

Bradford SACRE Annual Report 2023/24

Words from the Interim Chair of SACRE – Richard Crane, Assistant Director Schools & Learning

As we come to the end of another year I am very grateful to all our members for their continued support. This year, we have worked with Pennine Learning and our colleagues in Leeds, Kirklees and Calderdale on the revised RE Syllabus “Believing & Belonging” which was launched this September. Input from our SACRE members throughout this process has been very constructive and informative. Members have been very engaged in the process and throughout our meetings, dialogue continues to be respectful of other members and of divergent views.

Overview

Bradford SACRE met three times in the 2023-24 academic year, in November, January and March in person for all three meetings.

At the November 2023 meeting, we invited the Head of Engagement of the Bradford 2025 City Of Culture team to discuss how SACRE could input into the delivery plans from a faith and inclusivity perspective. Members had a number of comments and suggestions which were felt to be very useful. The committee was also given an update on the recent RE Network meeting with RE Leaders which included feedback given on their behalf to inform the syllabus review and a discussion around the number of hours of RE teaching is required (as a topic that comes up regularly) following data released by NATRE. An overview of the progress of the syllabus review to date was also provided.

The January 2024 meeting focused on a detailed examination of the revised syllabus with a presentation from Pennine Learning who produced and revised the syllabus. SACRE members were very engaged in the discussion and tabled a number of questions on the content and implementation of the new syllabus. They then had the opportunity, following the meeting, to make any suggestions on amendments, improvements, technical terms etc which they embraced resulting in changes being made to the final version.

In March, an extraordinary meeting of the LAs who jointly commission the RE Syllabus took place to approve and commend the new syllabus. There was an opportunity for each SACRE to meet in their own groups to give their feedback on the syllabus. Comments about the syllabus were very positive, with the committee feeling it was a solid, systematic approach providing a robust framework so curriculum leads can be held to account for the depth of teaching across the whole subject, whilst making it interesting to be taught. They also felt examples make it clear what needs to be taught, aided by inexpensive resources which can be purchased by schools.

There was also presentation on a summary of the RE section within the Ofsted General report as the specific one had not yet been published. The key messages are that RE is often seen as an afterthought particularly at KS4 for those students not taking a GCSE in RE. Many schools don't meet the RE statutory requirement. Suggestions from the Ofsted report to support this include access to high quality professional development; well-planned curriculum material and clearer government guidance on the breadth and depth of study in RE.

It was suggested that SACREs include an agenda item in their next meeting on how they can support schools to cover RE in a more robust manner.

Members of SACRE were also invited to the launch of the new syllabus in June attended by teachers from across this district. Some members were able to take up this invitation and fed back it was very interesting to see the training and the teachers' reaction to the new syllabus, bringing the SACRE discussions on it to life.

Statutory responsibilities - Religious Education

Due to the timings of the meetings in this year (as a result of the launch of the syllabus), it was too soon to look at the examination data for summer 2024 but this will be discussed in the November meeting. Bradford SACRE hasn't received any complaints this year.

Statutory responsibilities – Collective Worship

There were no determinations to consider this year. Due to the increasing amount of academies across the Bradford District, there are very few maintained schools with determinations (just 7 now from a previous high of almost 50). There are two determination due for renewal in 2025. The clerk contacts those schools when their determinations are due to offer SACRE's support.

Links to Other Bodies

The RE Teachers network is affiliated with NATRE local groups, and the termly meetings are led by the clerk as SACRE with guest speakers. This network is crucial to emphasise the importance of RE in schools and offer the RE Leads an opportunity to link with colleagues as the role is often moved between staff with no specific training or knowledge in the area.

SACRE also has close links with the Interfaith and Diversity Education Team at Bradford Council. The team provides traded support the RE Leads and their colleagues to enhance their knowledge of the subject via teacher CPD training as well as affording pupils invaluable enhanced learning through the lived experience of the tutors in the team via guided visits to places of worship, workshops and assemblies. This service is unique across the region and therefore also supports schools from other LAs. Team members also often attend the RE Teachers network meetings to understand key issues in the teaching of RE.

We also have close links with Leeds, Kirklees and Calderdale SACRE through the shared agreed syllabus, and with Pennine Learning. Bradford teachers have had the opportunity to join Pennine Learning syllabus meetings with colleagues from the other 3 LAs which has proved excellent networking opportunities particularly for secondary colleagues which is by its nature a smaller cohort with their own questions etc. Will be meeting face-to-face at least once a term and particularly around the time of the syllabus review.

Statutory Responsibilities – SACRE Arrangements

Professional and administrative support

The LA provides a clerk to SACRE. There is also an LA rep from the senior leadership team who attends the meetings.

Membership, Representation and Recruitment

Bradford SACRE appears to be quite large in comparison to other SACREs (potential membership of 38) and a significant number of attendees make a regular commitment to attend the meetings. However, there have been issues around quoracy and difficulties filling certain vacancies. The membership was reviewed in light of the 2021 census data. However, there is a plan to review our constitution and quoracy rules at the first meeting of this academic year, since our regional colleagues at the joint LASC meeting were quorate with significantly fewer members.

There are currently vacancies on Committees A, C & D. This academic year we have welcomed four new members, there have been three resignations, six dismissals of members who haven't attended and a further four members with poor recent attendance records have stated they do want to continue on SACRE and will endeavour to attend future meetings. Nevertheless, the next meeting will also include a review of our attendance policy within the constitution and the addition of a sunset clause for non-attendees similar to that of school governing boards.

There are currently 14 of a possible 21 members on Committee A, 5 of a possible 5 on Committee B, 1 of a possible 5 on Committee C and 4 of a possible 5 on Committee D.

Meeting Attendance 2023-24

Committee	14/11/23		22/01/24		12/03/24	
	Possible	Actual	Possible	Actual	Possible	Actual
A	21	7	21	4	21	6
B	5	4	5	3	5	3
C	5	1	5	1	5	1
D	5	1	5	2	5	1

Finance

SACRE has a draw-down budget provided by the LA, which it can call upon as required. This academic year it has only been needed to pay for the review of the syllabus.