



Swindon SACRE Annual Report 2023-2024



Swindon SACRE Annual Report 2023-24

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	Words from the Chair Overview – SACRE Overview – Agreed Syllabus Conference
2	Religious Education	Locally Agreed Syllabus/RE provision Monitoring KS4 exam outcomes 2024 WIRE award Learn Teach Lead RE (LTLRE) Hub Annual Conference
3	Collective Worship	Policy, guidance & support Determinations
4	Links with other organisations	NASACRE LTLRE Church of England Diocese of Bristol Other local involvement
5	SACRE arrangements	Organisation Membership

1. Introduction

Words from the Chair

Welcome to the 2024 annual report of the Swindon Sacre. We are a diverse and committed group of representatives from a broad range of faith and worldview communities who meet with the shared aim of enhancing the work and scope of Religious Education teaching in Swindon schools. We aim to support schools by fulfilling the role of critical friend in evaluating and monitoring RE provision and outcomes in Swindon. We regularly receive reports from those working in the field of RE in Swindon schools and colleges and offer support, advice and resources to support the provision and development of RE locally. This year we have been pleased to welcome a number of new members to our committee who have helped to broaden further the range of faith traditions and beliefs represented in our meetings.

We encourage all members to attend local RE training and conferencing opportunities and report back on these to our wider body. We also regularly invite local teachers to report to us about the development of RE in their context. It has been our privilege as a SACRE to celebrate the excellent RE being taught in Swindon Schools and to present a number of local schools with the WIRE and Gold WIRE award for diversity and inclusion in RE.

Our diocesan adviser, Laura Harris has again been an invaluable support to us over the past academic year. We have also been pleased to welcome Julia Watts to the role of diocesan advisor to Swindon Sacre. She and Laura worked together with us during a time of transition. Laura is now working with Bristol schools, and Julia has ably stepped into her shoes to support us in Swindon. Whilst we will miss Laura in our regular meetings, we will still benefit from her expertise and advise in the regional conferences and hub meetings in Bristol. We are grateful to be able to call upon Laura, and now Julia, to guide our process throughout the year and keep us at the cutting edge of developments in the RE world. This has greatly enhanced our effectiveness as a committee.

This year we welcomed Lesley Toogood as our new Clerk to SACRE. After a brief time in the role, we have now welcomed Annie Vickers as our clerk due to changing roles within the local authority.

We are well represented by members of the local council, in addition to teachers from a variety of schools, representatives from a range of major world faiths and by members of the Swindon Interfaith and Humanist groups. We actively seek to recruit new representatives as vacancies arise and this year have been pleased to welcome four new members to our committee. We were very pleased to welcome local councillor, Faye Howard, back to the Swindon SACRE this year. Faye served our committee as chair so effectively in the past and was voted as our new chair for the 24-25 academic year, due to the current chair's relocation to Wales.

We meet in person as a committee three times each academic year. This is either in the council offices or by invitation to the premises of local faith groups. This often affords us the opportunity to learn about the work of different groups in the community and to experience their kind hospitality first hand.

We continue to encourage schools to establish visits to local places of worship. This has been an excellent provision in the past, and we are seeking to re-establish links and contacts to support schools in providing these first-hand opportunities to visit faith communities and learn from their lived experiences of faith. Sadly, budget constraints have limited some schools in arranging these educational visits. We encourage sponsorship of visits to enable these vital experiences for children. Virtual visits and guest visitors to RE lessons have also enhanced provision in RE.

As part of our regular cycle of monitoring, we are currently undertaking a rolling review of RE provision and priorities in Swindon, via an examination of RE on school websites. We aim to publish our findings and offer further support to schools as a result.

We are pleased to be able to serve on the Swindon SACRE and to celebrate the many good things that are happening locally in the RE world. It is our hope going forward, that we will continue to provide a vital role and to further raise the profile of RE locally, as we maintain and develop a vibrant partnership with Swindon schools and colleges.

Ruth Williams

Chair of Swindon SACRE

Overview - SACRE

SACRE met three times in the academic year 2023-24. In November, SACRE met in the Civic Centre, Swindon and in March at the Civic Offices, Swindon and a final meeting in July also at the Hindu Centre. Eighteen members were present in November, fifteen in March and eight in July. Two of the three meetings were quorate.

In meetings these topics were discussed: SACRE Constitution and Code of Conduct, NASACRE training, Annual RE Conference, GCSE data, SACRE membership, working party for collective worship, SACRE website, Swindon Interfaith group, local trusts and academisation, LTLRE Hub meetings, WIRE award, the SACRE regional conference, support for individual schools, National Content Standard.

Swindon SACRE have a web page for their work and guidance:

<https://hubforeducation.swindon.gov.uk/Page/34073>

Overview – Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC)

In line with decisions made by the Agreed Syllabus working party, the revised RE Today Syllabus was launched for schools in September 2022. In the academic year 2021-22, the RE adviser developed ‘refresher’ training for schools, which ran over various sessions in April, May, June and September.

The Agreed Syllabus Conference reconvened to consider the options for the next syllabus review which will be due in 2027. An Agreed Syllabus Conference will be formed in the academic year 2024-25 and work will begin on reviewing and updating the Agreed Syllabus, ready for schools to use in September 2027.

2. Religious Education

Locally Agreed Syllabus and RE provision – it continues to be the case that the majority of schools, including academies and Church of England schools, are using the Locally Agreed Syllabus for all or part of their RE curriculum. Many schools also use the resource Understanding Christianity to supplement teaching about Christianity.

National Updates - SACRE have looked at the Ofsted Report for RE - *Deep and Meaningful* and the National Content Standard. This can be read [here](#).

Deep and Meaningful considers the evidence gathered through Ofsted inspections and research visits. The report is split into findings in primary schools and those in secondary schools; it includes evidence from Reception Year to sixth form. It evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of RE, building on the work of our 2021 [research review into RE](#). It considers:

- curriculum: the content that pupils learn in RE lessons
- pedagogy: how schools teach and implement the curriculum
- assessment: how teachers check the extent to which pupils have learned the curriculum
- how RE is organised in schools
- teacher education and professional development

The report identifies both strengths and weaknesses in RE. The report aims to illuminate effective practice and recommendations to help wider stakeholders, leaders and teachers understand how they can make sure that all pupils leave school with the depth of knowledge that they need about a range of religious and non-religious traditions. It explains what it means for pupils to have a meaningful understanding of the complex and diverse world that they live in.

SACRE have noted and discussed the implications that these documents might have on RE in Swindon. They have considered any necessary support and action that is required in Swindon as well as how this might feed into their Agreed Syllabus Conference.

Monitoring – SACRE has continued to monitor Ofsted reports as they are published. SACRE have observed a growing trend of Ofsted looking at British Values as well as curriculum and assessment in foundation subjects.

Exam outcomes KS4 Summer 2023

SWINDON GCSE RS results 2023	Exam Board	NoR(Number on Roll)	Number entered	% entered	Grades 9-5	Grades 9-1	average points
ABBAY PARK SCHOOL	AQA	208	21	10.6	59.1	40.9	4.4
COMMONWEAL SCHOOL		221	59	26.7	67.8	54.2	4.8
KINGSDOWN SCHOOL (RLT)	AQA	167	31	18	86.7	76.7	6.1
LAWN MANOR ACADEMY	AQA	191	29	15.2	62.1	51.7	4.6
SWINDON ACADEMY	AQA	191	5	2.6	80.0	80.0	8.0
THE DORCAN ACADEMY	AQA	132	129	97.7	40.3	21.0	5.6
THE RIDGEWAY SCHOOL	AQA	302	42	13.9	88.1	83.3	6.5
GREAT WESTERN ACADEMY	AQA	151	32	21.2	75.0	62.5	
THE LYDIARD PARK ACADEMY	OCR	222	26	11.7	73.1	65.4	5.5
HIGHWORTH WARNEFORD SCHOOL	EDUCAS	182	24	13.2	75.0	100.0	6.2
NOVA HREOD ACADEMY	EDEXCEL	160	11	6.9	81.8	72.7	5.5
ST JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC COLLEGE	PEARSON	272	269	98.9	69.1	56.5	5.5
		2399	678	28.26			

Observations –

- No schools are following the locally agreed syllabus recommendation of all students taking an accredited course in RS at KS4
- Most students are entered at The Dorcan Academy and St Joseph's Catholic College
- Three schools (Abbey Park School, Swindon Academy and Nova Herod Academy) have approximately 10% or less population taking GCSE RS

- Although some schools have low uptake, in these schools outcomes are sometimes high

The Wire Award - the Widening Diversity in Religious Education (WIRE) award is an opportunity available to all schools in the Swindon SACRE area. To achieve the Wire award a school must:

- Send a teacher to at least one continuing professional development (CPD) opportunity for RE. This could be the conference, or a local RE hub.
- Put on a 'faith day' or a celebration of RE to which a local SACRE member can be invited. Or a school might enter a national RE competition.
- Take pupils on a visit to a place of worship that is not the majority religion of their school. For most schools in Swindon, this will be from a faith other than Christianity.

The Award has been created to further SACRE's priority to encourage mutual understanding of different faiths, and to break down stereotypes and barriers. In the year 23-24, three schools have met the criteria for the award.

For those schools having already received the WIRE award, the WIRE award 'Gold' has now been created. To achieve the gold award schools will extend their already good practice in RE to complete tasks to do with extending their impact, working with parents, communities and other schools and teachers.

Swindon Learn, Teach, Lead RE Hub (LTLRE) - This project has been running for many years now and aims to develop leaders of RE in both primary and secondary schools, as well as providing networking and CPD for all local teachers of RE. Hub leaders get access to high quality training and facilitate three hubs per year aimed at both primary and secondary teachers, and teaching assistants.

Swindon SACRE as uses some of its budget through the Adviser to support the development of the hubs. Emma Ainslie-King, RE teacher at Commonweal School, is the Secondary Hub leader and Emma Batcup, RE Lead at Brookfield Primary School is the Primary Hub leader. Three meetings took place this year. The group explored the Ofsted RE report *Deep and Meaningful*, shared experiences of an Ofsted 'Deep Dive' and how to prepare well for one, and the new Worldviews handbook and shared resources for improving diversity within worldviews.

Annual conference – the annual RE conference, titled 'Let's Talk About Race' was held at Engineers' House in January 2024. Ten Swindon delegates attended alongside colleagues from surrounding regional areas, which is a positive number and reflects the value of this event. Keynote speaker Alysia-Lara Ayonrinde, National Education Lead for Racial Justice spoke about global Christianity and why representation is important. Teachers attended

workshops on subjects including Flourishing Diversity in Primary RE, Decolonising Sanatan Dharma and *All God's Children: Exploring the Impact of the slave economy on Bristol Cathedral* to name but a few. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with clear messages about how learning from the day would be used in schools.

LTLRE conference – This year's regional 'Area 2' conference for LTLRE was titled 'Knowledge-rich RE: Encounters, conversations and interactions' and was held with University of Bristol and the Shared Space Project. Several Swindon teachers attended. Keynote speakers were Tim Hutchins and Joyce Millar. Workshops included: exploring Jewish text and encountering pluralism in Jewish communities, encounters with paganism and bringing diverse lived religion into the classroom.

Communication - termly newsletters have continued, with all schools receiving a SACRE newsletter three times per year. The newsletter contains contact details for various communities and resources, as well as ideas for the classroom and information on upcoming events and CPD.

3. Collective worship

Policies, guidance and support - SACRE developed the current collective worship guidance in 2018. As part of the self-evaluation and development process next academic year, SACRE will survey schools and review guidance on collective worship. Work has begun to review and update the collective worship guidance.

Determinations - During this reporting period there were no determinations applied for.

4. Links with other organisations

NASACRE – Swindon SACRE continues to maintain its membership to the National Association of SACREs. This provides access to important updates on national issues and the use of recommended templates for policies and guidance documents.

In this period, SACRE members attended training on:

SW SACRE Annual Conference

NASACRE Annual Conference

NASACRE training on West Hill Awards, Collective Worship

LTLRE – as outlined above, Swindon SACRE continues to have significant commitment and practical involvement with the Learn, Teach, Lead RE programme. The adviser to SACRE assists in the planning and running of meetings, and communicates with hub members

regularly with RE updates and information via email. She is also on the steering committee for the project across the wider region.

Diocese – SACRE maintains strong working relationships with the Church of England Bristol Diocese. Through contractual agreements, the Adviser to SACRE is also a schools Adviser for Bristol Diocese and as such a large amount of goodwill and RE development takes place in Swindon through this connection. Church schools are able to ensure continuity and consistency in their support and advice for RE, and community schools are able, through contractual arrangements to access 2 hour sessions of support time as requested and arranged.

Other local involvement

Governor training – SACRE has previously provided training for Swindon governors on RE, SMSC and collective worship. This has been through the annual NASACRE membership.

SWARE (South West Advisers of RE) – the Adviser continues to be an active member of this cross-authority group. Meeting three times a year, advisers across the South West are able to share resources, policies and processes for effective and impactful advisory work.

5. SACRE arrangements

Organisation -

Chair – from September 2023 – Fay Howard

Clerk – from April 2024 – Annie Vickers

Local Authority link officer - Steve Bogg (sbogg@swindon.gov.uk)

Adviser – Julia Watts

- The revision of the SACRE constitution was finalised in July 2024.
- SACRE has established a new website. Useful information such as the constitution, handbook and the agreed syllabus can be found here. [SACRE \(External\) | Swindon Hub for Education](#)

Membership – as reported in the introduction, all meetings were quorate.

Members of SACRE 2023 - 2024:

<p>Group A: Christian Denominations and Other Religions or Religious Denominations (12)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Malkit Babbra, Sikh Community 2. Jo Backus, Buddhist Community 3. Saira Banu, Muslim Community 4. David Burbidge, Baptist Church 5. Rahima Malik, Muslim Community 6. Dinesh Patel, Hindu Community 7. Pradeep Bhardwaj, Hindu Community 8. Gemma Parkinson, Swindon Humanists 9. Brian Whitaker, Swindon Evangelical Alliance 10. 11. 12. <p>3x vacancies</p>	<p>Group C: Teacher Associations (8)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Subhina Khatoon, Primary 2. Tracy Mason, Special 3. Lottie O'Brien, Secondary 4. Helen Redhead, Primary 5. Alana Walch, Primary 6. Ray Williams, Primary 7. 8. <p>2x vacancies</p>
<p>Group B: The Church of England (3)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Laura Firth 2. Laura Harris 3. <p>1x vacancy</p>	<p>Group D: The Local Authority (5)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Councillor Repi Begum 2. Councillor Leon Grother 3. Councillor Fay Howard 4. Councillor Anabelle Pegado 5. Councillor Adam Poole
<p>Co-Opted: Fidelma Meehan, Baha'i Community</p>	<p>Support Officers: Julia Watts (September 23 - December 24), SACRE Advisor Rebekah Guy (October 24 onwards), SACRE Advisor Steve Bogg, Commissioner for Education</p>