



Wiltshire SACRE's Annual Report September 2023-July 2024

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1. Statutory Function of SACRE for a Local Authority

A Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) is an independent body in the United Kingdom that considers the provision of religious education in the area under the jurisdiction of its Local Authority. The SACRE advises and is empowered to require a review of the locally agreed syllabus for Religious Education (RE). The legal constitution of SACREs is set out in the [1996 Education Act Paragraph 390 subsection 4](#).

The representative groups required by this subsection are:

- a group to represent Christian denominations and other religions and denominations that, in the opinion of the authority, appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area;
- a group of persons to represent the Church of England;
- a group to represent associations representing teachers as, in the opinion of the authority, ought to be represented, having regard to the circumstances of the area; and
- a group to represent the authority.

Each SACRE has wide-ranging statutory powers including:

- ratify syllabi written for them by the Agreed Syllabus Conference of their Local Authority;
- improve quality of Collective Worship;
- monitor quality of RE teaching and SMSCD provision and assisting where necessary or informing head teachers or governing bodies of difficulties;
- recommend speakers;
- recommend places of worship to visit;
- design supplementary teaching materials;
- contribute to teacher training and teachers' in-service training, and;
- foster interfaith and community links especially to the end of community cohesion.

2. Introduction, overview of SACRE's activities and next steps – Chair, Celia Hicks

I am delighted to contribute to this year's annual report, 2023-24, in a year in which SACRE has achieved so much I am also excited to add some outcomes from July 2024, evidence of its success!

Since September 2023, with many new members joining our SACRE, we now represent a diverse and wide range of views and faiths and are delighted that they are taking an active role in ensuring we are able to advise and support the LA to deliver great RE in Wiltshire in the coming years.

My thanks go to all the members of SACRE who have worked hard to achieve this and to our clerk, who works tirelessly to support this advisory council. Thanks also go to our Adviser, Laura Harris, from the Diocese of Bristol, whose energy and support showed a real commitment to ensuring we will deliver a new and exciting Agreed Syllabus that reflects the move to 'Worldviews' that will prepare our children for the complex world in which they are growing up. Since March 2024, Laura has no longer been our Adviser but has gone on to become the Deputy Director of the Diocese of Bristol. We wish her every success and are very grateful for the expertise and advice she has given us over the last few years.

SACRE would also like to thank Nicola Coupe, from the Diocese of Salisbury, who so generously gives us her time, and we wish her well in her retirement, she will be sorely missed.

I hope you read this report with the same excitement that I feel about the activity of SACRE and share my optimism for what promises to be a productive year ahead.

Our notable successes are:

- **Four SACRE meetings:** 20 September 2023, 06 December 2023, 13 March 2024 and 02 July 2024 – well attended (more details below)
- **Three Agreed Syllabus Working Party meetings,** 30 November 2023, 11 January 2024 and 06 June 2024 continued from the previous year (more details below)
- **The creation of a RE survey sent to all schools** (summer term 2024) to understand what Headteachers/RE Leaders felt was going well in RE, the current agreed syllabus and to seek their input into a new Agreed Syllabus. Over 45 schools responded to the survey
- **Three Religious Education Subject Leader Network Meetings** (for teachers): 08 November 2023, 18 January 2024 and 18 June 2024. Attended by over 30 teachers
- **RE Hub meetings** led by teachers who receive training from the Diocese of Salisbury and financed by a grant from the Sarum St Michael Trust
- **Agreement on a new Agreed Syllabus** – following on from the work of the Agreed Syllabus Working party, the introduction of the Agreed Conferences (2024-25) to review and refresh the agreed syllabus and considerable work to review existing syllabi, a unanimous decision was taken at our final meeting (12 December 2024) to recommend that the LA purchase and adapt the new Dorset Agreed Syllabus for RE with a view to trialling it in schools from January 2026
- **New comprehensive guidance on Collective Worship** has been produced and shared with schools followed up by online training (21 May 2024). 37 Headteachers attended the training. The guidance can be accessed on [Right Choice](#). Once again, our thanks go to Nicola Coupe for her hard work and producing something practical for our schools
- **School website survey and targeted support to schools** - from this survey SACRE members identified schools that might benefit from support from our Adviser. Four to five schools were identified in agreement with the School Effectiveness Team
- **LA Faith Communities Network** – collaboration with this network has helped SACRE secure new members
- **Learning Outside the Classroom guidance** from the LA team, who reviewed SACRE's RE Visits and Visitors list for schools and produced guidance on '[planning, preparing, visiting and evaluating a visit to a place of worship](#)'.
- **A RE Newsletter** is shared with schools

- **Adviser and members support via email** with responses from schools like: “Thank you for your email regarding information and direction, it was much appreciated. As a school who is due a SIAMS visit imminently, your advice was timely!”
- **SACRE sent four congratulatory letters to schools** on the outcome of their Ofsted inspection and specifically for Ofsted’s comment on how they taught RE so well (details below)
- **SACRE sent three congratulatory emails to schools** for their contribution to the Spirited Arts competition (details below)

Next steps

SACRE, with the support of the LA, have established working parties to review and adapt the Dorset AS with a view to launching an engaging, accessible and comprehensive Agreed Syllabus for phasing in to schools from January 2026. This is a pivotal moment for ensuring we deliver high quality RE in Wiltshire schools.

A conference in which to launch the Agreed Syllabus is being planned for November 2025.

Raise the profile and expectations around the delivery of RE across all phases of Wiltshire schools.

Work is underway with School Effectiveness to ensure appropriate support and training is provided.

Celia Hicks – Co-chair of SACRE

3. CPD and training

The LA continues to run online network meetings three times a year for subject leaders, and these are very well attended with over 30 delegates at each session. Over the last year, the main focus of these meetings has been on assessment; getting the balance right between teacher workload, making summative judgements about standards and what is useful and helps teachers plan the next steps. In addition, one of our teacher SACRE members, Helen Cooke ran a session (Nov 24) offering ideas for Interfaith week based on the book Hats of Faith. The library and resource centre has subsequently built up a resource bank to support this topic.

The Diocese of Salsibury continues to run free face to face hub meetings led by teachers for teachers and these are organised regionally to cover the Swindon, Trowbridge, Salisbury and Marlborough areas. Hub leaders also respond to requests for help.

In addition, there have been opportunities to attend annual regional conferences:

- South West SACRE conference 04 March 2024 (Online Live)
- ‘Knowledge-rich RE’: Encounters, conversations and interaction - conference, University of Bristol 28 June 2024 organised by Diocese of Bristol
- ‘CREative, RE inspiring RE’ conference – 19 March 2024 co-created by a working party made up of members from 3 SACRES: Wiltshire; Dorset and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole

- Feedback from teachers is overwhelmingly positive with teachers saying, for example: “I have an improved understanding of how to plan from the syllabus”

4. Challenges

The [Ofsted Subject report: religious education \(17 Apr 24\)](#) painted a negative picture of the current state of RE teaching nationally. Our own RE survey showed that in Wiltshire a significant number of schools do not fully understand what they should be teaching and are relying on resources that are no longer fit for purpose to meet the requirements of RE teaching.

In addition, a recent survey undertaken by NASACRE suggests that some of our secondary schools may not be meeting their statutory duty and allocate insufficient teaching time to RE.

5. Overview – SACRE meetings and Agreed Syllabus Working Party Meetings

SACRE MEETING (1/4) 20 September 2023 4pm-5.30pm (online)

Quorate – 8 members attended from Groups A, B & C

Adviser to SACRE – Laura Harris, Co-Chairs Celia Hicks and Cllr Antonio Piazza

- Adviser presented on ‘what is a worldview’
- Jo Backus shared the philosophy of [Indra's net](#) (also known as Indra’s pearls)
- Adviser gave an overview of the Development Plan 2022-23
- Members had been sent updates from the dioceses, Hubs and schools that had achieved the WIRE Award:
 - Hardenhuish School
 - Chapmanslade CofE Primary
 - Box CofE Primary
 - Stratford-sub–Castle CofE Primary
- Nicola Coupe- update from the Collective Worship Group on the draft Collective Worship Guidance

AGREED SYLLABUS WORKING PARTY MEETING (1/3) 30 November 2023 4pm-5.30pm (online) – 6 members attended

Adviser to SACRE – Laura Harris

- Aim of this meeting was to review The new National Content Standard <https://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/rec/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/National-Content-Standard-for-Religious-Education-for-England.pdf> and set a timeline for actions including dates for future meetings, surveying schools and make a ‘decision’ on the content for the new syllabus
- A discussion took place regarding schools enquiring about RE Today’s and Kowpow’s resources (Kapow also create resources of other curriculum areas, e.g History etc).

Next steps agreed:

- Survey primary and secondary teachers on thoughts on the existing agreed syllabus and what they need next
- Teachers who attend network meetings are to be targeted
- Next meeting, 11 January 2024 – 4pm -5.30pm create the questions for the survey to send out the survey just after February half-term.

SACRE MEETING (2/4) 06 December 2023 4pm-5.30pm (online)

Quorate – 8 members attended from Groups A, B & C

Adviser to SACRE – Laura Harris, Co-Chairs Celia Hicks and Cllr Antonio Piazza

- Member, Cllr Boyd presented on her personal faith/worldview which was positively received by members
- Welcomed Cllr Allison Bucknell who presented on Wiltshire Council's priorities for community cohesion to identify how SACRE can support these as detailed in the SACRE development plan? Cllr gave an overview of the work of the Area Boards and Community Engagement Teams and invited a member to the LA's Faith Communities Network
- Nicola Coupe gave a detailed overview of the contents of the Collective Worship Guidance
- It was agreed that, for RE monitoring and support purposes, to offer 4 schools face-to-face visits from the Adviser
- It was agreed that SACRE would continue to check further LA maintained school websites for information regarding their RE offer

AGREED SYLLABUS WORKING PARTY MEETING (2/3) 11 January 2024 4pm-5.30pm (online) – 4 members attended

Adviser to SACRE – Laura Harris

- Focus for this meeting was to agree on the questions for the School Survey to present at the next SACRE meeting for approval.

SACRE MEETING (3/4) 13 March 2024 4pm-5.30pm (online)

Quorate – 9 members attended from Groups A, B & C

Adviser to SACRE – Laura Harris, Co-Chairs Celia Hicks and Cllr Antonio Piazza

- New members were welcomed:
 - Richard Sanderson – new Catholic member
 - Reuben Mann – new Free Churches member
- Amanda Butler, new Head of School Effectiveness, joined the meeting to meet members
- Member, Katherine Bloomer presented on her personal faith/worldview which was positively received by members
- Karen Linaker, Strategic & Partnerships Manager presented on the Faith Communities Network
- Clerk to forward the draft Agreed Syllabus survey to Nicola Coupe and Helen Cooke to share with hub leaders for their feedback on the questions. It was agreed that the final survey would be sent to schools after Easter
- Nicola Coupe confirmed details of the Collective Worship Guidance – process to deliver on 21 May 2024 (online) and upload all resources on Right Choice
- Ofsted reports – four congratulatory letters have been sent to:
 - King's Gate Primary School
 - Pembroke Park Primary School
 - Fynamore Primary School
 - Princecroft Primary School.
- Members agreed that the SACRE meetings should be on a Tuesday to ensure teacher members could fully engage in them.

SACRE MEETING (4/4) 02 July 2024 4pm-5.30pm (online)

Quorate – 7 members attended from Groups A, B & C

Co-Chairs Celia Hicks and Cllr Antonio Piazza

- Laura Harris, Adviser to SACRE, was unable to join the meeting due to illness
- New member was welcomed:
 - Emma Dixon, as Primary HT representative.
- Jamie Woodhouse presented on Sentientism – a worldview ‘naturalistic approach to valuing all living things’
- Member, Bal Kaur presented on her personal faith/worldview which was positively received by members
- Co-chair thanked Nicola Coupe, and her team, on producing the Collective Worship guidance for non-religious schools. An amazing number of HTs, 37, attended the launch on 21 May with positive feedback
- Congratulatory emails had been sent to schools contributing to the Spirited Arts competition –
 - Sutton Veny
 - South Wilts Grammar School for Girls
 - Winterbourne Earls
- Clerk has sent SACRE’s Annual report (2022-23) to the Department for Education, NASACRE and uploaded it on to Right Choice
- A post meeting note was added to the minutes from Amanda Butler – Head of School Effectiveness, regarding Laura Harris’ support as Adviser to SACRE. This is summary of that note:
 - The Diocese of Bristol had served notice to finish the contract in March 2025 and kindly offered to source a future provider for advisory support. As this had only left a proposed advisory support offer of six months (Sep 24 to Mar 25) and no definite replacement plans, SACRE has been actively looking at alternative options in line with the need to adopt a new Agreed Syllabus for 26/27. The contract ceased on 05 July 2024 in agreement with the Diocese of Bristol. SACRE is committed to ensure that this close working relationship continues and are thankful for their support so far and guidance going into 24/25 and beyond.
- Co-chair and other members commented on the good work Laura had achieved over the years and that she will be missed. Co-chair would do her best to fill in for Laura today for her parts of the agenda.

Jo Baccus is to update SACRE at the next meeting on what activities the Interfaith Group created in the past for Interfaith Week and how can SACRE ensure that schools are supported with Interfaith Week in November 2025.

AGREED SYLLABUS WORKING PARTY MEETING (3/3) 06 June 2024 4pm-5.30pm (online) – 4 members attended

Adviser to SACRE – Laura Harris

- The results from the survey (approximately 45) were discussed
- The power point presentation, 'Convening an ASC March 24' with a link to a recording from NASACRE's training on 'How to set up an agreed syllabus review/conference' was also discussed.

6. SACRE arrangements

Organisation -

Joint Chairs: Celia Hicks and Cllr Antonio Piazza

Clerk – Simone Kermode - SACRE@wiltshire.gov.uk

Local Authority link officer - Andrew Best (replaced by Amanda Butler, spring 2024) Amanda Butler left the LA Summer 2024.

Adviser – Laura Harris, Diocese of Bristol – left SACRE in the summer 2024.

7. SACRE membership (members highlighted in yellow joined Sep 23-Aug 24)

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE) MEMBERSHIP

Group A: Representatives from the Christian denominations and other religions and religious denominations

(11 votes - 3 votes for Free Churches, 2 for the RC Church and 1 vote each for representatives from the Muslim, Jewish, Sikh, Buddhist, Hindu and Humanism communities)

Buddhism	Jo Backus (Jul 15)
Buddhism	Tanya Dalley (Sep 24)
Catholic faith	Richard Sanderson (Mar 24)
Free Churches	Reuben Mann (Mar 24)
Islam	Jameelah and Omar Abdulshakour (Sep 24)
Jewish faith	Cllr Alexandra Boyd (Nov 22)
Sikhism faith	Bal Kaur (Jul 15)

Group B: Representatives from the Church of England

(5 votes – at least 2 from the Diocese of Salisbury and 1 from the Diocese of Bristol)

Diocese of Bristol	Katherine Bloomer (Mar 20)
Diocese of Salisbury	Helen Cooke (Mar 19)
Diocese of Salisbury	Nicola Coupe (Vice-Chair) (Oct 18)

Group C: Headteacher and Teacher Representatives

(7 votes – 3 votes for teachers of primary, secondary and special schools. 1 vote each for a Primary and Secondary Headteacher. 2 votes for school primary and secondary governor representatives from non-faith schools)

Secondary Headteacher	Vicky Bunting Head of RS for HT, Kingdown (Mar 15)
Secondary Teacher	Mark Perraton (Jul 18)
Primary Headteacher	Emma Dixon (Jul 24)
Primary Teacher	Hannah Crook (Mar 20)
Primary Teacher	Claire Brooks (Mar 20)
Primary Teacher	Amanda Garton (Feb 22)

Group D: The Local Authority representatives

(6 votes – 4 elected councillors, Director for Education/ representative, The Equality and Diversity Manager/representative)

LA Officer	Celia Hicks (Co-Chair)
Councillor	Stewart Palmen (Mar 22)
Councillor	Antonio Piazza (Co-Chair)

SACRE officers: (non-voting)

Clerk to SACRE	Simone Kermodé (Clerk)
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