



## **West Sussex SACRE Annual Report for 2023**

The role of SACRE is to provide advice and support, and to monitor the provision and quality of Religious Education and Collective Worship in schools in West Sussex.

Welcome to the Annual Report for West Sussex County Council SACRE, covering the year 2023. The report sets out the matters that have been covered by SACRE during the academic year plus the advice and support given to schools. It has been my privilege to continue serving as the Chairman during this time.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved in education across West Sussex, be they head-teachers, teachers, governors, administrators, classroom assistants or parents, for the dedication and determination they have shown to continue to provide an excellent educational experience for all our children and young people.

Thanks to the excellent administrative and technical support from West Sussex County Council's Democratic Services, SACRE was able to meet in hybrid form for each of the three agreed meetings throughout the year. Our attendance face to face has improved during the year and members are encouraged to attend meetings in person.

We have had a few changes of personnel in SACRE during the year. We would like to particularly thank Katherine Delamora (Senior Adviser) and Jack Bacon (Clerk) for their hard work and commitment to ensuring SACRE runs smoothly. I would like to express a huge thanks to Paul Wagstaff (LEA) for his continued support during his time with West Sussex and was disappointed when his resignation was announced in August. We wish him well in his new role as Director of Education for Luton Borough Council. Steve Nyakatawa was appointed Interim Assistant Director of Education and Skills and attended his first meeting on 20 November 2023. SACRE is also grateful for the ongoing support from Derry Richardson and her team, their help has been invaluable this year.

Karen Hammond continues as External Consultant for SACRE and we are all very grateful for her continued support, knowledge, experience and guidance in all that we do.

A working group was established to write the SACRE Development Plan and lead on actions from the SEF review. Also, during the year, a number of members have accessed the online training available through the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE). We have been working through our Development Plan and have been successful in the areas of creating active links between the Local Education Authority and SACRE and in beginning to increase member participation. However, we still have considerable work to do to operate effectively in our relationship with schools and in increasing and utilising our members' skills.

My sincere thanks go to all our members and officers for the work that has been accomplished during the year.

I commend this Annual Report to all its readers.

*Richard Burrett*

Chairman of West Sussex County Council SACRE

## **Introduction**

### **SACRE Statutory Duties**

The Education Reform Act 1988 required Local Education Authorities to convene a SACRE consisting of members appointed by the Authority to represent:

- **Group A:** Christian denominations and other religions and religious denominations
- **Group B:** The Church of England
- **Group C:** Teachers' Associations
- **Group D:** The Local Education Authority

The main functions of SACRE include:

- Addressing issues relating to RE and Collective Worship in local schools and other educational establishments.
- Developing ways of supporting schools with the delivery of the Local Agreed Syllabus and RE curriculum as well as monitoring this delivery.
- Developing and maintaining links with local and national faith communities
- Considering applications for determinations from head teachers. This is an application that the school be released from the requirements for Collective Worship to be of a mainly Christian character.
- Producing an annual report of its work.

### **Purpose of the Report**

The Education Act 1996, Section 391 (6) and (7) requires that each year the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) of each Local Education Authority will 'publish a report as to the exercise of its functions and any action taken by representative groups on the Council during the last preceding year.'

## West Sussex County Council SACRE

SACRE met three times during 2023.

The attendance, by Committee, is set out below.

<b>Committee</b>	<b>27 February 2023</b>	<b>29 June 2023</b>	<b>20 November 2023</b>	<b>Possible maximum attendances at each meeting</b>
Committee A	5	5	9	13
Committee B	4	1	4	4
Committee C	4	3	3	6
Committee D	7	5	7	8
Co-optees	0	1	1	2
<b>Total Members</b>	20	15	24	33

External Consultant for SACRE	1	1	1	1
Local Authority Officers	3	2	2	3

We have a broad membership that represents the religious diversity within the local community. This is regularly reviewed, and communities are contacted in order to increase their representation when necessary. SACRE members of faith communities visit schools and are involved in individual projects. It was agreed that all new members of SACRE should receive an induction outlining their roles and responsibilities. Current members of SACRE received training on the individual and collective responsibilities of SACRE.

Each meeting includes updates from the Local Authority Officers and the External Consultant for SACRE. Through the latter's reports the Council has been appraised of various national updates.

The Council has also reviewed or discussed:

- The Development Plan
- Local draft GCSE results
- Support and training for schools
- Updates on the Agreed Syllabus
- Approval of questionnaires to be circulated to primary and secondary schools.
- Primary and secondary school Governors' briefing paper
- WSCC website and text having been updated
- External Consultant attendance at NASACRE annual conference and AGM on 22 May 2023.
- Discussed "Does Government do God?" published by Colin Bloom - Independent Faith Engagement Adviser.

This academic year a SACRE Development Working Group was established which has met three times, twice face-to-face and once virtually.

Meetings continue to be hybrid although members are encouraged to attend in person.

**The number of schools within West Sussex is as follows:**

	<b>Primary</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>All-Through Schools</b>	<b>Special</b>	<b>Alternative Provision College</b>
Community	85	12		9	2
Foundation	1	1		1	0
Voluntary Aided (CofE)	22	2			
Voluntary Aided (RC)	10	2			
Voluntary Controlled (CofE)	46	1			0
Academy	63	19		2	0
Free Schools	1	1	2		0
<b>Total</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2</b>

**Total number of schools in West Sussex: 286**

## **The Local Agreed Syllabus**

The Local Agreed Syllabus was reviewed and updated in 2020 but publication was delayed until 22 April 2021 because of the COVID pandemic. The syllabus is available online for all schools in West Sussex.

## **Standards and monitoring of RE**

SACRE approved a primary and secondary school questionnaire which was circulated to schools at the end of September 2023. It was hoped that the results would provide SACRE with a deeper understanding of the delivery of Religious Education and Collective Worship.

West Sussex SACRE is beginning the review of the current Agreed Syllabus and gathering information to assist in the writing of the next Agreed Syllabus which is due to be agreed in 2026.

However, the returns were disappointing and in fact provided us with little information.

- Primary: 54 out of a possible 228
- Secondary: 12 out of a possible 38

It has been suggested SACRE recirculates the questionnaires, emphasising that delivery of Religious Education is a legal requirement and SACRE has a statutory duty to monitor and evaluate provision. The LEA provided excellent support for the distribution of the questionnaires.

SACRE also produced guidance to advise and support Governors about their role in relation to Religious Education and Collective Worship.

West Sussex SACRE continues to try to support schools, especially where there are concerns about compliance, time allocation or low take up in secondary schools of Religious Studies GCSE and A level.

SACRE has received no formal complaints regarding RE provision or quality this year.

## **Collective Worship**

SACRE encourages all schools to comply with their legal duty to provide a daily act of collective worship for their pupils. This may take place at any time of day in class, year group, or whole school settings. West Sussex SACRE believes that acts of collective worship or spiritual reflection should be meaningful and relevant to all those present.

Schools may apply to SACRE for a determination in order to provide collective worship of a non-Christian or other form. No schools have done so during this academic year. There was one complaint registered with the local authority in 2023 relating to attendance at collective worship. As in previous years, no determinations were requested by schools.

### **Links with other bodies**

West Sussex SACRE is a member of the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE). Through the year SACRE members were informed of developments in RE from NASACRE, several members of SACRE have attended training sessions. One member of SACRE attended the NASACRE conference and reported back to members.

### **West Sussex County Council arrangements for SACRE**

During the academic year 2022-2023 the Local Education Authority has financially supported SACRE through the allocation of officers and other resources.

Staffing costs have been covered to provide officers from Democratic Services to fulfil the administrative preparation and clerking of SACRE meetings. Additional officer and technology resources have also been allocated to ensure that SACRE meetings could be held via video conference and live streamed.

The costs of the SACRE External Consultant are met through Local Authority funds.

An officer in the Local Education Authority's Democratic Services Section acts as Clerk to SACRE, advising on governance matters and acting as a link between the Local Education Authority and SACRE.

In addition, the Democratic Services Team Manager provides professional support and advice to SACRE, principally on matters of governance and matters relating to the work of the Council and its Committees.

### **Membership**

#### **Committee A – Faith Group Representatives:**

Baha'i – Mrs Meenou Jones  
Baptist – Vacancy  
Free Churches – Rev David Pitkeathly  
Hindu – Mr Ashwin Soni  
Humanists UK – Ms Philippa Elliott  
Jewish – Mrs Barbara Bell

Methodist – Vacancy  
Muslim – Mr Arif Syed  
Quaker – Ms Maria Hock  
Roman Catholic – Mr Peter Ward  
Salvation Army – Major Mike Warner  
Sikh – Mrs Divinder Kaur Ghundale  
United Reformed Church – Rev Helen Higgin-Botham

**Committee B - Church of England Representatives:**

Mrs Rosie Black  
Fr Ben Scott  
Mr Andrew Simpson  
Mrs Angela Smith (Vice-Chairman)

**Committee C - Teachers of Religious Education:**

Rev Chrissie Millwood, The Holy Trinity CofE Secondary School, Crawley  
Ms Helen Elphick – Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee School  
Teachers – Vacancy  
National Education Union – Ms Anne Barker  
NASUWT, The Teachers’ Union - Vacancy  
Two union vacancies

**Committee D - Elected Members of the County Council:**

Cllr Zack Ali  
Cllr Brenda Burgess  
Cllr Richard Burrett (Chairman)  
Cllr John Dabell  
Cllr Nigel Jupp  
Cllr Kirsty Lord  
Cllr Katie Nagel  
Cllr Jacky Pendleton

**Co-Opted members:**

Mrs Joanna Beer  
Mrs Grace Waker

**SACRE support to schools:**

Members of SACRE hosted 2 special events for teachers, headteachers and governors.



These were entitled "Religions and World Faiths Roadshows". These were hosted by two local secondary schools:

- Tanbridge House High School, Horsham
- Bishop Luffa CofE School, Chichester.

Representatives of world faith groups were present to share information and discuss resources available to schools. The faith groups prepared displays and literature. Attendees at the events found it extremely beneficial.

SACRE members found it particularly useful to meet in an informal environment and speak to other members, given SACRE only meets three times a year.

Further comments/observations:

- Teachers demonstrated a clear hunger and desire for RE and gratefulness for the resources and wider support on offer.
- An infant school teacher highlighted the need for more age appropriate resources.
- Members were asked to consider what SACRE can provide in terms of RE learning, provision and support.
- Members were asked to support Collective Worship and give presentations.
- Teachers requested an annual event.
- The stall layout was good as it allowed attendees to move around with ease as well as see every stall at a glance.

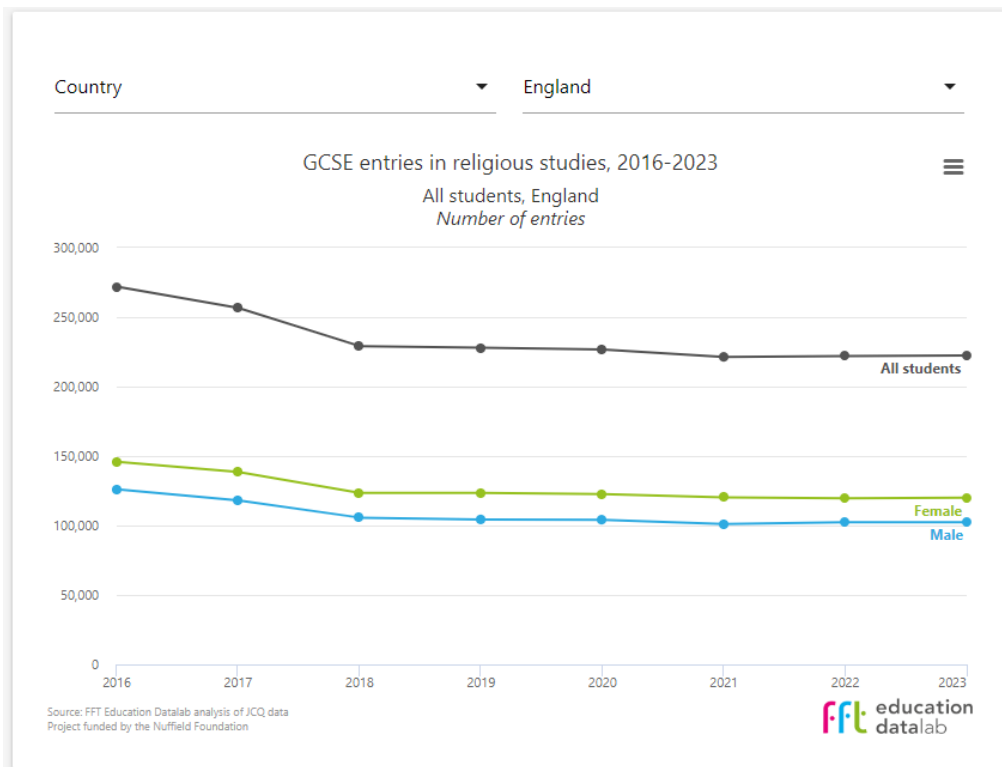
## **Religious Studies 2023 Analysis**

### **GCSE**

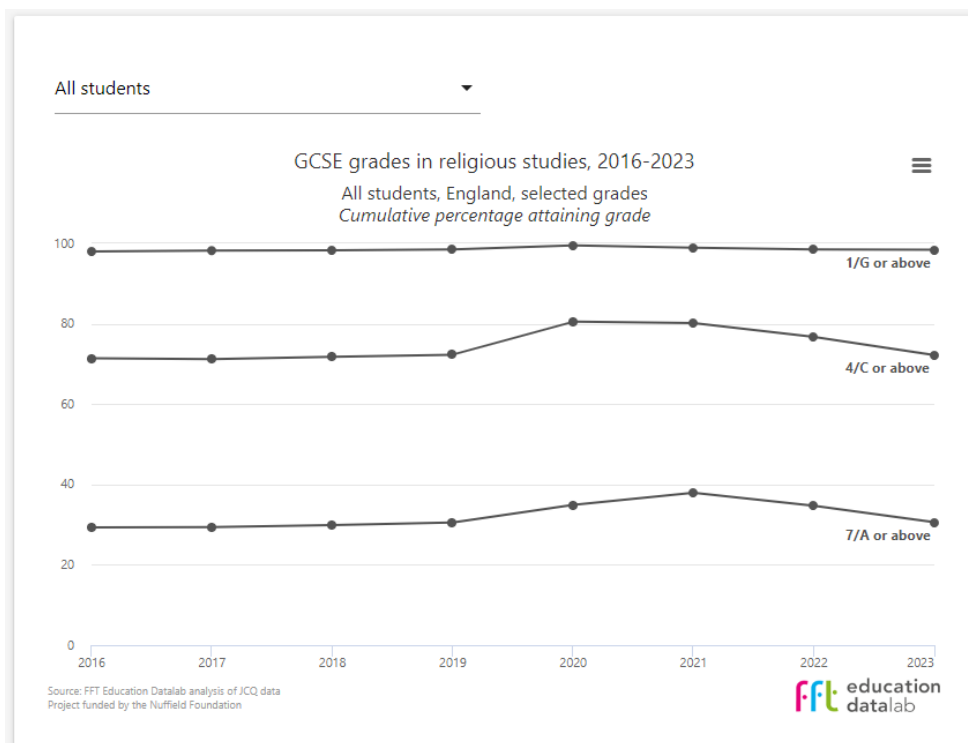
Grades were awarded following different processes in 2020 and 2021 [and 2022] after public exams were cancelled in all constituent countries of the UK. This led to a large increase in the share of top grades awarded.

Source: <https://results.ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/gcse/religious-studies.php?v=20230817>

Entries in Religious Studies have decreased a little across the UK over the last five years. The -2.1% change compared to a change of +6.4% in all GCSE entries over the last five years. Over the same period, the 16-year-old population has changed by approximately 9.0%. For West Sussex, compared to the national figures, there was an uptake of 22.1% compared to 25.7% nationally.

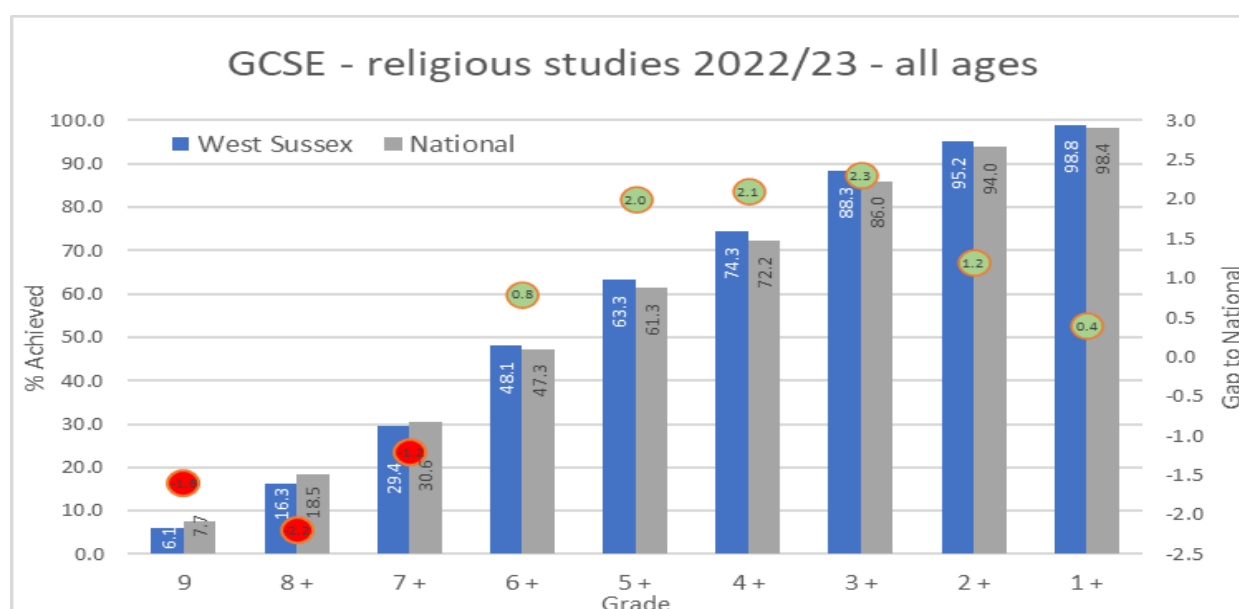


Across the UK, a greater proportion of students achieved good passes in Religious Studies in 2023 compared to all GCSE subjects. A total of 72.2% of pupils achieved grade 4/C or higher in Religious Studies compared to 68.2% for all subjects. In West Sussex the achievement was 74.3%, 2.1% better than the national figure.



The overall comparison by grade is shown in the table below:

GCSE - Religious Studies 2022/23 - all ages									
Grade Area	9	8 +	7 +	6 +	5 +	4 +	3 +	2 +	1 +
West Sussex	6.1	16.3	29.4	48.1	63.3	74.3	88.3	95.2	98.8
National	7.7	18.5	30.6	47.3	61.3	72.2	86.0	94.0	98.4
Gap to National	-1.6	-2.2	-1.2	+0.8	+2.0	+2.1	+2.3	+1.2	+0.4



Source: <https://analytics.ofqual.gov.uk/apps/GCSE/County/>

In West Sussex the achievement at a Grade 4 “standard” pass was 74.3%, 2.1% better than the national figure. Similarly, the result at Grade 5, a “strong” pass was 2.0% better, at 63.3%, than compared to nationally, 61.3%.

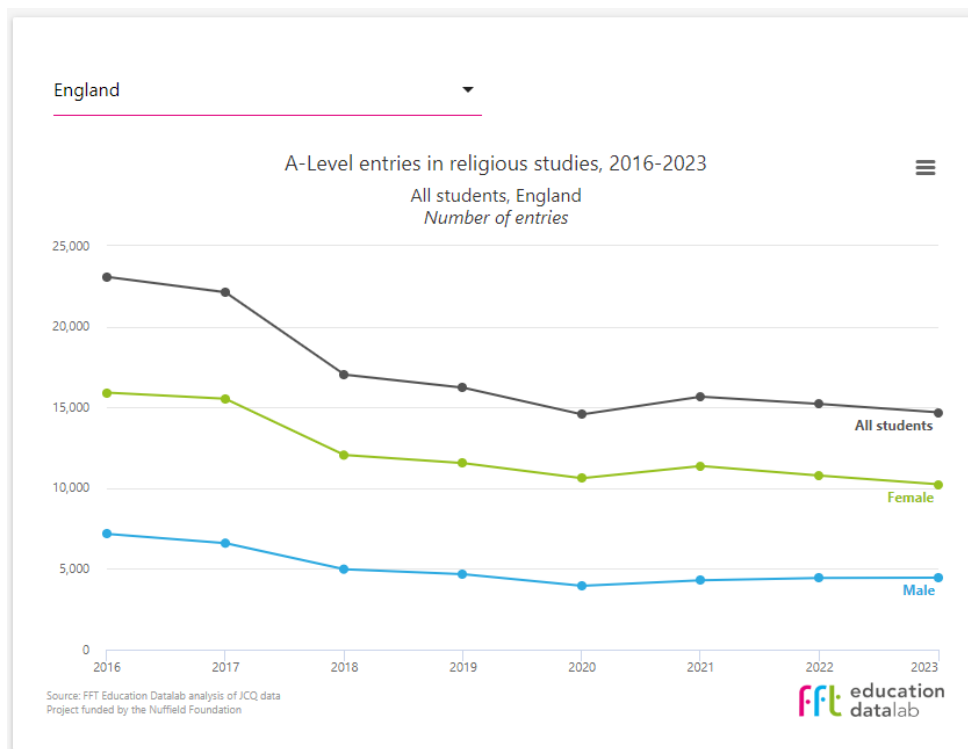
However, the highest grades, at 7, 8 and 9 all saw that the national figure was higher than the West Sussex figure of between 1.2% and 2.2%.

## A-Level

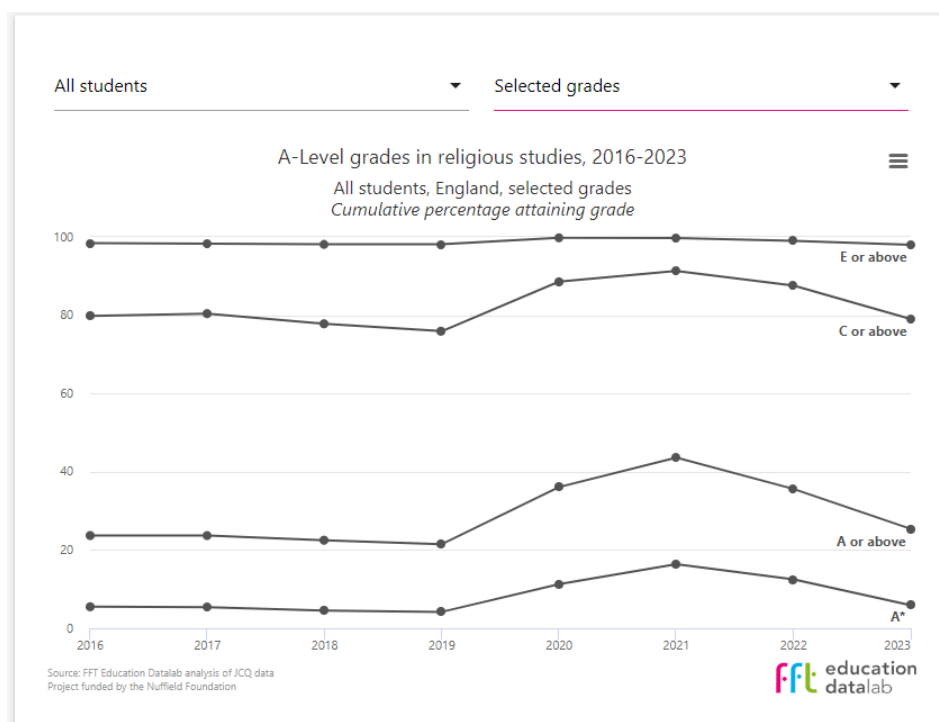
Source: <https://results.ftteducationdatalab.org.uk/a-level/religious-studies.php?v=20230817>

Entries in Religious Studies have decreased across the UK over the last five years. The -13.2% change compared to a change of +8.3% in all A-Level entries over the last five years. Over the same period, the 18-year-old population has

changed by approximately 4.5%.



Across the UK, a broadly similar proportion of students achieved the top grades in Religious Studies in 2023 as did so across all A-Level subjects. A total of 25.7% of pupils achieved A\*-A grades in Religious Studies compared to 27.2% for all subjects.



'Student counts and Results - A level by region and subject (end of 16-18 study)' for All state-funded schools, All state-funded schools and colleges and Total Religious Studies in West Sussex for 2022/23.

<b>State funded pupils in schools</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>A*</b>	<b>A* - A</b>	<b>A* - B</b>	<b>A* - C</b>	<b>A* - D</b>	<b>A* - E</b>
All state-funded students	National	4.2%	20.8%	50.2%	76.0%	91.0%	97.7%
All state-funded schools	South East	4.4%	20.7%	51.8%	75.7%	91.6%	98.4%
All state-funded schools	West Sussex	5.8%	21.7%	44.9%	71.0%	87.0%	97.1%
Gap to national		1.6%	0.9%	-5.3%	-5.0%	-4.0%	-0.6%

In West Sussex the achievement at lower grades was significantly less than those of the national figures. A\* - B, A\* - C and A\* - D, was between 4.0% and 5.3% lower than the national equivalents and to those in the South East.

However, at the highest grades, A\* and A\* - A, the national figures were lower than the West Sussex figure by 1.6% and 0.9% respectively. For the South East the gaps were 1.4% and 1.0% respectively.

<b>State funded pupils in schools AND colleges</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>A*</b>	<b>A* - A</b>	<b>A* - B</b>	<b>A* - C</b>	<b>A* - D</b>	<b>A* - E</b>
All students	National	6.1%	25.7%	55.6%	79.2%	92.3%	98.1%
All state-funded schools/colleges	South East	4.0%	20.2%	51.2%	74.5%	90.7%	98.2%
All state-funded schools/colleges	West Sussex	5.8%	21.7%	44.9%	71.0%	87.0%	97.1%
Gap to national		-0.3%	-4.0%	-10.7%	-8.2%	-5.3%	-1.0%

When including all students and in colleges, the gaps to national were wider and the higher grades were broadly similar or lower than the national figures. However, at the highest grades, A\* and A\* - A, the South East figures were lower than the West Sussex figure by 1.8% and 1.5% respectively.

Source: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/1555b2d2-975d-4de0-2fa9-08dbf56f0faa> (SE and West Sussex)

Source: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/c8373c46-2710-430e-fac9-08dbf5f3097e> (England)

