



**Central Bedfordshire
Standing Advisory Council for
Religious Education (SACRE)**

Annual Report

Academic Year 2024 to 2025

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Introduction

Every Local Authority is required to have a SACRE which is made up of four groups: (A) Faith representatives, (B) The Church of England, (C) Teachers and (D) Councillors and Local Authority representatives.

SACREs have responsibility for advising a Local Authority (LA) on religious education and collective worship in its schools and have a duty to publish an annual report. The main purpose of the annual report is to hold the LA to account, by informing the Secretary of State and key partners what advice SACRE gave the LA during the year and how that was responded to; this includes advice on RE and Collective Worship in those schools for which the LA has responsibility.

Central Bedfordshire SACRE (CBS) is a member of the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE). A copy of this report, which covers the academic year 2023-2024, will be sent to NASACRE.

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Clerk to SACRE

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Foreword

As this is my first year as Chairing of Central Bedfordshire SACRE, I would like to thank Lucy Chapman, my predecessor, for their dedicated service and leadership.

This is my first time writing a foreword to a SACRE annual report, and I am pleased to present the Annual Report of Central Bedfordshire Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education for 2024-2025.

SACRE continues to fulfil its statutory responsibilities to advise the Local Authority, to support schools and teachers in delivering high quality Religious Education and promote Collective worship.

Last academic year saw the launch of the agreed syllabus that was developed in collaboration with Bedford Borough with our advisors at RE Today. We also welcomed a new member in Group A Hayley Cohen representing Judaism.

The year has seen encouraging progress in training opportunities and syllabus support. From the report ahead you find that while SACRE remains committed to its role and responsibilities in supporting schools, our challenges remain ensuring engagement in CPD and with the syllabus and collective worship. We have much to do in the year ahead!

We are very grateful to RE Today's Julia Diamond Conway and Julie Childs for advising Central Bedfordshire SACRE in the past academic year. Going forward we welcome Lisa Kassapian from 'Breathe RE', supported by Stacey Burman, and look forward to working with them.

Heartfelt thanks to all the Headteachers and teachers. I am aware of the challenges that come with delivering RE in all its forms and hope that we can continue to work together in providing students with the highest quality RE.

Thank you to all the SACRE members and Local Authority officers and Councillors for your hard work and commitment. I look forward to working together to strengthen RE provision across Central Beds.

SACRE Chair
Tulsi Seva Dasi

1. Overview of Academic Year

Meetings

SACRE met in person on three occasions during the academic year 2024-2025:

Wednesday 6th November 2024

Tuesday 25th March 2025

Wednesday 16th July 2025.

All meetings were quorate and held in person at Priory House, Chicksands from 4pm.

The RE Advisor(s), with the support of the LA, ensures all materials and minutes are updated regularly. All agendas and approved minutes of these meetings are saved regularly and made accessible to the public via the Central Bedfordshire Council [website](#).

Standing Agenda items for these meetings included (in no particular order):

Apologies for absence
Minutes and matters arising
Membership of SACRE
SACRE National Update
Dates of future meetings

Other items discussed in these meeting included (in no particular order):

- Engagement and Training of primary teachers and support for Secondary teachers
- Communication with schools
- Budget and Advisory support for SACRE and support from the LA
- Attendance and membership to SACRE, including Jewish Representation
- SACRE action planning and self-evaluation
- Membership to NASACRE
- Annual Report (November Meeting)
- Election of Chair and Vice Chair (July Meeting)
- Analysis of Workforce Data
- Potential for a pupil conference
- National events and updates, including Interfaith Week and RE Today competitions

CBS was supported during 2024-5 with Advisors from RE Today services (Julia Diamond-Conway and Julie Childs). These advisors delivered updates and training for the teachers (see section 2) and provided regular national updates to SACRE members at each meeting, which they attended online.

2. Standards and Quality of RE Provision

Locally Agreed Syllabus

RE is not part of the national curriculum. Each LA is required to produce an Agreed Syllabus for RE, and SACREs are required to begin reviewing the current Agreed Syllabus within five years of its production.

The Agreed Syllabus for Central Bedfordshire was launched in September 2023 and was developed in collaboration with Bedford Borough.

This syllabus, along with accompanying unit plans for Early Years to the end of Key Stage 2 purchased from RE Today, were sent to schools electronically and will be hosted on Central Bedfordshire's portal. However, it might be considered whether these should be more widely accessible as they are publicly funded documents.

Schools attending the launch event received paper copies of the syllabus, but any schools requiring further paper copies can only do so via separate purchasing options.

It is expected that schools required to adhere to the syllabus would adapt their RE curriculum provision ready for implementation from September 2024.

However, in the absence of data and records to the contrary, it is unlikely that SACRE is able to establish whether all schools needing to access these materials have done so, nor collate a picture of how schools have responded to this Agreed Syllabus, including gathering any feedback or if schools have been able to implement the requirements.

This then, should be a key priority in the next academic year.

School Support and Communication

The LA supports SACRE communication with schools through the 'Central Essentials' school **bulletin**. These are directed to the Head Teachers of schools, but it is not clear whether any measures have been taken to check if these are actually being received by the Subject Leaders themselves. However, in the next academic year, the Clerk has been directed to request subject leader details from schools so that future communication may be sent directly, including a proposed termly newsletter.

Schools are also provided with a school [portal](#) hosted by the LA where additional materials can be stored for schools.

The RE Advisors (Julia Diamond-Conway and Julie Childs) provided online termly **training** for primary schools and according to the development plan, also for secondary schools. A short report was provided about these to SACRE during their meetings, however it is not clear whether the content and materials, theoretically paid for through the LA/SACRE budget, were provided/remain accessible.

It appears the number of schools registering to attend these was not reflected in the numbers that actually did so. Comments suggest that attendance to these declined, and therefore efforts are being made in the next academic year to increase school engagement with in-person sessions being provided. If a reasonable proportion of schools do attend these, then this will provide a suitable platform to support SACRE in gleaning a picture of schools' reception of the Agreed Syllabus going forwards.

Whilst a **pupils' conference** was also proposed, this did not take place. However, in the next academic year, plans have been discussed for secondary schools to be invited to join an online interfaith conference opportunity being hosted by another SACRE. This will be held during the Spring term, with subject leaders receiving bespoke training and resources. This will be offered at no charge to schools.

Standards and monitoring of RE

During the Spring term meeting of SACRE, members considered the **workforce data**. Conversation also included confirmation from the current head of School Improvement that 'compliance checks had been completed, and they had not found any schools not teaching RE'.

At the time of writing this report, no verified data for **school examinations** was available. However, a discussion took place during the Spring meeting, in which it was noted that the number of pupils being entered for these public examinations was in decline, with possible reasons including the method of schools to option block RE alongside other humanities subjects such as history and geography. Officers also confirmed that they meet with head teachers regularly and would raise the committee's concerns with them. However, it is not clear whether secondary schools are providing core RE to all pupils beyond the GCSE and A Level option.

Throughout the next academic year, it is recommended that further strategies are put in place for SACRE to be better able to discern and monitor the provision of RE in schools. In addition, examination information, as well as other quantitative data, can be analysed once made available/verified.

3. Collective Worship

No requests for **determinations** were made during the academic year covered in this report.

Collective Worship featured on the development plan, with actions specified such as conducting a school survey or audit and developing revised guidance and policies for schools. However, it appears that these were not conducted.

However, there may be opportunities for CBS to work collaboratively with other SACREs which also have a focus on developing/revising guidance and school support on Collective Worship with the support of the new Advisor, taking up the role from September 2025.

4. SACRE work with other agencies

RE Advisors have shared feedback and updates from national events and/or engaged with organisations throughout this academic year. However, it might be beneficial for relevant members of the committee to also attend and access some of the opportunities open them.

CBS is a member of the National Association of SACREs (**NASACRE**), and as such, members are able to attend the annual National Conference and AGM. In addition, NASACRE also provide a series of webinars which some members may benefit from attending if subscription is/could be supported through the budget. SACRE could also then record any opportunities for training attended/accessed by its members, as step towards monitoring its own effectiveness.

Whilst CBS joined with Bedford Borough in collaboration with the Agreed Syllabus, and members of both SACREs may have met/attended the subsequent launch event in 2023, it is unclear whether this working relationship continues. SACRE may wish to consider taking part in initiatives being provided through the **RE Hubs**, such as the Chair attending the biannual 'In Conversation' events held for each region.

5. SACRE involvement in the Local Area

Some action was taken to inform local schools of events and activities being run such as the Bedford Multi Faith Tours. In addition, the development plan for this academic year also mentioned some activities aimed to increase and enhance the schools use of speakers and visits as first-hand experiences for their pupils. This included encouraging schools to contact SACRE directly to access visit and speaker information which presumably would require SACRE members to source, provide, collate and then publish the relevant information.

However, teachers could make better use of RE Hubs which already has exactly these functions, and which would then relieve much time for more productive projects for SACRE members. In addition, all speakers registered on the RE Hubs website have been trained and received a 'kitemark', meaning that it would be the responsibility of the RE Hubs to resolve any issues or complaints if they were to arise.

SACRE members could also access this free CPD provided through RE Hubs, which would enhance their own subject knowledge and skills, or even consider requesting a bespoke training session for SACRE and other local interfaith groups in the local area.

This would then mean that CBS would be better placed to build links with schools as trained speakers, but also once kitemark accredited, could contribute to some other interfaith projects and/or resource development to support schools in delivering RE.

Further to this, it is possible that, if a strengthened working relationship can be established with schools in the Borough (for example through in-person networks), then SACRE would be more able to take part in some national, collaborative initiatives and school-based research and projects, as is the case with other SACREs.

All meetings include a membership list, and the Autumn meeting (November) included discussions around an application for a Jewish Representative on SACRE. Mention of extending membership to include more headteachers was also included in the development plan, but CBS could perhaps also enhance their relationships with schools and other groups in the local area by considering holding in person meetings at alternative venues.

6. Management of SACRE

During the reporting period, clerking of SACRE was undertaken by Lily Glowacki of Central Bedfordshire Governance Services.

The Local Authority also provided support SACRE with funding to contract an RE Consultancy from RE Today Services. As listed above, their support included:

- Writing the statutory Annual Report for the previous year
- Attending SACRE meetings to provide national updates
- Running online teacher network meetings
- Delivering any further agreed actions as per for a development plan

SACRE continues to be supported by Claire Mosseveld, Head of Education at Central Bedfordshire Council, in a variety of ways, including:

- Maintaining the allocated budget on behalf of SACRE
- Ensuring provision of accommodation and support administration
- Communication with schools
- Securing advisory/consultancy support for SACRE

Towards the end of the academic year, CBS welcomed Tulsi Seva as Chair, and during the next academic year, regular meetings will be held with the newly appointed Advisor, Lisa Kassapian, the Chair and the Clerk and Head of education with LA. This will help ensure that the devised development plan strategic and creative actions which can be more consistently monitored and updated throughout the year.

Please see Appendix 1 for membership and attendance details.

7. Appendix

Membership and Attendance

Key: **Attended** **Apologies** **Absent** *indicates if attended remotely

Meeting: Wednesday 6th November 2024

Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Officers
Tulsi Seva Dasi (Hindu) Ian Smith (Humanist) Sister Aidan Richards (RC) Serish Mubeen (Muslim) Tirath Bhavra (Sikh)	Ryan Parker Carly Woodall Revd Caren Topley	Lucy Chapman (L) Chair Michael Ward (M) Lucia Saggese (S) Lilian Ogunbiyi (S) Shanelle Coulson (S)	CLlr Tranter CLlr Hegley* CLlr Pughe CLlr Childs CLlr P Daniels	Julie Childs* (Advisor) Craig Martin Claire Mosseveld

Meeting: Tuesday 25th March 2025

Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Officers
Tulsi Seva Dasi (Hindu) Ian Smith (Humanist) Sister Aidan Richards (RC) Serish Mubeen (Muslim) Tirath Bhavra (Sikh) Hayley Cohen (Jewish)	Ryan Parker Carly Woodall Revd Caren Topley	Lucy Chapman (L) Chair Shanelle Coulson (S) Michael Ward (M) Lilian Ogunbiyi (S) Lucia Saggese (S)	CLlr Tranter CLlr Hegley CLlr Pughe* CLlr Childs CLlr P Daniels	Julie Childs* (Advisor) Craig Martin Claire Mosseveld*

Meeting Wednesday 16th July 2025

Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Officers
Tulsi Seva Dasi (Hindu) Chair Ian Smith (Humanist) Hayley Cohen (Jewish) Sister Aidan Richards (RC) Serish Mubeen (Muslim) Tirath Bhavra (Sikh)	Ryan Parker Carly Woodall Revd Caren Topley	Lucy Chapman (L) Shanelle Coulson (S) Michael Ward (M) Lilian Ogunbiyi (S) Lucia Saggese (S)	CLlr Tranter CLlr Hegley CLlr Pughe CLlr Childs CLlr P Daniels	Julie Childs* (Advisor) Craig Martin Claire Mosseveld