of the AS.

3.4 Teacher recruitment and retention, level of specialist provision

Information regarding monitoring, recruitment and retention continues to be reliant on the collation of evidence from advertisements in the educational press. There is no established method of gathering data within the LA.

Information gleaned from the national press indicated that there was a relatively low turnover of subject leaders at the end of the academic year with few changes taking place.

Newly qualified teachers are now referred to as Early Career Teachers- ECTs

3.5 Resources

The work of the Entrust consultant for RE was carried out virtually and through face to face contact this past year. This involved support for Religious Education planning and Collective Worship. Resources were sent to schools to support online RE and CW.

These were well received by schools. Schools were sent information about Black History month, Interfaith week and Holocaust Memorial day. They were also informed about the Ofsted Research about RE.

An Entrust website for RE was developed, a similar website was developed for the SACRE. Schools were reminded of the links to these websites three times per year.

3.6 Collective Worship (CW)

3.7 Practice and provision for Collective Worship

An advice booklet continued to be made available to Staffordshire schools to support their statutory duties regarding CW.

Some schools sought clarification regarding time allocations. They enquired if collective worship/assembly time could be counted towards the RE/RS time allocation.

Schools can also email the commissioned consultant advisor for Religious Education at Entrust for additional support. This academic year there have been no specific training opportunities for CW although email targeted advice has been provided. Several schools have requested face-to-face meetings with the commissioned consultant to discuss these aspects.

3.8 Monitoring determinations for Collective Worship

There are no existing determinations in Staffordshire.

No determinations have been applied for or granted in this academic year. This is a standing item on the SACRE agendas in three meetings throughout the year.

4 Managing the SACRE and partnership with the LA and other stakeholders

4.1 SACRE meetings

Three meetings were held during the year 16th November 2023, 7th February 2024, and 26th June 2024, at the Council Chambers in the County Buildings Stafford, ST16 3AD. All meetings were held at 2.00 p.m.

At the autumn term 2023 meeting the Rev. Prebendary Michael Metcalf was elected as chair for the following year.

4.2 Membership

There was a review of membership and steps taken to recruit new members to fill vacancies. Several changes to the membership of the SACRE were noted during the year. See Appendix 2 for full details. All new members are required to sign the SACRE Code of Conduct on appointment and read the Safeguarding policy.

4.3 Training

During 2023-2024 professional development activities were offered virtually or face to face to teachers, these activities centred around email support for planning and advice regarding the Agreed Syllabus planning and Collective Worship. Governors and Trustees were updated three times by way of a general update webinar over the year to support their link governor roles, which was well received. Three general face to face meetings were also made available to governors. Training on Equality. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion was also provided for the SACRE and 12 schools throughout the county. This training was free.

Reverend Preb. M.R. Metcalf and M Gale (Advisor to SACRE) attended the NASACRE conference **on 20th May 2024** in York.

M Gale Advisor to SACRE attended three of AREIACs regional meetings in 2023-2024. She also attended three NATRE virtual meetings, one per term and the AREIAC/AULRE conference in Birmingham on 19th June 2024 where she was invited to speak about Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion with reference to the Staffordshire 2023 Agreed Syllabus.

4.4 SACRE developments

Development Projects

The Explore- Engage -Reflect pupil workshops provided for pupils across Stafford, Stone and Newcastle were delivered initially through the support of the MEAS team and then through the support of a new member of SACRE- Hifsa Iqbal OBE. She delivered workshops on Islam. YouthNet also supported on a couple of occasions delivering workshops on Christianity.

Here is an evaluation from one of the schools.

Christian and Islamic Workshops- report from a Governor at Oulton First school Stone

In my capacity as a Foundation Governor, I attended school all day. As an introduction to my report all I can say is that the children were fully occupied from early morning until the sessions finished and that the behaviour for learning was exemplary. Both workshops had activities which fully engaged the children, and the presenters were able to communicate with the children at their level.

Islam

This session began with a talk about what Muslims believe and emphasised the similarities between Christianity and Islam. It outlined the five pillars of Islam and explained clearly what each of the five entailed. Mrs Iqbal told the children how each applied to her which gave the children a practical example. They were amazed when she explained Ramadan and the hours of fasting. Someone said it must be easier in March than June! She also amused them when explaining the Hajj and what the men were expected to wear. She clearly outlined the times of prayer and that prayer could be conducted anywhere.

There then followed 3 work stations:

Islamic literature

Sheets to fill in

A selection of artifacts including prayer mats and clothing.

The children were amazed at the stories of the prophets, many of the class 3 children realising that they appear in Christian stories as well.

It was apparent at the end of the day that the children, both Y3 and Y2 had learned a great detail as outlined in my introduction.

Christianity

This session was very interactive and consisted of 6 work stations and made clear to the children these facets of Christianity.

Milestones: baptism, weddings, communion and funerals. Of course many of the children could relate directly to the these.

Prayer: what it is and what helps people to pray.

Trinity: A simple diagram to explain it and a question asking why Jesus is special. **Worship:** simple diagrams illustrating the different types of worship.

The Bible: explaining in simple terms of history, gospel and prophecy all explained very clearly and in terms aimed at the children.

Church: drawing out fact that the Church is not only buildings but communities of Christians. The back of the sheet had little drawings explaining what Christians do. The learning was obvious and very sympathetically presented.

Visit to Church

In the morning class 2 visited St. John's Church to have a talk by from a youth and children's worker. He made it very interactive, and child centred The Vicar also took the chance, using me as an example, to explain the role of a church warden. The visit served the purposes of meeting church members and also of familiarising the children with Church and showing them the Altar and the Font.

In summary a most rewarding day in which it was obvious that much learning took place. Congratulations to the school for organising it and the support from the SACRE.

Additional Support

The advisor to SACRE applied for a grant to support a project which involved the ongoing developments in schools through the Culham St Gabriel (CSTG) charity. The brief included bringing about a development in the mindset for some, and a refinement for others in enabling them to lead organisations that provides an inclusive respectful and enriching educational experience for all stakeholders. This involved filling in an expression of interest alongside a first interview with the CEO of CSTG. The next stage involved a second interview and then a stage 2 grant application. The application was presented to the Charity Trustees of CSTG. Each stage was supported by paperwork and references were taken up from Tim Moss and a Trustee of a local MAT.

The advisor, Mary Gale, researched the project brief in great detail. This project provides support for strategic training on Equality/Equity, Diversity and Inclusion aspects in connection with the Staffordshire 2023 Agreed Syllabus.

The project application was successful.

This project enables school leaders to address the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus, plus equality, diversity and inclusion aspects.

This project could be viewed as a *seedcorn* funded initiative which develops and clarifies strategic leadership at governance level, so Trustees and Governors are equipped to seek assurances from headteachers and Principals that understanding and appreciation for the richness of human diversity/ world views including different RE curricula, content, pedagogy, and provision is at the heart of their organisation.

It works well alongside schools who also access the Westhill Legacy workshops.

Mary networked with fellow professionals to support some of the project through the delivery of the webinars. *Eventbrite* links were provided for schools on two occasions. Also, a zoom licence was purchased.

Mary Gale advertised the project to many schools through the Entrust Governor Information Packs, which are available to over 300 schools in Staffordshire and 43 Local Authorities Information was also provided through face-to-face meetings and online information webinar meetings this supported the evaluation of need.

The resources continue to be modified month on month to support schools, In addition to the webinar type presentation, there are now face-to-face bespoke training for schools governing boards or Trusts and their local academy committees/councils plus teachers.

To date the following have been delivered

2 webinars with 10 schools participating on each.

Face-to face training at Staffs SACRE, Edinburgh University Network, Chase View Primary School, Endon Hall Primary, Oakridge Primary, St Luke's at Endon, Wood Lane Primary, Walton Priory Middle, Newman College Birmingham. The training for the Talentum Trust was cancelled 24 hours before the presentation and so we are waiting for another appointment.

This totals 11 presentations, 5 more than was required to fulfil the brief.

The advisor has also attended Culham online meetings to update them on the progress of the project.

The next steps are to evaluate the project utilising the feedback from the sessions.

In addition, the SACRE also launched its Safeguarding policy for 2023-2024, This was well received and supports members who wish to visit schools in the course of their roles

4.5 LA support for the SACRE

The LA continues to commission its support for Religious Education from Entrust. Support for SACRE 2023/24 was provided by Mary Gale, director of Mary Gale Consultancy. She was commissioned to provide this support and advice to SACRE and schools. This commission continues.

4.6 Financial support

£6,590 was made available to support the work of SACRE during the financial year 2023-2024 as approved by the Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) between Staffordshire County Council and Entrust. Additional funds were provided to support the Culham St Gabreil project which amounted to an additional £6500 over two financial years (£3500 in the 2023-2024 budget). Continuing priorities for the year were identified through a development plan as supporting schools to be aware of their statutory responsibilities with regard to the revised AS and to provide support in relation to fulfilling the statutory functions for SACRE including but not limited to:

(i) provision of advice and guidance on teaching and learning on the Religious Education syllabus.

- (ii) providing updates to maintained school RE teachers with a refresh on the requirements to the RE Syllabus.
- Support for specific projects in a election of schools ranging from support for resources for CW and RE including advice on application for the RE quality mark. (Gold award successful)
- (iv) Workshops for pupils in all phases and stages on the delivery of the AS requirements.
- (v) Delivery of the Culham project from December 2023 to Dec 2024.

The budget was a standing item on the agenda at each meeting see Appendix 4.

Additional information shared in meetings

The Religious Education Council publication information was shared with members during the November 2023 meeting.

Members received a copy of the RE Council publication The National Standard Entitlement. The Chair gave a brief summary of the publication, stating that, although it was issued and adopted by the RE Council, it wasn't a statutory document, but it was being commended to schools for their consideration.

The advisor shared that some of the publication echoed our agreed syllabus, and it had a big emphasis on world views. There were good factors and good practices to be noted and followed and it was requested that members take note of the information. The Chair commented on the reference in the Agenda papers to the RE Network and its critique of the publication. The RE Network was a Christian-based organisation that held a traditional view of RE. It was arguing that the proposed emphasis on children developing their own worldview cut across faith transmission within families and faith communities.

We also discussed **Guidance for local authorities about membership of Standing** Advisory Councils for Religious Education (SACREs)

This note provides information on a recent court ruling and shares the Department for Education's (the Department) view <u>that representatives from non-religious belief</u> <u>systems may be appointed to Group A of a SACRE and/or to an Agreed Syllabus</u> <u>Conference (ASC)</u>.

Background

SACREs are established by local authorities, as required by legislation¹, and their membership must consist of the following groups:

- Group A: members that represent Christian denominations and other religions and their denominations who will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area;
- Group B: members that represent the Church of England;
- Group C: members that represent the teaching profession or other relevant

¹ Section 390(4)(a) of the Education Act 1996

associations that, in the opinion of the authority, ought to be represented; and

• Group D: members that represent the [local] authority.

The recent legal case of *Bowen v Kent County Council²* (more details in the Annex) clarified that applications for Group A membership from persons who represent holders of non-religious beliefs should be considered in the same way as applications from those who represent holders of religious beliefs.

In the Department's view, the non-religious beliefs adhered to by the person to be appointed must be analogous to a religious belief. To be "analogous", the non-religious beliefs must, in accordance with case law under the European Convention of Human Rights and the Human Rights Act 1998, attain the necessary level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion, and importance to attract protection under the Convention Rights.³

The final decision on appointment of persons to a SACRE or ASC is a matter for local authorities. This may include consideration of whether such a representative would help ensure that the relevant traditions and beliefs in the local authority's area are appropriately reflected in Group A.

4.7 Partnerships with other Key Stakeholders

NASACRE

The Chair of Staffordshire SACRE, Michael Metcalf, was until May 2022/23 the treasurer of the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE). He continues to support the incoming treasurer.

A report from NASACRE is a standing agenda item at each meeting.

At each of the three meetings, the Chair gave a brief update on key issues raised by the National Association of SACREs. Matters for 2023/2024 are included in the minutes from each meeting.

SACRE subscribes to NASACRE receiving updates as appropriate.

AREIAC (Association for Religious Education Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants) and NATRE (National Association for the Teaching of RE) and AULRE.

SACRE subscribes to these organisations, receiving updates as appropriate. The consultant advisor also attends meetings and conferences with members of these organisations ensuring SACRE receives regular information which supports them in carrying out their core duties.. These continue. Mary Gale has attended 3 such meetings.

NATRE

Mary Gale continues to communicate with NATRE on a number of topical RE aspects. She receives publications and news as appropriate and disseminates this information to schools and Governors. She has attended three virtual NATRE meetings and meets with the local representative to explore RE issues.

² www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2023/1261.html

³ This aligns with the policy in Wales, where a non-religious belief for the purposes of education is aligned with those philosophical beliefs that are protected following European Convention of Human Rights caselaw.

The provision of regional RE hubs has been a new initiative of 2023; this is proving to be beneficial for schools and organisations.

Local Authority

The Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus 2023 (AS) for Religious Education is the key document for the provision of RE in local schools. Schools receive reminders regarding the statutory status of this syllabus on a regular basis. As the key curriculum document for pupils in all Staffordshire's maintained schools and in some Multi Academy Trusts (this at the discretion of each Trust board) the local authority is responsible for ensuring that guidance is in place. The advisor to Staffordshire SACRE and the Assistant Director for Education Strategy & Improvement have continued to remain in regular contact and work together to ensure that schools are clear about their statutory responsibilities for Religious Education.

5 The effectiveness of the local agreed syllabus

5.1 Guidance/monitoring and evaluation of the agreed syllabus

Ongoing guidance was provided in the following formats:

- RE news was provided through the headteacher Electronic Bag (e-bag) and through the Governor Information Pack (GIP) at the start of each term together with targeted emails to schools to support them with aspects of teaching and learning.
- Schools have been invited to phone/email the commissioned consultant advisor for Religious Education at Entrust for advice and support on all aspects of their RE provision- there have been a number of queries. Religious Education Quality Mark (REQM) support has also been provided.
- Revised long and medium-term plans have been made available to schools to support high quality Religious Education. These plans were further revised in 2023-2024.
- The Entrust RE website was launched and provides support for schools and can be accessed by following this link. <u>https://www.entrust.education/Page/35474</u>
- The SACRE website was also launched and provides support and can be accessed by following this link. *SACRE Link*
- <u>https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Education/SACRE/Home.aspx</u>

6 Contribution of the SACRE to the wider community

6.1 Representative nature of the SACRE

The membership of the SACRE indicates that it is representative in nature. There are currently vacancies which the SACRE are seeking to fill.

6.2 Knowledge and understanding of the local religious, cultural and ethnic minorities.

A number of the SACRE members are also representatives on the Stafford Friends of Faith Forum, a local interfaith network. Where opportunities arise, SACRE members and members of Stafford Friends of Faith Forum support each other's events to promote positive community relations. This relationship supports SACRE members knowledge and understanding of the local religious, cultural and ethnic minority.

The commissioned consultant/advisor for RE works alongside the Entrust MEAS (Minority Ethnic Achievement Service), the local YouthNet team and RE-ENGAGE offering support for COUNTER-TERRORISM & COUNTER-RADICALISATION Prevent – Legislation, guidance & general information & support.

RELIGION & WORLD VIEWS - THE WAY FORWARD Classroom based sessions for students as well as sessions aimed at teachers to explore their understanding of religion and world views.

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION Discussions based on the 9 protected characteristics for young people.

CONTEXTUALISING ISLAM & EXPLORE ISLAM EXHIBITION

There are several Inter faith/cultural experiences/workshops available for schools to book which aim to enhance RE in Staffordshire schools in line with the AS 2023 syllabus. These offer the opportunity for an interactive experience for pupils where they meet with members of a faith and learn about what that faith means to them. These workshops support the previous Westhill Legacy project.

Support for schools, particularly around diversity and race relations had been provided through information on Black History month, on the Holocaust Educational Trust learning support tool and Interfaith support.

Emphasis had been put on the schools embedding all such aspects in all that they do, not just during the national awareness periods.

6.3 Understanding the intrinsic contribution which RE can make to social, racial and religious harmony and to the wider community.

The Staffordshire AS for Religious Education 2023 affirms that the role of RE is to foster in each pupil a growing level of religious literacy, through three complementary aims, encapsulated as Exploring, Engaging, Reflecting. This is emphasised in the revised 2023 Agreed Syllabus.

These three aims call for pupils to "acquire a growing range of the social, spiritual and emotional skills and dispositions appropriate to living well in a religiously plural and open society, by reflecting on the reality of religious diversity and on the issues raised by living in a diverse world".

Pupils studying RE are now specifically required to reflect on the issues raised by living in a diverse world, through studying world views in addition to studying Abrahamic and Dharmic religions. These aims highlight the key role played by Religious Education in developing, supporting and promoting a knowledgeable society with respect for and sensitivity towards the beliefs and life choices of others. The 2023 revised syllabus emphasises that, in a civilised society, difference can be celebrated when we also seek out and build on shared values and experiences.

The SACRE is committed to the syllabus and to the role it plays in building a cohesive community.

The training on Equality/Equity, Diversity and Inclusion emphasises the importance of the 2023 AS.

The Religious Education Quality Mark- REQM

Three schools have achieved the REQM in Staffordshire over the past 18 months. They have all achieved the GOLD quality mark. SACRE have congratulated the schools for this achievement.

The schools include St Chad's CE at Pattingham, St Luke's CE at Cannock and St Michael's CE Penkridge.

This award recognises high quality RE through:-

- Invigorating RE teaching practice and creativity contributing to whole school outcomes.
- raising the profile of RE in the school and the school community through sharing quality resources via networking
- Here are some quotes from the children-Theological Thoughts are questions that no-one can really answer, but we get time to think and discuss and there isn't really a right or wrong answer.
- *RE* helps me to learn about God and to understand other people's faiths and values.
- To pray you don't have to put your hands together, you can dance.
- RE helps my understanding of other people's world views and then being able to show tolerance.
- RE helps you to grow spiritually.

Here is the summative comment about RE in the school. This is a general these throughout all three schools.

The RE Leader and staff at St Michael's CE First School are committed to raising standards in RE by providing:-

- A rich, broad and balanced curriculum designed to engage and stimulate the children.
- RE is considered a core subject, its creative and innovative curriculum, combined with the use of 'Theological Thoughts', provides opportunities for the children to learn, and to explore more challenging and moral issues which helps to prepare them to live *"life in all its fullness"* (John 10:10). '
- The children feel safe, valued and nurtured and are encouraged to explore the 'big questions' about life, to find out what people believe and to deepen their understanding and develop their tolerance and respect for other faiths and non-religious world views.
- The leadership and management of St Michael's CE First school is strongly committed to the development of RE and Worldviews, which has had an extremely positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning and has provided a firm foundation for the children to make outstanding progress.
- The children spoke with confidence and maturity, and they are a credit to their teachers.

Appendices



33rd Annual Report September 2023-September 2024

Appendix 1

The Statutory Duties of a SACRE

All LAs are required to establish a SACRE.

A SACRE's main function, as set out in the 1996 Education Act is:

"to advise the local education authority upon such matters connected with religious worship in county schools and the Religious Education to be given in accordance with the agreed syllabus as the authority may refer to the council or as the council may see fit". [s.391(1)(a)]

Such matters include:-

"methods of teaching, the choice of materials and the provision of training for teachers".

A SACRE also:

- can require the local authority to review its current agreed syllabus [s.391(3)]
- must consider applications made by a headteacher, that the requirement for collective worship in county schools to be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character shall not apply to the collective worship provided for some or all of the pupils in a particular school ('determinations'). [s.394(1)]

Every SACRE must, by law, produce an annual report on its work and on actions taken by its representative groups, specifying any matters on which it has advised the local authority, broadly describe the nature of that advice and set out reasons for offering advice on matters not referred to it by the local authority. [s.391 (6) and (7)]

A copy of the report should be sent to The National Association of SACREs (NASACRE)

Appendix 2

SACRE Membership

Attendance at Meetings and Vacancies 2023/2024

	15 Nov 23	7 Feb 24	26 Jun 24
Committee A - Christian and other religious denominations			
Free Churches (4)			
Sam Phillips	Α	-	-
Maddy Belle	Α	✓	Α
Vacancy			
Vacancy			
Hindu (2)			
Mr. G. Devadason	-	-	-
Vacancy			
Jewish (1)			
Vacancy			
Muslim (2)			
Mohamed Sedky	-	-	-
Hifsa Haroon-Iqbal OBE – Joined from June 24	NA	NA	✓
Quakers - (1)			
Gabi Oldfield	✓	✓	\checkmark
Roman Catholic (2)			
Lisa Gretton – Joined from February 24	NA	✓	Α
Vicki Wayman – Joined from February 24	NA	✓	Α
Sikh (2)			
Mr Tajinder Singh	-	Α	-
Vacancy			
Salvation Army (1)			
Vacancy			
Buddhist (1)			
Ven. Dr Phramaha Laow Panyasiri	Α	-	-
Humanist			
lan Horsewell	-	-	-
Baha'i			
Julie Thompson	✓	Resigned	Resigned
Jacqueline Bandha – Joined from February 24	NA	Α	✓

Committee B - Church of England (5)	15 Nov 23	7 Feb 24	26 Jun 24
Vickie Longson	-	-	-
Vicky Priestley	Α	А	Α
Lauren Nicholson-Ward	✓	А	Α

Rev. Preb. Michael Metcalf	✓	✓	Α
Zoe Cahalan	Α	A	✓

Committee C - Teacher Associations (5)	15 Nov 23	7 Feb 24	26 Jun 24
Samantha Kirwan (NEU)	✓	Α	✓
Judy Wyman (ASCL)	-	-	-
Shaun Miles (NAHT)	-	Α	А
Linda Goodwin (NEU)	-	-	✓
Harold Gurden (NASUWT)	-	-	-

Committee D - Local Education Authority (5) (Membership change in November 2021)	15 Nov 23	7 Feb 24	26 Jun 24
Councillor Philip Atkins, OBE	~	✓	✓
Councillor Paul Northcott	✓	✓	Α
Councillor Kath Perry, MBE	✓	✓	✓
Councillor Paul Snape	✓	Α	Α
Councillor Mike Wilcox	Α	✓	Α

Co-opted - Spiritualist National Union	15 Nov 23	7 Feb 24	26 Jun 24
Vacancy			
Clerk to SACRE:	15 Nov 23	7 Feb 24	26 Jun 24
Clerk to SACRE: Simon Humble	15 Nov 23 ✓	7 Feb 24 ✓	26 Jun 24 ✓

Officer	15 Nov 23	7 Feb 24	26 Jun 24
Mary Gale	✓	✓	✓

✓ = Attended
 A = Apologies Submitted
 - = No Response
 NA = Not a member at the time of the meeting

Appendix 3

Procedures for schools causing concern.

Where, in carrying out its statutory duty to monitor the provision of Religious Education as appropriate within the Local Authority, the SACRE has identified a cause for concern:

- 1. The SACRE or a sub-committee will request that a letter be sent from the Consultant Adviser for RE or an appropriate LA officer to outline concerns to the school and offer support.
- 2. Any responses will be referred to the SACRE or a sub-committee for consideration.
- 3. Where no reply is received, a further letter will be sent by the chair of SACRE reiterating concerns and offering the support of the Senior Adviser or appropriate LA officer.
- 4. Any responses will be referred to the SACRE or a sub-committee for consideration.
- 5. Where no reply is received, the SACRE, through the chair, will send a further letter to the school reiterating concerns and alerting the school to further action:
 - a) Concerns to be raised with relevant LA officers with a request that the SACRE be informed of the outcome of any ensuing discussion.
 - b) A note of concern be sent to the Senior LA officer with responsibility for SACRE.

Appendix 4 2023-2024

NML400

Screen Data Export - SACRE (2023-24) as at 30-5-2024

Option Username Date Time

		_					
GL Account Code	Description	<u>Current Budget (v2)</u>	<u> Actual + Grni</u>	<u>Actuals</u>	<u>Variance Bud v(Act</u> +GRNI)	Excl Grant	<u>Variance</u>
EM110010002	SACRE Teachers Gross	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
EM110044316	SACRE CONSULTANTS FEES	0.00	8,390.00	8,390.00	(8,390.00)	5,930.00	(5,930.00)
EM110044038	SACRE QLS Curriculum Advice	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
EM110046204	SACRE Conference Fees	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
EM110047017	SACRE Grants to third parties	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
EM110047202	SACRE Subscriptions General	0.00	365.50	365.50	(365.50)	365.50	(365.50)
EM110048342	SACRE Contingency	6,590.00	200.00	200.00	6,390.00	200.00	6,390.00
EM110063008	SACRE General Grants (Culham)	0.00	(3,510.00)	(3,510.00)	3,510.00	0.00	0.00
EM110064550	SACRE Tfrs to Oth Accounts	(10,890.00)	(10,890.00)	(10,890.00)	0.00	(10,890.00)	0.00
		(4,300.00)	(5,444.50)	(5,444.50)	1,144.50	(4,394.50)	94.50

GL Account Codes for : Enquiry Group: Curr Budget (v2) v Act + GRNI/GL Account Code Range: EM1100/***** to EM1100/***** / Enquiry Year: 2023Period: (

Total Available before commitments		1,144.50	94.50
Less committed amounts: Carry forward		(1,050.00)	
	Page 26		

Available Total Available before commitments	<u>94.50</u> 1,144.50
Less committed amounts: Carry forward	(1,050.00)
Available	94.50

Appendix 5

SACRE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Staffordshire SACRE

Chair Michael Metcalf				Date Range for completion:	2023-2024						
Commissioned support adviser	Mary Gale										
Self-evaluation:	Amber board			Self-evaluation:							
Objective	Activities Time scale Led by Success criteria		Success criteria	Evidence	Evaluation Nove 2022	RAG in Feb 2024					
 New members become familiar with roles and responsibilities 	Attendance at 3 annual meeting	Nov 23- Nov 24	Chair and consultant	SACRE members are familiar with roles and responsibilities.	Through meetings, knowledge is evidenced of the process and procedures of SACRE	As meeting are convened then new members become familiar with their roles.	Amber				
 SACRE are made aware of current philosophy regarding RE and CW and resources under key issues 	Update information received at meetings	Nov 23- Nov 24	Chair and consultant	SACRE members are aware of current philosophy regarding RE and CW and resources to assist.	Through meetings, knowledge is increased.	This is always an update at each meeting and is ongoing	Amber				

3.	Support for the Agreed Syllabus (AS)	Workshops delivered on diversity aspects through Engaging with Islam resources and Christianity resources	Nov 23- Nov 24	Trainer x2	Target schools receive half day or full day support	Through workshops, knowledge is increased in line with AS	This is underway	Green
4.	Culham St Gabriel grant utilised	Training of leaders on EDI aspects in schools x6 workshops	Jan 24- autumn 24	Trainers x2	School leaders become more aware of AS and its connection with EDI aspects	Evaluations and dissemination of information	This will start in February and March 2024	Green
5.	Understanding of Equity/Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	SACRE members to increase their knowledge of these aspects	Feb 24- Feb 25	Consultant and Trainer	SACRE members become more aware of AS and its connection with EDI aspects	Evaluations and dissemination of information	This will be highlighted in February, June & November 2024	Green
6. Entrust	Development of websites to share resources including AS and reports. and SACRE	Information shared with website providers. Resources updated	Nov 23- Nov 24	Clerk and consultant	Websites up and running x2 SACRE members able to access information through one website for SACRE information and one for resources through Entrust. Link for Entrust	Stakeholders use of website	Feedback is presented at June and November 2024	Green

					https://www.entrust.education/Page/35474 Link for SACRE https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Education/SACRE/Home.aspx		meeting	
	Engagement with RE Hubs and stakeholders	Attendance at Hub meetings and NATRE meetings and NASACRE and AREIAC meetings	Nov 23- Nov 24	Consultant and RE HUB leaders	Increased engagement and quality assurance of information shared	Up to date resources utilised in schools.	Feedback is presented at Feb/June and November 2024 meeting	Amber
Impact Summary					Area/s for further development			