



ANNUAL REPORT

of

**Cheshire East Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education September 2024 – August 2025
Celebrating Religious Education in Cheshire East**

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1. Introduction

This is the annual report for Cheshire East SACRE covering the academic period **from September 2024 to August 2025**.

1.1 Chair's Introduction

At the NASACRE conference this year Lord Khan of Burnley, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Lords Minister for Faith, Communities and Resettlement) had prepared a recorded message in which he said that knowledge and understanding of religion changes people, encourages social cohesion and equips pupils with an ability to interact with all. Religious education celebrates diversity and creates connection, rather than suspicion and an opportunity to explore shared values. Our Primary School Advisor, Lindsey McDade, attended the conference and led our SACRE in considering what this means to us in our role and validated the importance of making use of all of the skills and attributes of our members to ensure that every child in Cheshire East receives quality religious education.

I would like to thank all the dedicated members of Cheshire East SACRE for their time and contributions to SACRE's work during the past year, especially Sue Glover for her continuing support and training for our new School Advisors. Sue was the Primary School Advisor since SACRE's inception. She developed a good relationship with members of SACRE and RE teachers and this meant that the Agreed Syllabus is of a high standard and has been taught in most of our schools. Her expertise guided and supported SACRE in its work and schools in their teaching of RE. Sue retired from her post in July 2024, but remained with us in a role of quality assurance until July 2025. Sue will be sorely missed and we wish her all the best for the future.

I would also like to thank Joe Carter (LA SACRE Officer) for her invaluable support, ensuring that we have appropriate members in each SACRE section. Joe has also continued to ensure that the required funding is in place for SACRE's activities and I would also like to thank Monks Coppenthal school for their continued management of the finances. Thank you to Lindsey McDade, our Primary School Advisor and Rebecca Callister, our Secondary School Advisor for all their work supporting the teaching of this important subject in our schools. Thank you to our SACRE committee members who have supported SACRE's work and made invaluable contributions to SACRE discussions. Finally thank you to all the schools and their staff who teach R.E. to our young people.

This year Cheshire East SACRE's support for schools has focused on the development of teacher's knowledge of Religious education and especially in World religions. Our School Advisors have also supported teachers in accurately assessing RE and ways to develop knowledge retention.

The SACRE committee have looked at their role in supporting Community Cohesion in Cheshire East. This focus commenced with a presentation by Jo Bowkett (Team Manager for Cheshire East) who helped us understand what support work is in place and how we could support this work. Jo told us about the changing communities within Cheshire East including over- seas arrivals to CE; homes for Ukraine and the Afghan resettlement scheme. Jo also pointed us towards cultural resources to help schools.

The committee is also using the NASACRE self- assessment form to look at how we can restructure our work to be more proactive as a committee in supporting the work of our school advisors.

Hazel Brown
(CE SACRE Chair)

1.2 Overview of academic year September 2024- August 2025

Three SACRE Committee Meetings were held during the Year. The usual agenda items remained constant at each meeting. These were: Primary & Secondary reports from our RE Advisors which included network attendance; analysis of Ofsted reports and school websites; Sector Led improvement work; monitoring the syllabus and ongoing teacher support. Budget updates from LA and national updates from NASACRE briefings were also discussed and a section of our SEF was reviewed at each meeting.

Date	Venue	Key agenda item
12.11.24	TEAMS meeting	Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Justice (EDIJ) – evaluation of practice eg Black History Month presented by Sue Glover. SG re-iterated the value of the CE SACRE Project - Lived Experience! Real People, Real Lives, Real Places and Real Communities in celebrating diversity SEF – Members evaluated section 5- Community Cohesion
12.03.25	Elworth CE VC Primary	Jo Bowkett (Cheshire East Team Manager) presentation – Community Cohesion and Education with an emphasis on what Cheshire East is doing to support Community Cohesion. Discussions took place as to how SACRE could impact on their work and how Cheshire East could support SACRE’s work SEF - Section 5: Community Cohesion, 5d (SACRE’s role within wider LA initiatives on community cohesion) was assessed as ‘Established
3.07.25	Wybunbury Delves CE Primary	OPPORTUNITIES TO CELEBRATE RELIGIOUS AND NON-RELIGIOUS WORLD VIEWS A discussion on Community Cohesion and identification of opportunities to celebrate both religious and non-religious world views and how this could link to or support existing Cheshire East work - Members noted the following occasions: - Faith and Belief Forum events • World Interfaith Harmony Week • Inter Faith Week SEF section 1 reviewed: discussion regarding impact of poor attendance this year in Committees C and D on the grading of 1b . The committee also questioned the input of committee members as currently meetings are often dominated by the Advisors. It was agreed to aim to make future meetings more interactive and enable everyone to share their knowledge and skills. Teachers share knowledge and skills at the network meetings. The committee also agreed that there should be more cohesion between the LA’s initiative and SACRE. It was agreed to retain established in 1b and 1d

We have, throughout the year, continued to support schools in using our Agreed Syllabus and where appropriate in adapting it to their individual needs. A number of schools have been searching for a commercial syllabus to support RE teaching and SACRE has planned ongoing research and evaluation work to support these requests. In the meantime, where schools have already purchased a scheme SACRE have been instrumental in identifying disparities between the scheme and our Agreed Syllabus.

2. Advice given to Statutory Bodies/ and response where appropriate

2.1 Advice given to the Local Authority

Our LA SACRE Officer has been present at all meetings this year and has been part of the discussions about outcomes in RE education and the support that has been given to schools throughout the year. An end of year review by the Chair identified that the School reports would provide more useful information to the LA if they were more focused on the outcomes of network meetings rather than reporting on the content. This will be a focus for next year. SACRE aims to be more specific next year on action/improvement points that the LA can then note and action.

SACRE produce and publish an Annual report that provides a wealth of information about religious education and examination results in schools supporting the local authority in understanding the strength and weaknesses in RE in our schools. SACRE aims to be more specific about action/improvement points in order to make it clearer what the LA can do to support any improvements.

SACRE's understanding and engagement with the community cohesion agenda and links to wider LA community cohesion initiatives as exemplified in 5c and 5d of our SEF, highlights the committee's alignment to the LA's principle of inclusion. As part of this ongoing work, members were invited to review the LA's draft Inclusion Strategy On A Page and to take part in the Strategy Consultation

2.2 Advice given to schools

The focus for RE networks for the first term was on informal moderation. Feedback was very positive from those who attended. People appreciated the opportunity to share ideas and celebrate good practice. The group requested that this becomes a regular slot going forward. Additionally, telephone &/or email support was given to approximately 15 schools who requested advice on statutory obligations regarding the RE Agreed Syllabus and Collective worship. This provided support for the implementation of the locally Agreed Cheshire East RE Syllabus. At a Primary Network meeting a Secondary colleague created resources that showed how Assessment works in secondary schools and during the meeting the teachers discussed how these could be adapted to work in Primary Schools. Feedback was very positive from those who attended.

The second Primary Network meeting looked at schemes that would fit with Cheshire East syllabus. Many schools would like to buy in a scheme and SACRE will research the compatibility issue further.

Our Secondary school Advisor has worked with a school to develop their KS3 curriculum following their OFSTED report and given support to develop a KS4 core RE curriculum to support students who do not sit the GCSE. She has also supported a special school to identify ways of adapting the Locally Agreed Syllabus for their students. This work is ongoing.

Both the Primary and Secondary School Advisors have supported a number of individual schools on a range of matters including exam preparation, assessment, moderation and using the Locally agreed syllabus.

SACRE School Advisors have also focused on 'Improving Teacher's RE Subject Knowledge'. In Autumn 2023 the focus was Judaism & Islam, in Spring 2024 it was Sikh & Hindu Dharma and in the Summer Term Buddhism & Humanism. Feedback from teachers was very positive. The Primary Advisor has since had a number of requests to forward the material from the networks to school leaders unable to attend the hubs. These PowerPoints were then added to the diversity project and all these documents are available to all schools on the Cheshire East hub.

The Secondary Advisor (SA) produces a bulletin for our Secondary schools giving links to useful information and events. She has worked with schools looking at a joint curriculum between secondary school and primary feeders. The SA has worked with schools to develop their Curriculums to ensure that they have a curriculum that is in line with the LAS. She is also trying to develop links with local ITT providers to run sessions for those

teaching RE.

2.3 Advice and links to the Government and other bodies

Our Annual report is submitted each year so that NASACRE and other external bodies are kept informed regarding Religious Education in Cheshire East.

The Cheshire East SACRE is a member of the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education (NASACRE). The NASACRE briefings ‘SACRE News’ are much valued by SACRE members, providing useful insight into the activities of SACREs and the teaching of RE across the country. Our Primary Advisor attended the AGM and reported back to SACRE. Cheshire East SACRE value NASACRE trainings with members attending the ‘New to SACRE’ courses, inter faith webinars and a session on effective hub leadership.

3. Standards and quality of RE provision

3.1 Public Examinations 2025 (See appendix)

Key points:

GCSE

- 152 fewer pupils sat the GCSE than in 2024 which is the lowest number for 4 years
- The percentage of pupils sitting the RE GCSE and attaining a grade was the same as in 2024 (97%)
- The percentage attaining the higher grades (9-5) decreased by 2% from 58% last year to 56% this year
- The percentage of girls attaining a grade was the same as in 2024 whereas for boys there had been a decrease from 96% in 2024 to 95% in 2025
- In 2025 the percentage of boys attaining the higher grades (9-5) was significantly less than the girls (51%/65%) however the percentage of boys achieving the higher grades had increased from 2024 (51%/48%)

Areas for development

- Encourage more pupil and in particular boys to take RE
- Focus on how to increase the number of boys attaining the higher grades
- Identify how much curriculum time and support is given to students in schools and look at whether SACRE could give support to individual schools or develop more school to school support and look at the correlation between curriculum time and attainment
- Identify good practice in our primary schools through consultation with Secondary schools

A Level

- All 10 ‘A’ level providers (16-18years) in Cheshire East entered at least 1 pupil for A level RE. The range for the number of entrants was 1-15 with All Hallows College entering the most pupils (15) closely followed by Brine Leas and The Fallibroome Academy with 13 entrants. All Hallows and Brine Leas were also our highest performing schools; both attaining 100% A-C. Fallibroome attained 69% A-E.
- Two pupils out of 81 (2%) pupils entered achieved A* 15 (18.5%) achieving an A grade and 24 pupils or 35% achieved a B and 63 pupils achieving A-C.

Areas for development

- Analyse individual school data annually to build up a picture of individual school performances and to enable SACRE to focus their support appropriately
- Encourage all schools who are performing well to share good practice with other schools
- Analyse gender data
- Use data for Disadvantaged pupils to support SACRE’s work with Cheshire East on RADY (Raising

3.2 Attainment in RE not covered by public Examination

This is assessed through informal book sharing and assessment meetings. Teachers are able to share pupil's work and discuss pupil progress. Teachers particularly find sharing pupil's greater depth work useful as many seem to be reticent to award GD and it is useful to see what other teachers are categorizing as GD. Teachers have also said that they find the Knowledge Organisers useful as an assessment tool.

3.3 Quality of RE provision in school

The Cheshire East Agreed syllabus (AS) is used in many of Cheshire East schools and schools are exploring ways to assess learning of RE. Many feel the revised syllabus provides support in this area. Copies of the syllabus and additional supplementary materials can be found on the webpage: <http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/schools/sacre.aspx> or on the **CHESS resource hub** [Cheshire East RE Agreed Syllabus 2022-2027 \(Statutory\) | Chess Hub](#)

SACRE monitor and support the provision of high quality RE and CW by:

- a) Analysis of Ofsted Reports– Section 5 and Section 8 Ofsted inspection reports identify the performance of schools and occasionally make specific reference to Religious Education. The reports for schools in the authority which have been visited by Ofsted are analysed for each SACRE meeting and reported upon at SACRE meetings. However currently most OFSTED inspections make little or no reference to RE. In our review during the Summer 2025 it was decided that a more effective use of SACRE's time is to focus on website content and then to utilise this information to provide focused support for an individual school or to encourage a school to share good practice.
- b) Our R.E. School Advisors also analyse the school websites to see what indicators of performance can be seen. This is particularly useful to show what importance schools put on the subject alongside other national curriculum areas. Success is then celebrated with schools by means of a congratulatory letter. If concerns are raised, then advice and support is offered by the SACRE appointed School Advisors, Lindsey McDade (Primary) and Rebecca Callister (Secondary).
- c) Conversation: Network meetings for RE identify what is happening in specific schools. This source of information is also an area that has been identified by SACRE for development. Next year we aim to be more focused in the way that this information is collated and to utilise this information to provide support or to share good practice.
- d) Concerns: This is through matters raised by schools and teachers directly with SACRE.
- e) SACRE Concerns: These are issues raised by SACRE members themselves. Eg direct concerns raised over the lack of contact with diverse communities or other cultures within the local area is often an issue for schools and this makes it difficult for schools to fully demonstrate a developed understanding of other faiths and cultures. The Visit and Visitors guide is contained within the Handbook Part 2 of the Agreed Syllabus was written to address these concerns.
- f) Primary School RE and Secondary RE Department Support is offered by Rebecca Callister and Lindsey McDade (RE Advisors) through telephone calls, emails, and network meetings.

3.4 Withdrawal from RE

The number of pupils in primary schools currently withdrawing from the subject are very few across the authority and where there are small pockets, this is due to religious affiliation namely members of Plymouth Brethren, Jehovah's Witnesses, and very rarely a few Muslim pupils. Data is less readily available for secondary schools.

3.5 Complaints about RE

SACRE has received no complaints about RE this year.

3.6 REQM Awards

Schools of all types are encouraged to apply for the RE Quality Mark award. Current Cheshire East school holders are as follows:

Alsager Secondary School Gold 5.6.23

Handforth Grange Silver 15.7.22

Calveley Primary Academy Gold 25.3.24

Shavington Academy Gold 20.07.22

These awards are held for 5 years.

4. Collective Worship – Statutory Responsibilities

4.1 Compliance with Statutory requirements

- The last questionnaire (Autumn 2023) identified that whilst most schools were compliant regarding having daily acts of collective worship there was some discrepancies in the understanding of what constitutes CW
- Local faith leaders contribute to CW in some areas of the county particularly where there are youth leaders to support this.
- Varied weekly timetables of collective worship are the norm in schools.
- Collective worship is led by a variety of staff but mainly Senior Management.
- There is variety regarding the provision for collective worship from school to school and within schools eg. whole school, Key stage CW and Class or form CW.
- There are a small number of pupils withdrawn from CW mainly Jehovah Witnesses or Muslims, although there were a couple of SEND children withdrawn for support work.

4.2 Standards and Monitoring of Collective Worship

(source of information : SACRE Collective Worship questionnaire (Autumn 2023))

- Many schools gather pupil voice at every session; some schools ask pupils occasionally (e.g. termly or annually); some schools do not monitor the impact of CW.
- Key things pupils enjoy are visitors, being together, listening to music and singing; celebrations; being inclusive, moving around in groups, videos, praying. In some schools the pupils lead collective worship using format : Gather, Listen, Response, Send Forth.
- Negative feedback from pupils included CW being too long; some pupils prefer to sit in groups rather than lines; not being able to ask questions.
- Several schools said CW sets/affects their goals for the week and provides reflection time. Staff see improvement in behaviour and personal relationships; several felt CW develops respect and tolerance. One school identified that Collective worship helped children think spiritually rather than materialistically which they felt helped with mental health. Prayer has a calming affect.

4.3 Determinations

There were no determinations in Cheshire East during the Year 2024-2025.

4.4 Teacher training advice on Collective Worship

Our Secondary School Advisor has contacted the local SCITT programme- whilst the SCITT has an RE

specialist who supports trainee teachers, SACRE has offered to run sessions in new academic year for the incoming cohort to introduce them to the work of SACRE and to provide any Collective Worship support that is required. SACRE is working to establish an Early Career Teacher network to provide support. These partnerships will continue to be developed.

4.5 Complaints about Collective Worship

SACRE has received no complaints about CW in the year 2024-2025.

5. Contribution of SACRE to the wider LA agenda

5.1 SACRE’s Contribution to LA agendas including Public Sector equality and Duty

SACRE have continued to promote the documents that it produced last year titled ‘Lived experience - Real People, Real Lives, Real Places and Real Communities.’ This document supports Cheshire East’s focus on Community Cohesion.

5.2 SACRE’s links to broader Community initiatives

- Our LA SACRE Officer is leading in the LA in terms of Raising the Attainment of Disadvantaged Youngsters (RADY) which focuses schools to consider the untapped potential of every Disadvantaged learner and provides a framework for schools to close the gap as early as possible. SACRE are working with the LA to see how RE (and SACRE) could support the disadvantaged objective.
- One of the LA’s key principles of inclusion is that ‘*inclusion is community collaboration*’ which supports a vision of ‘all staff supporting the learning, wellbeing and safety needs of all our children so that they belong, achieve and thrive’ SACRE are currently looking at the role they play in supporting the LA achieve its vision.

6. Cheshire East SACRE Management

6.1 Attendance

Meeting	Attendance and committees represented
12 th November 2023	A- 75% B- 0% C- 50% D- 50%
12th March 2024	A -38% B- 67% C- 0% D – 0%

3rd July 2024	<p>A- 63%</p> <p>B- 100%</p> <p>C- 0%</p> <p>D- 0%</p>

Cheshire East SACRE have had an issue this year with attendance in categories C and D. Our LA Officer continues to work with the Chair to secure new members for both of these categories. The format of the meetings will change for 2025-2026 to make the meetings more interactive to help members realise that their input is valued and acted upon. It is envisaged that this should improve attendance in all categories.

Percentage of Cheshire East Residents by religion: [source](#)

Religion	Christian	Muslim	Hindu	Buddhist	Jewish	Sikh	Other	No religion	No replies
Cheshire East 2011	68.9%	0.7%	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.3%	22.7%	6.7%
Cheshire East 2021	54.3%	1.0%	0.5%	0.3%	0.2%	0.1%	0.4%	37.7%	5.5%
North West 2011	67.3%	5.1%	0.5%	0.3%	0.4%	0.1%	0.3%	0.3%	25.7%
North West 2021	52.5%	7.6%	0.7%	0.3%	0.4%	0.2%	0.4%	32.6%	5.3%
England & Wales 2011	59.4%	5.0%	1.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.8%	0.4%	25.2%	7.1%
England & Wales 2021	46.2%	6.5%	1.7%	0.5%	0.5%	0.9%	0.6%	37.2%	6.0%
Global y 2022	31.6%	25.8%	15.1%	6.6%	0.2%	0.5%	0.8%	14.4%	Folk 5.8%

Cheshire East SACRE representation has full group on Committee A, from a number of Christian denominations and Other Religions. Two Church of England representatives sit on Committee B. The second most practiced religion in Cheshire East is Islam (0.7%).

Membership of Cheshire East SACRE during Academic Year 2024/2025

A.Name	Denomination/Religion
Laurie Bailey	Baha'i
Les Biddulph	Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints
Jay Vaja	Hinduism
Cathy Smeaton	Unitarian
Sandra Stewart	Judaism
Hazel Brown	Catholic (Chair)
Rhoda Bailey	Methodist
Irene Faseyi	WSCF
Gillian Merry	Methodist
Mr G Nicholson	Humanist representative
B. Name	
Fiona Pulle	Church of England
Revd David Page	Church of England
C Name	Association
Chris Cooney	NUT
Lindsey McDade	UNISON
D Name	
Cllr Brendan Murphy	CEC
Cllr Brian Puddicombe	CEC
Cllr Alan Gage	CEC
Officers	2023/24
Lindsey McDade	Primary Consultant
Rebecca Callister	Secondary Consultant
Sue Glover	Primary RE support Consultant
Joe Carter	Cheshire East LA SACRE Officer

As can be seen from the above tables Cheshire East SACRE is a true representation of the residents of Cheshire East.

6.2 Professional and administrative support

- The local authority provides administrative support through a Clerk, Marc Booker .
- Cheshire East local authority officer Joe Carter provides direct links to the local council and also manages the budget.
- Professional advice and support this year came through our two RE SACRE Advisors Lindsey McDade (Primary) and Rebecca Callister (Secondary).

An annual budget of £11,654 was provided for the general work of SACRE (2024-2025) including administration and additional sector led improvement funding for specific initiatives. The budget covers all administrative support, payment for Advisor's Supply cover, NASACRE, admin support for finances, and any special projects which may involve resources and supply cover for teachers who are involved.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - Examination Statistics 2019-2025 (NB No data exists for Covid Year 2020/21)

	Cheshire East 2019 (national averages shown in brackets)	Cheshire East 2022 (national averages shown in brackets)	Cheshire East 2023 (national averages shown in brackets)	Cheshire East 2024 (national averages shown in brackets)	Cheshire East 2025 (national averages shown in brackets)
Full Course GCSE Religious Studies					
Number of candidates entered	1,295	1,775	1,624	1,657	1,505
Number of grades A* -C/ grades 9-5	794	1,128	939	934	876
Percentage gaining A* -C/ grades 9-5	61.3% (59.2%)	63.6% (59%)	57.9% (61.1%)	56.4% (60.1%)	58% (60)
Percentage gaining A* -G/ grades 9-1	98.5% (98.2%)	98.9% (89%)	97.2% (97.8%)	96.6% (97%)	97% (97%)
Percentage of cohort entered	34.7% (29.7%)	44.3%	39.6% (26.9%)	39% (No data)	n/a
GCE 'A' Level Religious Studies					
Number of candidates entered	75	No data	47	70	81
Number of grades A-E	75	No data	47	69	77
Percentage gaining grades A-E	100% (97.7%)	No data	100	98.57% (98.1%)	95%

APPENDIX B - LA Publications

Religious Education Agreed Syllabus - *Engaging Encounter, Reasoned Response & Connecting Communities*

The locally agreed syllabus and the accompanying Handbooks and all other documentation for religious education in primary and secondary schools is available on the Cheshire East SACRE website. <http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/schools/sacre.aspx> and also on the CHESSE Resource Hub <https://www.chesshub.co.uk/Page/16677>

LA guidance on Collective Worship

Guidance on Collective Worship for community schools can be found under ‘SACRE documents’ on the Cheshire East SACRE website.

SACRE Annual Report

Further copies of the annual SACRE reports are available from the Clerk to SACRE, Marc Booker and these are also on the SACRE webpage. Queries about publications should be made in the first instance to the SACRE clerk.

APPENDIX C - SACRE Development Plan

APPENDIX D - Statutory Functions

These continue to remain the same in line with government legislation:

- To advise the LA on matters relating to RE and collective worship; methods of teaching; choice of teaching material; provision of teacher training.
- To determine any applications from head teachers for dis application in relation to the general requirements for collective worship.
- To monitor the effective provision for RE in community and controlled schools.
- To consider whether changes need to be made in the Agreed RE Syllabus or the support offered to schools.
- To support the effective provision for collective worship in schools.
- To monitor the provision of daily collective worship in schools and consider how to improve such provision.
- To publish an annual report on its work which is circulated to the DFE & NASACRE.

APPENDIX E - Distribution

The Cheshire East SACRE annual report is sent to the following:

- NASACRE (National Association of SACREs)
- DfE (via NASACRE)
- Cheshire East Schools and Colleges

- Members of the Cheshire East SACRE & Representatives of local faith communities
- Lead Member for Children's Services
- Children and Families Committee
- Local Diocesan Board of Education