

# **Buckinghamshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education**



## **Annual Report 2015-16**

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## Foreword from the Chair of SACRE

Bucks SACRE Report covering the period September 2015 to July 2016 from Val McFarlane chair of Bucks SACRE



This has been a significant year for us as we needed to complete the review and publish our Agreed Syllabus Challenging RE to cover the years 2016-2021. In addition thanks to the continuing support of BCC officers we have been able to plan for a website on the SchoolsWeb and our newsletter SACRED has gone from strength to strength.

We are thankful that we have the professional support of our Independent Consultant Adviser, Bill Moore, and the services of a most efficient clerk Allison Holley. Atifa Sayani the education Champion for Bucks continues to take an active interest in the work of SACRE and was present at our Agreed Syllabus Conference, (ASC), where she introduced us to her assistant Bucks CC officer Katherine Wells, who has been instrumental in guiding us through our preparations to have our own dedicated SACRE website on the schools web. It is a content driven site and is available for all to see, including the Agreed Syllabus, our SACRED newsletter, Agendas and Minutes of Meetings and policies prepared by SACRE.

### Membership

During the year we welcomed: Anne Andrews, co-opted Oxford Diocesan Representative; Mary Saywood, the new Church of England Representative; and Sue Smithin NAHT representative. We value the contribution these members are making.

Sadly we learned that Marion Clayton felt the need to resign her membership as a CC representative as she no longer fulfilled that title. Marion had served on Bucks SACRE as long as anyone could remember. These tributes represented the thoughts of many members; 'Marion has always been such a wise addition to our SACRE meetings, giving us thoughtful ideas to enable us to move forward'. 'She was one of those people who - when saying something in a meeting - I always thought I wish I had said that'.

### Meetings

We have met in 3 schools this year, a special school, where the SACRE Meeting was followed by an ASC, a Primary CofE school and a Secondary Khalsa Academy. In addition we had a Development Day and a further ASC, both in CC facilities, while our 2<sup>nd</sup> INSET day was held in Milton Keynes.

One of the contributing features for our Agreed Syllabus was the feedback received from practising teachers following a survey distributed by Bill Moore our Adviser (see AR 2014). Following considerable discussion about assessment of RE during our ASC meeting it was agreed that Challenging RE 3 would state that it is recognised that there are aspects of RE that cannot and should not be assessed. This is because the agreed syllabus states that RE is both academically rigorous and deeply personal and it is not appropriate – or even possible – to measure the personal impact that learning in RE might have.

We are most grateful to our dedicated Writing Panel members who worked so creatively and with such enthusiasm to revise Challenging RE 3, "Learning and Growing through challenging RE" 2016-21

At the primary CofE School we learned that each class has a 'Thoughts and Feelings Book' to record spiritual moments. One topic covered was 'Creation'. The teacher used

various wording from Psalms and the children wrote their own Psalm, '*With your hands you made us, with our hands we serve you*'. Following on from this they all made individual small crosses out of salt dough and then applied hand prints to a large wooden cross.

Our third meeting took place with agreement from Bucks CC at the Khalsa Secondary Academy. The only RE teacher at the academy is also a member of Bucks SACRE. He teaches the subject through a blend of history and RE: Quakerism alongside the Industrial Revolution with visits to Ironbridge and the Black Country and Islam in Year 7, mainly through the crusades and Islamic culture and civilisation. He uses artefacts a great deal which the students enjoy. There are students of all religions at the Academy and they view religion very positively. The school has a nurturing ethos, is calm and starts each day with daily prayers. Members of SACRE visited the Gurdwara there and were told that it sits at the heart of the school and is there for all. The Gurdwara is also used as a venue for addressing behavioural issues and restorative justice and community service are used as appropriate to the situation.

### **SACRED our newsletter**

At the end of 2015 SACRED edition 4 was published with a feature from Charles Clark on his call for A New Settlement on Religion and Belief in Schools which he co-authored with Prof Linda Woodhead. Alongside our regular feature a 6 monthly multi-faith calendar it also included the teaching topic of 'Festivals' with contributions from our membership representing their faith traditions. Faith traditions were further explored in our INSET day and reports on the 3 religious buildings visited were included in SACRED 5 when Places of Worship was a topic addressed with additional contributions from SACRE members. We are fortunate in having a most creative and inspirational editor, Ann Beaton.

**INSET Day 2 12<sup>th</sup> March 2016** This year it was held in Milton Keynes where we visited a Jewish synagogue, a modern synagogue with a mixture of ancient and modern. The beautiful new ark incorporates a cupboard decorated with The Tree of Life in marquetry. The tree is formed by the merging of three Hebrew words meaning Tree of Life. The scrolls inside were Czech memorial scrolls that German Jews placed into the synagogue in Prague. They were beautifully hand written scrolls on animal skin.



From there we went to the Buddhist temple, where we were welcomed by a Japanese monk who led us in procession beating his drum around the Milton Keynes Peace Pagoda. We then went back to the temple where we learned about the philosophy and rituals practised there.

Our last visit was to the Greek Orthodox Church. Its iconostasis and iconography prompted many questions about Orthodox Christian beliefs and practice, which proved fascinating and enlightening.



It was a very colourful and thought-provoking day. We know this inspired some teachers to take groups on school visits following their own multi-sensory experiences. Look out for future events!

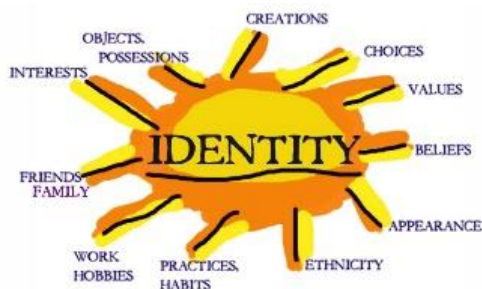


## Presenting our AR 2014-15 to Bucks CC

Thanks to our Bucks Champion, Atifa Sayani, a meeting was arranged for our RE Adviser and Chair of SACRE to meet with Zahir Mohammed, Cabinet Member for Education & Skills and present him with and elaborate upon our Annual report for 2014-2015. We anticipate having a similar meeting to present this report.

## Development day 06.06.2016

This year we held it at Bucks CC offices. The Day was entitled 'Who Am I?' and we were



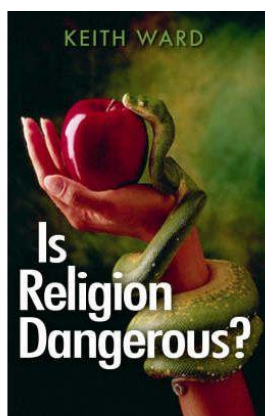
considering identity and ways of helping students in Bucks to consider their own identity from a variety of perspectives. We were reminded of work we have already facilitated with this theme and discussed how we might take it forward. Andr a Sparrow from 'Art Beyond Belief' described a day held at a grammar school in Slough at which Professor Eleanor Nesbit talked about identity and proposed to the 6<sup>th</sup> form audience factors that are likely to make a difference to how one responds to questions about identity. They are:

- Cultural and religious background
- Your generation
- Your community and roots
- How exposed you have been to changes.

We were shown a DVD and some of the discussion that took place amongst the students. It provided a stimulating session and we intend working on this further with schools.

## Concluding reflections

We continue to conclude our meetings with a reflection selected by a member of SACRE and here is one from a book titled 'Is Religion Dangerous?' by Keith Ward.



*"So, is religion dangerous? Sometimes it is. But it is also one of the most powerful forces in the world for good. The best way of ensuring that religion is a force for good is for people of good will and intellectual wisdom to play their part in supporting and shaping it. At best, religion, the search for supreme goodness, a life lived for the sake of good alone, will help to promote the welfare of all sentient beings. Some danger is unavoidable in any human enterprise. But religion is a main driving force for wisdom and compassion in a world that would be bleak and cruel without."*

Valerie McFarlane

Val McFarlane, Chair of Buckinghamshire SACRE

# 1. Standards and quality of provision of RE

The agreed syllabus allows for schools to plan progressively challenging religious education for pupils and students of all ages. Challenging RE has always provided this language of learning and progression above a simple record of levels. Now that these have been replaced with assessment without levels, the new syllabus will reflect the need for schools to abide by the principles of assessment in Challenging RE, whilst adapting these to the specific structures they have adopted and developed. It remains difficult for SACRE to monitor the quality of learning, progression and attainment beyond examination RS in KS4 and KS5, but we continue to strive to find ways of so-doing.

## Examination RS in Buckinghamshire (See Appendix 1)

Overall, achievement in GCSE Full Course in 2016 is above national standards, although there has been a dip in the percentage of higher grades (A\*-A), especially in our Grammar Schools. SACRE will try to work with teachers and school leaders to see what can be done to stretch our most able students in all schools, especially as this is central to the notion of 'Challenging RE'. There is a definite divide between the attainment of Grammar and Upper schools, as one would expect. However, it is to the credit of the teachers in the Upper schools that the 'pass' grade is only slightly below the national rate and that they exceed the national rate for A\* - G. This reflects commitment from both staff and students and SACRE would like to congratulate and thank all staff in all schools for continuing to uphold the importance of and commitment to RS at GCSE.

Examination entry remains consistent with last year, but fewer than 1 in 3 being students are entered for examination. While this is not statutory, schools have a statutory duty to provide RE for all registered students. The agreed syllabus gives expectations and curriculum guidance on this from which to plan meaningful, relevant and important learning. SACRE is concerned that RE may not be provided for a significant number of students at KS4. SACRE encourages schools to provide the opportunity for all students to gain accreditation, even if not all are entered for examination.

*It has never been more important that our children and young people have an accurate knowledge and critical understanding of religion and belief, and are able to empathise with the deep and rich traditions, whilst also having the skill and discernment to reflect critically for themselves on the questions, experiences and challenges that life throws at us.*

**A and AS level** results continue to surpass the national average and the performance of students in our Grammar Schools is outstanding.

SACRE is keen to help schools develop GCSE and Post-16 RS examinations and also general RE provision, and hopes to contact schools to develop networks and raise the profile of the subject as an academic qualification.

## A big thank you

We congratulate all students and staff on these very encouraging results and want to thank all involved for their hard work and enthusiasm.

SACRE members thoroughly enjoy visiting schools for our meetings, where they have face-to-face discussions with teachers and often pupils. This helps us to keep in touch with what our work is really all about. Whilst we do what we can to support schools and help pupils, it is you, the teachers and pupils, who really make RE what it is: for that we are heartily grateful. We are keen to hear your views and find out what is happening in schools, so please do contact us through Bill Moore, whether to share your practice, to tell us what you are doing, or to invite us in to see and meet you through one of our meetings.

## Examination Data summary 2015 (with 3 year trend)

GCSE Full Course		Number of pupils at the end of KS4	GCSE Full Course			
			% Entries (out of KS4 pupils)	% A*-A	% A*-C	% A*-G
<b>2016</b>	<b>England</b>			29.8	71.6	97.8
Buckinghamshire Maintained and Academy Schools (incl. Special)		5599	31%	38.0	79.6	99.1
Buckinghamshire Upper Schools		3295	32%	20.7	68.0	98.5
Buckinghamshire Grammar Schools		2177	32%	64.0	97.1	100.0
<b>2015</b>	<b>England</b>			29.7	71.8	97.9
Buckinghamshire Maintained and Academy Schools (incl. Special)		5699	31.8	41.9	81.8	99.4
Buckinghamshire Upper Schools		3398	33.8	24.5	72.3	99.1
Buckinghamshire Grammar Schools		2170	30.4	72.1	98.3	99.8
<b>2014</b>	<b>England</b>			30.1	71.3	97.6
Buckinghamshire Maintained and Academy Schools (incl. Special)		5675	26.5	38.9	83.0	99.5
Buckinghamshire Upper Schools		3378	28.9	18.5	73.9	99.3
Buckinghamshire Grammar Schools		2193	24.2	76.6	99.6	100.0

A and AS Levels		Number of pupils at the end of KS5	A LEVEL				AS LEVEL			
			% Entries (out of KS5 pupils)	% A*-A	% A*-C	% A*-E	% Entries (out of KS5 pupils)	% A	% A-C	% A-E
2016	England			24.3	80.4	98.9		19.4	65.8	91.7
Buckinghamshire Maintained and Academy Schools (incl. Special)		4109	6.3	30.7	84.4	99.2	10.1	26.8	73.9	94.0
Buckinghamshire Upper Schools		1665	5.5	5.4	70.7	97.8	10.6	9.0	61.0	91.5
Buckinghamshire Grammar Schools		2444	6.8	44.8	92.1	100.0	9.7	40.1	83.5	95.8
2015	England			24.4	79.9	98.9		20.4	66.4	92.1
Buckinghamshire Maintained and Academy Schools		3343	7.0	33.8	82.1	97.9	10.9	34.3	75.9	95.0
Buckinghamshire Upper Schools		1165	6.4	4.1	55.4	93.2	10.6	6.9	47.5	86.1
Buckinghamshire Grammar Schools		2178	7.3	47.5	94.4	100.0	11.1	48.0	90.1	99.5
2014	England			26.4	80.0	99.1		20	64.7	91.6
Buckinghamshire Maintained and Academy Schools		3026	8.6	34.4	83.8	99.2	10.9	36.6	82.5	94.9
Buckinghamshire Upper Schools		902	8.3	12.0	65.3	100.0	10.6	17.7	64.6	86.5
Buckinghamshire Grammar Schools		2124	8.7	43.5	91.3	98.9	11.1	44.3	89.8	98.3



## 2. Managing the SACRE and Partnership with the LA and Other Key Stakeholders

## 2.1 Work with the LA

Links with the LA have been strengthened through the commitment of the education champion, Katherine Wells. Working with SACRE, Katherine has not only pushed forward the development of the SACRE page on SchoolsWeb, she has also co-ordinated work on community cohesion and guidance for schools on Ramadan with Bill Moore (see appendices) The guidance on Ramadan went out to schools in the summer term.

SACRE discussed issues to do with developments in RE, especially around its purposes, the concept of religious literacy and the relationship between national and local RE, in response to national discussions. See appendices.

### 3. Effectiveness of the Agreed Syllabus

### 3.1 Agreed syllabus training

Bill provided individual school support and training to a number of schools. SACRE has received feedback from schools visited and the report back is that schools value the flexibility of the agreed syllabus, combined with the coherent structure and the availability of earlier support materials. Pupils enjoy the questions and learning. Assessment and recording remain an issue.



The new syllabus, Challenging RE 3, was agreed at the Agreed Syllabus Conference meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2016. It is a continuation of and builds from the previous syllabus and schools will have the academic year 2016-17 to allow for transition to any changes.

(Wordle from the AS introduction – most revealing about its priorities)

#### 4. Collective worship

The guidance for collective worship and other advice is now on our [website page](#).

## Determinations

No determinations were sought in 2015-16. Please address any requests for a determination to [aholley@learningtrust.net](mailto:aholley@learningtrust.net).

## 5. SACRE and School Improvement

Although SACRE's statutory remit is around RE and collective worship, we also support schools with **SMSC and preparation for life in modern Britain ('British Values')**. This aspect of school improvement is not always fully understood or developed in relation to learning and teaching. SACRE can be a source of advice and, through our adviser, of support and training.

SACRE is a council of volunteers, not dissimilar to a governing body. We are committed to raising the profile of the spiritual dimension of life and education through exciting, engaging and challenging religious education and Collective Worship.

We can only do this with the active involvement of schools, so whatever your role is, if you want to work with us in this endeavour, sharing your successes and letting us know how we can best support you, please do get in touch through:

**Allison Holley, the Clerk to SACRE on 01296 382146/Email: [aholley@learningtrust.net](mailto:aholley@learningtrust.net) or**

**Bill Moore, Adviser to SACRE on 07749211997/  
Email :[bjvmoore@aol.com](mailto:bjvmoore@aol.com)/[www.justBmoore.com](http://www.justBmoore.com)**



**SACRE INSET visit day 12<sup>th</sup> March 2016**

## Appendix 1 Examination data

### KS4 2016 Religious Studies Results - Buckinghamshire

Source - DfE Performance Tables Data

NE = No Entries, SUPP = less than 6 pupils

URN	School Name	School Type	Number of pupils at the end of KS4	GCSE Full Course			
				% KS4 pupils entered for Full GCSE RS	% A*-A	% A*-C	% A*-G
110484	Buckingham School	CY	175	85%	9.5	48.6	98.0
110488	The Grange School	FD	236	21%	16.0	66.0	96.0
110490	The Misbourne School	CY	138	90%	19.4	72.6	100.0
110500	Cressex Community School	FD	139	99%	16.8	62.0	95.6
110516	St Michael's Catholic School	VA	112	97%	33.9	81.7	99.1
110533	The Cottesloe School	FD	174	85%	10.8	61.5	98.6
135879	The Aylesbury Vale Academy	AC	149	7%	20.0	50.0	100.0
136419	Dr Challoner's Grammar School	ACC	180	29%	56.6	96.2	100.0
136723	Wycombe High School	ACC	187	29%	87.0	100.0	100.0
136771	John Hampden Grammar School	ACC	155	26%	63.4	100.0	100.0
136781	Sir William Borlase's Grammar School	ACC	139	1%	Supp	Supp	Supp
136845	Sir Henry Floyd Grammar School	ACC	143	97%	61.9	98.6	100.0
136846	Aylesbury High School	ACC	187	15%	60.7	100.0	100.0
136858	Highcrest Academy	ACC	139	17%	4.3	65.2	100.0
137343	Amersham School	ACC	143	12%	23.5	47.1	100.0
137344	Royal Latin School	ACC	176	100%	58.0	96.0	100.0
137355	Waddesdon Church of England School	ACC	145	99%	44.8	83.2	100.0
137372	Princes Risborough	ACC	173	1%	Supp	Supp	Supp
137564	Burnham Grammar School	ACC	147	101%	61.1	94.6	100.0
138058	Holmer Green Senior School	ACC	144	60%	17.2	80.5	100.0

139367	The Beaconsfield School	ACC	150	16%	16.7	66.7	95.8
140678	Bourne End Academy	AC	120	18%	14.3	76.2	100.0
140893	Beaconsfield High School	ACC	151	34%	86.3	100.0	100.0
137280	Chiltern Hills Academy	AC	84	NE	NE	NE	NE
137864	The E-Act Burnham Park Academy	AC	90	NE	NE	NE	NE
137261	John Colet School	ACC	175	NE	NE	NE	NE
137219	Dr Challoner's High School	ACC	146	NE	NE	NE	NE
110497	The Mandeville School	CY	157	NE	NE	NE	NE
137091	Chesham Grammar School	ACC	188	NE	NE	NE	NE
137256	Sir William Ramsay School	ACC	158	NE	NE	NE	NE
136884	Aylesbury Grammar School	ACC	182	NE	NE	NE	NE
137215	The Chalfonts Community College	ACC	295	NE	NE	NE	NE
136484	The Royal Grammar School, High Wycombe	ACC	196	NE	NE	NE	NE
136964	Great Marlow School	ACC	199	NE	NE	NE	NE
131915	Maplewood School	CYS	1	NE	NE	NE	NE
137934	Alfriston School	ACS	25	NE	NE	NE	NE
110576	Pebble Brook School	CYS	24	NE	NE	NE	NE
110577	Chiltern Way Federation	CYS	26	NE	NE	NE	NE
110579	Stony Dean School	CYS	17	NE	NE	NE	NE
110581	Stocklake Park Community School	CYS	9	NE	NE	NE	NE
110582	Heritage House School	CYS	8	NE	NE	NE	NE
110585	Furze Down School	CYS	17	NE	NE	NE	NE
Buckinghamshire Maintained and Academy Schools (incl. Special)			5599	31%	38.0	79.6	99.1
Buckinghamshire Upper Schools			3295	32%	20.7	68.0	98.5
Buckinghamshire Grammar Schools			2177	32%	64.0	97.1	100.0
National (All schools)					29.8	71.6	97.8



## **KS5 2016 Religious Studies Results - Buckinghamshire**

Source - DfE Performance Tables Data  
NE = No entries, SUPP = less than 6 pupils

URN	School Name	School Type	Number of students at the end of KS5	A LEVEL				AS LEVEL				% KS5 pupils entered for A/AS Level
				% Entries	% A*-A	% A*-C	% A*-E	% Entries (out of KS5 pupils)	% A*-A	% A*-C	% A*-E	
110484	Buckingham School	CY	85	14.1	0.0	58.3	91.7	22.4	5.3	73.7	100.0	36.5
110488	The Grange School	FD	78	10.3	0.0	62.5	100.0	17.9	0.0	35.7	85.7	28.2
110490	The Misbourne School	CY	101	4.0	Supp	Supp	Supp	10.9	18.2	63.6	72.7	14.9
110500	Cressex Community School	FD	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE
110516	St Michael's Catholic School	VA	44	25.0	18.2	100.0	100.0	38.6	17.6	70.6	100.0	63.6
110533	The Cottesloe School	FD	121	4.1	Supp	Supp	Supp	9.1	9.1	72.7	100.0	13.2
135879	The Aylesbury Vale Academy	AC	53	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE
136419	Dr Challoner's Grammar School	ACC	214	13.1	50.0	96.4	100.0	17.8	47.4	92.1	94.7	30.8
136723	Wycombe High School	ACC	196	7.1	21.4	78.6	100.0	10.2	35.0	70.0	100.0	17.3
136771	John Hampden Grammar School	ACC	147	8.2	41.7	91.7	100.0	12.9	42.1	84.2	100.0	21.1
136781	Sir William Borlase's Grammar School	ACC	216	0.5	Supp	Supp	Supp	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9
136845	Sir Henry Floyd Grammar School	ACC	190	4.7	44.4	100.0	100.0	7.4	21.4	64.3	100.0	12.1
136846	Aylesbury High School	ACC	194	3.1	50.0	100.0	100.0	8.2	31.3	75.0	93.8	11.3
136858	Highcrest Academy	ACC	89	3.4	Supp	Supp	Supp	7.9	14.3	28.6	57.1	11.2
137343	Amersham School	ACC	85	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE
137344	Royal Latin School	ACC	199	16.1	43.8	96.9	100.0	19.1	55.3	97.4	100.0	35.2
137355	Waddesdon Church of England School	ACC	146	14.4	9.5	76.2	95.2	26.0	13.2	68.4	100.0	40.4
137372	Princes Risborough	ACC	59	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	0.0

137564	Burnham Grammar School	ACC	141	6.4	22.2	77.8	100.0	7.8	27.3	81.8	100.0	14.2
138058	Holmer Green Senior School	ACC	45	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	0.0
139367	The Beaconsfield School	ACC	70	1.4	Supp	Supp	Supp	10.0	0.0	14.3	42.9	11.4
140678	Bourne End Academy	AC	18	22.2	Supp	Supp	Supp	38.9	28.6	85.7	100.0	61.1
140893	Beaconsfield High School	ACC	175	14.9	53.8	92.3	100.0	24.0	38.1	83.3	97.6	38.9
137280	Chiltern Hills Academy	AC	81	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE
137864	The E-Act Burnham Park Academy	AC	60	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE
137261	John Colet School	ACC	54	9.3	Supp	Supp	Supp	24.1	0.0	53.8	92.3	33.3
137219	Dr Challoner's High School	ACC	163	7.4	66.7	83.3	100.0	10.4	52.9	100.0	100.0	17.8
110497	The Mandeville School	CY	107	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE
137091	Chesham Grammar School	ACC	207	7.2	40.0	93.3	100.0	7.7	31.3	87.5	100.0	15.0
137256	Sir William Ramsay School	ACC	106	9.4	0.0	40.0	100.0	17.9	0.0	73.7	94.7	27.4
136884	Aylesbury Grammar School	ACC	198	0.5	Supp	Supp	Supp	2.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.0
137215	The Chalfonts Community College	ACC	142	5.6	0.0	62.5	100.0	9.9	7.1	42.9	92.9	15.5
136484	The Royal Grammar School, High Wycombe	ACC	204	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE
136964	Great Marlow School	ACC	121	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE
Buckinghamshire Maintained and Academy Schools (incl. Special)			4109	6.3	30.7	84.4	99.2	10.1	26.8	73.9	94.0	16.3
Buckinghamshire Upper Schools			1665	5.5	5.4	70.7	97.8	10.6	9.0	61.0	91.5	16.2
Buckinghamshire Grammar Schools			2444	6.8	44.8	92.1	100.0	9.7	40.1	83.5	95.8	16.4
<b>National (All schools)</b>					<b>24.3</b>	<b>80.4</b>	<b>98.9</b>		<b>19.4</b>	<b>65.8</b>	<b>91.7</b>	



## **Appendix 2:      Ramadan Guidance**

Ramadan this year is likely to begin on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> June and Eid-ul-Fitr, marking the end of Ramadan, is likely to be 7<sup>th</sup> July, though final dates will depend on the sighting of the new moon and so may be either side of these two dates.

This will affect Muslim pupils, families and staff and schools should, to the best of their ability, consider their arrangements to accommodate the needs of those fasting.

### **Eid-ul-Fitr and time off school**

Eid-ul-Fitr is one of the two most important festivals in Islam and most parents will want to celebrate with their families and communities. Eid falls at the end of the month of Ramadan and the date will be according to the new moon. Pupils are allowed to take one day off school if this falls in term time and on a school day.

### **Background**

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Muslim Lunar calendar and is believed to be the month in which the prophet Muhammad received the first revelation of the Qur'an. In this month of fasting (sawm), Muslims will not eat, drink, smoke or engage in sexual activity between the hours of sunrise and sunset. However, the purpose of sawm, far from being physical, is to develop a spiritual and moral discipline in life, and so there is also an emphasis on pure thoughts, acts and language.

Ramadan is a time of spiritual and moral reflection and growth. It is an act of obedience to Allah and follows the example of Prophet Muhammad. They also learn self-discipline, feel closer to God, develop empathy with the poor and gain spiritual merit.

Muslims will rise before dawn to eat breakfast and pray. This means that your pupils who fast will likely get up before 3.00am. They will then not eat or drink till sunset. In addition during Ramadan, special evening prayers are conducted during which long portions of the Qur'an are recited. These special prayers are known as taraweeh. The word *taraweeh* comes from an Arabic word which means to rest and relax. The prayer can be very long (well over an hour), during which one stands upright to read from the Qur'an and performs many cycles of movement (standing, bowing, prostrating, sitting). Many Muslims will also read the entire Qur'an over the month of Ramadan.

### **Who performs sawm?**

All Muslims who have reached puberty must observe the fast.

Many younger children are gradually introduced to fasting by performing it for half days or occasional days. Practice will vary across families. Fasting is seen as a mark of pride in their faith and identity and some families understandably are keen for their children to start on their journey in the faith as soon as possible, though usually this does not happen before the age of 7. If you have concerns about a young child fasting, speak with the parents and also if you can with their Imam. NHS Choices has advice on Ramadan health which recommends not fasting for children under seven or possibly eight years old: 'Fasting for children under the age of seven or eight isn't advisable. It's a good idea to

make children aware of what fasting involves and to practise fasting for a few hours at a time.' See: <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Healthyramadan/Pages/faqs.aspx>

Those who are ill, travelling, women who are menstruating and in developed stages of pregnancy do not have to fast but will catch up days missed later in the year or provide food for the needy.

Further advice and guidance can be found from the Bradford 2015 documents by clicking [here](#). This includes things schools can do to help pupils and staff through the 30 day fast.

### **Public examinations 2016**

This year GCSE/A Level examinations will fall during the month of Ramadhan which secondary schools will need to anticipate in advance in order to offer students and their families support.

Fasting is obligatory for Muslim students in secondary school. The only dispensation are those who are ill or girls who may be menstruating. Families will make their own decision on such issues affecting their children.

It is important that secondary schools consult early with their Muslim parents and the mosques about this so that the best arrangements can be made for the students. Some parents may want their children not to fast during the examination period, or on days when they have exams, whilst others may feel they need to follow the requirements of their faith and fast all through Ramadan. We advise that schools discuss this with parents, recognising that this is a personal decision of the student and family and respecting the final outcome.

### **What can schools do to help?**

- Offer guidance on the best way to avoid dehydration, eating nutritious food, getting appropriate rest periods, organising revision sessions etc as a run up to Ramadan and exercising flexibility where possible.
- Provide a quiet room during break times where they are able to pray, rest or revise between examinations.
- Work with parents to offer advice to students on how to use their time sensibly for rest and revision, especially early in the morning and waiting to break the fast at night.

Schools are encouraged to liaise with parents, their local Masjid or Madrassah, Muslim staff and/or their students in advance of Ramadhan to ensure those fasting are well prepared and able to achieve their best during this Holy month of religious observance.

Tower Hamlets SACRE, in consultation with their Council of Mosques, has produced helpful advice and guidance that can be accessed [here](#). Please note that this was produced for 2015, but still has advice for fasting during exams.

### **What can schools do to support their Muslim pupils during Ramadan?**

Parents have a responsibility to tell the school if their child is fasting, not least to ensure that school and home can work together to support the child and keep them safe. There is no need to separate pupils off from activities, but usual practice may be adapted. Pupils should still do PE, but schools can ensure that they do not over-exert themselves.

- Write to parents early, explaining the school's approach to Ramadan and what you will be doing and that you recognise the importance of Ramadan for Muslims.
- Provide support during lunch hours with a designated member of staff to supervise alternative arrangements while the rest of the school eats.
- Pupils and staff may want a room in which to pray and reflect.
- Use the themes and values of Ramadan to promote community values across the whole school. Use assemblies, displays, discussion groups, topics across the curriculum where appropriate to celebrate and understand Ramadan. This is a real opportunity for SMSC and exploring 'British values' and what it means to be human/British.
- Special Assemblies can be organised involving Muslim visitors from the local community or parents.
- Particular emphasis can be made during assemblies as Eid-ul-Fitr approaches.

Education is very important in Islam, but so too are the religious and spiritual practices of the faith. Schools, families and local leaders need to work together to provide the best opportunities for pupils to benefit from both.

## Appendix 3 - SACRE Membership and Attendance (September 2015 – July 2016)

In accordance with statute, the Buckinghamshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education is composed of four groups:

Group	Name	Represents
<b>A</b> <b>Other Denominations and Faiths</b>	Mrs Val McFarlane, Chair	Quaker
	Mrs Frankie Fisher	Methodist
	Mrs Sushma Sahajpal	Hindu
	Mr Zahid Jawed	Muslim
	Mr Barry Shine	Jewish
	Mr Ranvir Singh	Sikh
	Steve Terry	Buddhist
	Vacancy	Roman Catholic
	Vacancy	Baptist
	Other faiths yet to be represented	Pentecostal
<b>B</b> <b>The Church of England</b>	Mr Jonny Walker	Church of England
	Rev'd Tim Harper	Church of England
	Mr Toby Long	Church of England
	Mrs Mary Saywood (wef July16)	Church of England
<b>C</b> <b>Teacher representatives</b>	Ms Sue Bowen	NUT
	Mrs Margaret Dean, Vice-Chair	ATL
	Mrs Sue Smithin (wef Nov15)	NAHT
	Miss Debra Mansfield (left Nov15)	NAHT
	Vacancy	ASCL
	Vacancy	NASUWT
<b>D</b> <b>The Local Authority</b>	Mrs Marion Clayton	County Council
	Cllr David Watson	County Council
	Mrs Ann Beaton	Chair of Governors
<b>Co-opted</b>	Mrs Elaine Lever	Humanist
<b>Co-opted</b>	Ms Karen Crussell	Academies
<b>Co-opted</b>	Anne Andrews (wef July16)	Oxford Diocese
<b>Deputies</b>	Ms Suma Din	Muslim Deputy

Members	Group Represented	21st Sept 2015	23 <sup>rd</sup> Nov 2015 ASC	23 <sup>rd</sup> Feb 2016	12 <sup>th</sup> Jul 2015	Dev. Day 6th Jun 2015
Val McFarlane, Chair	Quaker	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Frankie Fisher	Methodist	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Sushma Sahajpal	Hindu	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
Zahid Jawed	Muslim	N	N	Y	N	Y
Suma Din	Muslim Deputy	SD	N	N	N	N
Barry Shine	Jewish	N	Y	N	N	N
Steve Terry	Buddhist	N	N	N	Y	N
Ranvir Singh	Sikh	N	N	N	Y	N
Mary Saywood	Church of England				N	N
Jonny Walker	Church of England	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Rev'd Tim Harper	Church of England	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Toby Long	Church of England	Y	Y	N	N	N
Margaret Dean	ATL	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
Debra Mansfield	NAHT	N				
Sue Smithin	NAHT		Y	Y	Y	N
Sue Bowen	NUT	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Marion Clayton	County Council	Y	Y	N	N	N
David Watson	County Council	N	N	N	N	N
Ann Beaton	Governors	Y	N	Y	N	Y
Elaine Lever	Co-opted	N	Y	Y	N	Y
Karen Crussell	Co-opted	N	Y	N	Y	Y
Anne Andrews	Co-opted				Y	N
Atifa Sayani	LA Officer	N	Y	N	N	N
Katherine Wells	LA Officer	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Bill Moore	Advisor	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Allison Holley	Clerk	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Y = Attended    N = Absent    SD Standing Deputy

**SACRE is advised and supported by Bill Moore, SACRE Advisor.**

**The Clerk to SACRE, Allison Holley can be contacted at:** Buckinghamshire Learning Trust, School Improvement Service, Unit 9, The Abbey Centre, Weedon Road, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP19 9NS. Tel: 01296 382146 / Email: [aholley@learningtrust.net](mailto:aholley@learningtrust.net)