
CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

2023 - 2024



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Foreword

Message from the Chair

It is a pleasure to introduce the annual report of the Central Bedfordshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education for 2023 - 2024.

The aim of this report is to update readers about the work of the members of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE). Our function is to advise the Local Authority (LA) on matters relating to collective worship in community schools and on religious education given in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus. The SACRE monitors the effectiveness and appropriateness of the agreed syllabus. This has been given to every school in the LA and is available from the Local Authority. It is reviewed every five years and should be followed by all community and VC schools. Other schools may also follow the syllabus.

In order to support schools, SACRE has provided termly RE training opportunities. RE leaders and teachers from all phases of schooling within Central Bedfordshire are invited to receive free, high quality training, resources and curriculum updates. RE Consultants to SACRE from RE Today, deliver this termly training to Secondary colleagues followed by Primary teachers. Feedback from these groups, form the focus of the training ensuring SACRE is responding to the needs of teachers within the LA. SACRE are grateful for the work and support of RE Today, as part of their LA advisory role to SACRE.

Members of SACRE bring much expertise and a spirit of thoughtful co-operation to meetings. The Council brings together councillors, teachers and faith representatives. The commitment of the members of SACRE to promoting religious education in Central Bedfordshire is strong and evident in their active interest, involvement in developmental work and in monitoring the quality of religious education in all our schools.

SACRE receives positive information from Ofsted reports about the quality of RE and its impact on pupils' spiritual and personal development. Some reports reveal outstanding and innovative work in schools. We acknowledge the hard work of RE subject leaders and teachers. The importance of high quality religious education cannot be overstressed. Our teachers make a vital contribution to the promotion of social cohesion in our multi-faith society and the development of critical thinking in the RE classroom.

There have been some membership changes to Central Bedfordshire SACRE since September. We have welcomed new members, thanked those who have come to the end of their term and through it all the work of SACRE continues.

I am pleased to commend this report to you.

Lucy Chapman (Chair of SACRE)

Overview of the work of SACRE

Since 1988, each Local Authority (LA) has been required by law to have a Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE).

The remit of a SACRE is principally to oversee the Religious Education (RE) and collective worship within the authority principally to:

- advise Central Bedfordshire Council upon matters connected with Religious Education and Collective Worship in community schools and in foundation schools which do not have a religious character. Religious Education in these schools is to be given in accordance with the Agreed Syllabus;
- advise Central Bedfordshire Council on teaching methods, choice of materials and teacher training in Religious Education and Collective Worship;
- require Central Bedfordshire Council to review the locally agreed syllabus for Religious Education at least every five years.

The reporting period of the 2023-2024 report starts from September 1st 2023 and runs to August 31st 2024.

SACRE met on three occasions during the academic year 2023-2024, Tuesday 21st November 2023, Tuesday 12th March 2024 and Monday 8th July 2024. All meetings were held at Priory House, Chicksands. Minutes for these meetings are available on the Central Bedfordshire Council website (they can be found at this link: <https://cms-centralbedfordshire-uk.azeusconvene.com/index.html?TYPE=u2GdiOZpTu>).

Standing items in meetings:

Apologies for absence

Minutes and matters arising

Membership of SACRE

SACRE National Update

Dates of future meetings

Additional items in meetings:

21st November – Changes to SACRE Constitution, Agreed Syllabus Launch, RE Teaching in Our Secondary Schools.

12th March – Changes to SACRE Constitution, RE Teaching in Our Secondary Schools.

8th July – Election of the Chair, Election of the Vice Chair, NASACRE National Conference Update, OFSTED Update, Review of the Draft SACRE Development Plan 2023/24.

Section 2: Religious Education

The Locally Agreed Syllabus and RE in schools

RE is not part of the national curriculum. Each LA is required to produce an Agreed Syllabus for RE. Each LA is required to begin reviewing the current Agreed Syllabus within five years of its production. During this academic year, the new Agreed Syllabus for Central Bedfordshire was launched with a full day training event for teachers at Puttridge Bury on 28th September 2023. Central Bedfordshire has produced its syllabus alongside Bedford Borough and teachers from both Local Authorities were in attendance. It is expected that schools required to teach the syllabus will implement the new one by September 2024.

In order to support teachers in the delivery of the syllabus, SACRE has invested in a full set of accompanying unit plans for Early Years through to the end of Key Stage 2. The plans and syllabus have been sent to all schools electronically and will be hosted on Central Bedfordshire's portal. Schools attending the launch received paper copies of the syllabus and further paper copies are available to purchase.

Standards and monitoring of RE

During the Autumn Term meeting, SACRE monitored RE within Central Bedfordshire by scrutinising School Workforce Data. As a result, the Chair and a member of Committee D contacted Central Bedfordshire's Head of School Improvement to request that they investigate the issue of schools that seemed as if they may not be delivering RE in Year 9 and above.

At the Spring Term meeting, the Head of School Improvement reported that all necessary schools had been contacted and were meeting the statutory requirement for RE Teaching. It was reported that some schools may call RE by a different name, such as Philosophy and Ethics which means that it is not recorded as 'Religious Education' in the School Workforce Data, others are delivering RE through different curriculum areas which again would not be recorded as 'Religious Education' in the data but still complied with statutory requirements.

At present, the exam results from 2024 are unvalidated.

Central Bedfordshire validated GCSE RS data (2023)

School/College	NOE	% 9-5 (A*-B)	% 9-4 (A*-C)	% 9-1 (A*-E)	Avg Points
National (State Funded)	105,240	60.1	71.0	97.7	5.1
LA (State Funded)	467	52.0	62.5	98.3	4.6
All Saints Academy Dunstable	90	24.4	35.6	97.8	3.2
Cedars Upper School	29	58.6	72.4	100.0	5.0
Harlington Upper School	31	80.6	87.1	100.0	6.0
Manshead Church of England Academy	164	47.6	56.1	99.4	4.4
Priory Academy	15	73.3	86.7	93.3	6.0
Queensbury Academy	48	58.3	77.1	95.8	5.2
Redborne Upper School and Community College	76	69.7	77.6	98.7	5.3
Sandy Secondary School	13	69.2	84.6	100.0	5.0

GCSE Religious Studies (9-1) - National and LA (State Funded) Results

Category	NOE	% 9-5 (A*-B)	% 9-4 (A*-C)	% 9-1 (A*-E)	Avg Points
National (State Funded)	105,240	60.1	71.0	97.7	5.1
LA (State Funded)	467	52.0	62.5	98.3	4.6

Central Bedfordshire validated A level RS data (2023)

School/College	NOE	A*-A (%)	A*-B (%)	A*-E (%)	Avg Points
National (all entries)	14,700	25.8	55.3	97.3	35.5
Cedars Upper School	15	13.3	20.0	100.0	27.3
Harlington Upper School	13	-	15.4	100.0	20.8
Manshead Church of England Academy	3	33.3	100.0	100.0	43.3
Redborne Upper School and Community College	10	20.0	40.0	80.0	29.0
Sandy Secondary School	2	-	-	100.0	20.0
Stratton Upper School	9	-	11.1	88.9	21.1

Category	NOE	% A*-A	% A*-B	% A*-E	Avg Points
National (State Funded)	14,700	25.8	55.3	97.3	35.5
LA (State Funded)	58	33.3	62.1	100.0	43.3

Teacher training materials and advice for schools

This year saw a conference day in the Autumn term for the launch of the revised syllabus. This event was well attended by teachers from Central Bedfordshire and provided them with information about how the syllabus has changed since the last edition. The day also gave many practical examples of how to deliver engaging, practical RE in line with the new syllabus. Over 90% of attendees rated this training event as 'very good', with the rest rating it as 'good'.

There have been 2 primary Subject Leaders' meetings. A virtual meeting took place in the Spring Term and focused on creative teaching of RE. The second meeting was a face-to-face session in the Summer Term and concentrated on Ofsted's report into RE and teaching RE outside of the classroom.

Secondary colleagues met virtually in the Summer Term and investigated how to use texts effectively as a window into the study of religious belief. Building on the Ofsted comment that too many schools used proof texts out of context which distorted the meaning of the text, teachers used texts from Abrahamic and Dharmic religions as a catalyst for delving deeper into the rich tradition of hermeneutics in the classroom.

Other information

There were no formal complaints to SACRE about RE during the year.

Advice given to the Local Authority

SACRE provided formal advice to the Local Authority regarding the teaching of Religious Education (RE) in secondary schools. The Chair communicated concerns raised by a Freedom of Information request, indicating that some schools were not meeting statutory RE requirements. In response, the Head of School Improvement was asked to investigate these claims. The findings confirmed that all schools listed were fulfilling their statutory obligations, although some may refer to RE under different names, such as Philosophy and Ethics. Additionally, SACRE discussed strategies for enhancing networking among RE teachers and improving communication through a dedicated SACRE website, further emphasising the importance of RE in the educational framework.

Section 3: Collective worship

Standards and monitoring of Collective Worship

At the Summer Term meeting, SACRE discussed making Collective Worship a focus of next year's development plan.

Determinations

No determinations have been requested in the year 2023-2024. The determination procedure remains the same as for previous years whereby SACRE will receive and determine whether an application from a Headteacher to vary the requirement for worship of a broadly or mainly Christian character is appropriate for the whole school or for groups of pupils.

Teacher training provided

No training on Collective worship has been provided in 2023-2024.

Other information

There were no formal complaints to SACRE about collective worship during the year.

Advice to the Local Authority

No formal advice regarding Collective Worship was received.

Section 4: Links with other bodies

National Bodies

Central Bedfordshire SACRE are pleased to be linked with national bodies and receive national updates from Lat Blaylock and Julia Diamond-Conway, our RE advisers.

Central Bedfordshire SACRE has links with NASACRE and has received feedback from the NASACRE annual conference.

Information from NATRE and Ofsted has been used in meetings and shared with schools where appropriate.

Local bodies

St Albans Diocese provides excellent support to SACRE and SACRE is pleased to have its RE and Christian Ethos Adviser as a member of committee B and Vice Chair.

Central Bedfordshire schools engage with the Bedford Multi Faith Tour programme, of which SACRE has received positive reports.

Section 5: SACRE involvement in the Local Area

Governor and head teacher links

Head Teachers are represented on Committee C of SACRE. Strengthening Head Teacher and Governor links is a future area for development.

Advice on community issues

Advice has been provided to schools via newsletter regarding the Bedford Multi Faith Tours and virtual tours.

Section 6: Managing the SACRE and partnership with the Local Authority (LA)

Professional and administrative support

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

The Local Authority provided funding to support SACRE activity 2023-2024 by contracting with RE Today Services of an RE Consultant. This includes the consultant attending SACRE meetings, writing the statutory annual report, providing national updates and information and leading network meetings.

Lat Blaylock continued in the role of RE consultant for the first term of this academic year, after which the main body of the contracted work moved to Julia Diamond-Conway of RE Today Services.

Claire Mosselveld holds responsibility for SACRE support and liaises with the Chair of SACRE.

Membership

The table provided below demonstrates the composition of Central Bedfordshire's SACRE. This year, SACRE has been pleased to welcome new Humanist and Muslim representatives to committee A.

Membership of SACRE	Group Represents	Meetings Attended 2023 - 2024
Group A		
Roman Catholic Church (2)	A	
Sister Aidan Richards	A	Roman Catholic Church
Humanist (1)	A	
Ian Smith	A	Humanist
Free Church (3)	A	
Baptist	A	
Muslim (1)	A	
Serish Mubeen	A	Muslim
Hindu (1)	A	
Tulsi Seva Dasi	A	Hindu
		2
Sikh (1)	A	
Tirath Bhavra	A	Sikh
Jewish (1)	A	

Membership of SACRE	Group Represents	Meetings Attended 2023 - 2024
Nina Leigh	A Jewish	
Buddhist (1)	A	
Group B		
Church of England (3)	B	
Ryan Parker	B Church of England	2
Carly Woodall	B Church of England	
Revd Caren Topley	B Church of England	3
Group C		
Lower School Rep	C Sutton Lower School	
Lucy Chapman	C Lower School	4
Middle School Rep	C Robert Bloomfield Academy	
Michael Ward	C Middle School	1
Secondary RE Specialist	C	
Shannelle Coulson	C Redborne Upper School	
Lilian Ogunbiyi	C Queensbury Academy	
Lucia Saggese	C Manshead Academy	
Group D		
Cllr C Hegley	D	2
Cllr G Tranter	D	1
Cllr K Pughe	D	2
Cllr L Childs	D	3
Cllr P Daniels	D	3
Named Substitutes		
Cllr S Bell		
Cllr S Goodchild		

Membership of SACRE	Group Represents	Meetings Attended 2023 - 2024
Cllr M Versallion		1

Current Vacancies

Headteacher Representative

Special School Representative

Officers

Ms Julia Diamond, RE Today

Ms C Martin, Senior Committee Services Officer

Ms Lily Glowacki, Committee Services Officer

Training

SACRE teacher representatives have had the opportunity to attend network meetings and a full day's worth of CPD at the launch of the new Agreed Syllabus. One representative gave feedback from NASACRE's annual conference at the Summer Term meeting of SACRE, so that all members could benefit. Members of SACRE have received a presentation on the national Ofsted report for RE, which was published in April 2024.

Finance

The LA allocated £5320 for support to SACRE from the RE Consultant. £105 was utilised on NASACRE membership and £157.49 on the NASACRE conference. £1500 was spent on the development plan and £1250 on updating unit plans.

Appendix A:

Circulation of the Annual Report

The Central Bedfordshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Annual Report will be:

- Provided, via e-mail, to all SACRE Members
- Provided, via e-mail, to the Department for Education
- Provided, via e-mail, to NASACRE
- Published on the Local Authority website