



Foreward

It gives me great pleasure to write this foreword for Devon SACRE's 2024/5 Annual Report. This has been a remarkable and productive year, with many positive developments in Religious Education across Devon schools.

We are fortunate to have a dedicated and diverse Committee, bringing together university academics, headteachers, classroom practitioners, local councillors, union representatives, Church of England members, and voices from diverse faiths and worldviews. The thoughtful discussions and strong attendance at each meeting reflect the Committee's commitment and expertise.

We are particularly grateful for the tireless work carried out by our RE advisor, Ed Pawson, who is both remarkable and prolific in his work in the local, regional and national realms of religion and worldviews.

We would also like to thank Devon County Council for their ongoing support, which enables us to offer a rich Agreed Syllabus, host conferences and launch events, and sustain the Learn Teach Lead RE initiative.

The launch of the 2024–2029 Devon and Torbay Agreed Syllabus was enthusiastically received in Plymouth, Exeter, and Bideford, with contributions from the RE Today co-writers. The Syllabus is now widely used, often alongside enhanced RE Today materials and the newly re-launched DfE-backed Oak Academy resources.

Our Learn Teach Lead RE Hubs, subsidised by Devon SACRE, continue to support teachers across the county, providing updates, shared best practice, and training. The annual SW LTLRE Conference at St Mellion was fully attended, featuring workshops and talks from academics, teachers, and faith and belief representatives. Local Hubs also offer triannual twilight training, often collaborating to provide a comprehensive programme for educators. The Young Ambassadors Project, involving Year 9–11 students from Okehampton College, culminated in July 2025 with a visit to Westminster hosted by Sir Mel Stride, MP for Central Devon, culminating in a Round Table discussion with MPs and parliamentarians, advocating passionately for the importance of RE in schools.

With its pioneering approach, Devon SACRE is shaping the future of Religious Education, fostering a generation of young people equipped to embrace, challenge, and transform the world of Religion and Worldviews.

Belinda Twiggs (SACRE Chair)

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1 Introduction

Membership

Leaving

During the year Devon SACRE said goodbye to two of its most long-standing and valued members. We were deeply saddened to hear of the death of Saxon Spence, who was a dedicated SACRE member, first as a County Councillor and then as a co-optee. SACRE also said farewell to Cllr Christine Channon, who stepped down after a long and distinguished period of service. Both gave great support to the teaching of great RE in Devon schools. SACRE also bid farewell to: Prof Susanne Cornwall, Leonore Newson, Rosemary Khreisheh, Cllr Colin Slade, Cllr Ron Peart, Cllr Debo Sellis, Cllr Tracy Adams and Cllr Janet Bradford

Joining

SACRE is pleased to welcome new members: Rosie Lee (LTLRE), Prof Brandon Gallaher (Exeter University), Nic Gibson (Pagan Community), Jenny Morse (Buddhist Community), Neomi Alam (Exeter Mosque, co-opted), Cllr Graham Bell, Cllr Jack Eade, Cllr Ed Hill, Cllr Nick Hookway, Cllr Andrew Leadbetter, Cllr Neil Stevens.

We would like to thank Simon Bissett for his support as LA lead for SACRE over recent years, and welcome Alice McShane to this role.

Details of Devon SACRE meetings

November 2024: 18 attendees, plus clerk and adviser, hybrid meeting

February 2025: 25 attendees, plus clerk and adviser, hybrid meeting

June 2025: 23 attendees, plus clerk and adviser, hybrid meeting

All meetings were quorate.

SACRE has been well led this year by Belinda Twiggs (Chair) and Kelly Keatley (Vice-Chair).

2 SACRE's statutory responsibilities

2.1 The new Local Agreed Syllabus (2024-29)

The new agreed syllabus, launched in June 2024, has been well received by schools. RE leads report that they are embedding the new Religion and Worldviews approaches into their teaching and learning planning. Both community and Church schools have found the new teaching frameworks helpful.

A primary teacher survey reveals that 96% of schools are using the new syllabus, with 71% reporting that it has been fully implemented. 82% of respondents expressed confidence in their understanding of the term 'religion and worldviews'.

Responses show that the new units on teaching about Humanism, caring for the world and diversity within and across religions have been particularly helpful. The development of Ways of Knowing and the use of disciplinary lenses has been well received. Confidence in delivering the syllabus is moderate, and future training needs have been identified.

Paid-for training sessions were offered in 2024/5, but due to low take-up the dates had to be cancelled. Much of the post-launch training has been provided through the Learn Teach Lead RE hub networks, offering free twilight training CPD.

2.2 Standards and monitoring in RE

2.2.1 Secondary schools

Data from the DfE annual workforce survey points to the fact that several schools appear not to be meeting statutory expectations for teaching RE. Some schools are only teaching RE for 1 hour every fortnight at KS3 and 4. Some schools are dropping RE in Year 11.

Schools have been contacted and conversations with headteachers and senior leaders have taken place to explore further and offer input to encourage them to develop the place of RE in the curriculum.

2.2.2 GCSE Religious Studies exam results 2025 (see Appendices 1 and 2)

Exam results data shows a wide spread of entries for GCSE RS, from schools entering their whole Y11 cohort to those entering few or no students. The percentage of Y11 cohort in Devon schools who were entered for GCSE RS has dropped by more than half in the last 7 years from 58% in 2018 to 23.8% in 2025. This fall demonstrates a significant reduction and reflects the increased competition in many schools for GCSE option choices. This is, in part, due to pressures from EBAC subjects, so it is encouraging to understand that the Curriculum and Assessment Review has recommended that EBAC measures should be discontinued. SACRE is keen to work with schools to explore ways in which they can offer RS as a GCSE exam option. It is vital for the subject to continue to be offered as a subject to be studied at higher levels, helping to create the next generation of RE teachers in our schools.

2.2.3 Primary schools

Monitoring of RE in primary schools continues through sampling of websites and scrutiny of recent Ofsted reports. Over 70% of Ofsted reports include a mention of issues relating to SACRE's purpose (eg RE, collective worship or SMSC) and the majority of these comments are positive.

Where SACRE has concerns, schools have been contacted to raise issues about standards or profile of the subject. SACRE officers have had conversations with a number of schools where their Ofsted report has highlighted weaknesses in RE or related areas. Where RE is mentioned positively schools have been contacted to thank them for their strong provision. Resources have been shared and advice has been given to a number of schools with regard to parental requests for withdrawal from RE (and/or collective worship). In particular, the Devon LTLRE hub leaders continue to be an important resource in being available to offer support and guidance where schools make contact for help.

3 Collective Worship

The current guidance on collective worship and school assemblies from Devon SACRE is still in date. This guidance supports schools in developing a suitable CW policy and encouraging active pupil participation in assemblies. We want to help schools put in place effective practice, offering opportunities for reflective experiences for their pupils. The guidance document offers an explanation of the legal obligations, including the right to withdrawal, and outlines some of the rich opportunities that assemblies/ collective worship can offer pupils for spiritual, moral, social, cultural and personal development.

There have been no formal complaints about collective worship in schools and no applications for determinations.

4 Links with other bodies

4.1 Strong partnerships

Strong partnerships are a hallmark of the way Devon SACRE operates. We have good links with a number of organisations, working closely with Devon County Council, the Diocese of Exeter, the Universities of Exeter and St Mark and St John, Devon Faith and Belief Forum and Torbay Faith and Belief Forum.

The SACRE Adviser attends the annual conferences for AREIAC (Association of RE Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants) and NASACRE (National Association of SACREs), and sits on the

AREIAC executive and the Board of the REC (Religious Education Council). He coordinates the SW AREIAC network of advisers (SWARE), organises the annual SW SACRE conference and acts in the role of RE Hubs lead for the SW. The 2025 SW SACRE conference hosted inputs from a number of regional and national RE figures, offering workshops on a range of important inputs for SACRE member training. The keynote address was given by Professor Trevor Cooling on Knowledge in RE.

During the year, Devon SACRE officers attended a regional 'In Conversation' forum, hosted by RE Hubs and NASACRE, to receive updates and discuss issues of SACRE effectiveness.

4.2 Devon Faith and Beliefs Forum

SACRE works closely with the Devon Faith and Belief Forum and Torbay Faith and Belief Forum to establish strong links to local faith and belief organisations. This enables schools to draw on visitors to school classrooms and to inform who will be the most suitable faith and belief representatives when member vacancies occur.

4.3 Learn, Teach, Lead RE

Devon SACRE is pleased to continue to partner and give funding support to the Learn, Teach, Lead RE programme (LTLRE). The Devon LTLRE hub groups continue to offer excellent support teachers of RE, setting up termly twilight meetings and networking opportunities. Hub leaders continue to be a significant resource to teachers of RE in their locality, and termly training days enable hub leaders to keep up to date with current RE issues and initiatives.

The 2024 LTLRE conference was well supported, with over 90 teachers attending from across the region. Both conference and hub meeting evaluations show how valuable teachers are finding these networking and CPD offers.

Here is a sample of the evaluation comments from conference delegates:

- Great networking opportunity
- Practical ideas for staff development
- Understand how to implement a worldviews approach
- Inspiring, uplifting, imaginative, motivating
- Great choice of workshops for beginners and experienced teachers
- Fantastic wide range of workshops

5 SACRE: local involvement

5.1 RE Newsletter

The half termly RE newsletter gives schools in depth support, information and networking links. It signposts current CPD, hub groups and conferences. Through this newsletter SACRE signposts guidance to schools about significant events, eg religious festivals such as Easter, Ramadan and Diwali, Interfaith Week etc

5.2 Holocaust Memorial Day

SACRE officers organise Holocaust Memorial Day events in Exeter for schools every year, attended by some Devon schools. On Holocaust Memorial Day in January 2025 a ceremony was held at Exeter Cathedral where schools participated in remembrance and reflection. The theme, For a Better Future, provided a poignant opportunity for pupils to reflect on issues of conflict in today's society.

Over 250 school pupils were involved in the Exeter events from eight schools across the area. Presentations were given on Kindertransport, the Gypsy Holocaust and Holocaust history. The closing ceremony was hosted by the Jewish community.

HMD resources and [links](#) were shared with schools.

5.3 Faith and Belief Schools' Visitor Training

During the year, a Faith and Belief visitors' training day has been run, led by a qualified professional trainer. It was well-attended, with a diverse participant group and the feedback was very positive. The aim of the event was to provide visitors with an understanding of what RE is like in schools, to develop relevant skills and build confidence. Schools, Colleges and Community Groups need skilled faith and belief speakers who can educate and inspire, sharing genuine 'lived experience'.

5.4 Multi-faith Centre, Exeter University

SACRE was pleased to be informed about the opening of the new Multi-faith Centre at Exeter University.

6 SACRE: regional and national involvement

6.1 Curriculum and Assessment Review (CaAR)

Devon SACRE was pleased to contribute to the consultation for the DfE's Curriculum Review. In particular SACRE expressed its concern about the huge and unjustifiable variability of standards for RE in schools both locally and nationally. SACRE emphasised the need for a National Content Standard and gave support for the idea of RE becoming part of the National Curriculum.

Concerns were expressed regarding the huge crisis in RE teacher recruitment and the poor provision in training bursaries. SACRE also highlighted the need for systemic support and funding for the subject.

6.2 National Content Standard

SACRE is fully supportive of the REC's [National Content Standard](#). The NCS provides a benchmark for excellence in religion and worldviews in schools or across a MATs in England. SACRE is pleased to support the NCS as a basis for a possible future National Curriculum in RE.

6.3 RE Hubs

SACRE continues to be supportive of the [RE Hubs](#) initiative, which is providing teachers with a 'one-stop-shop' website, offering links to [school speakers](#), places of interest, CPD events, local network groups, blogs and resources etc. The school speakers database is of particular importance for schools who want to invite people into their classrooms with a particular 'lived experience' relating to the worldviews they are studying.

6.4 Young Ambassadors for Freedom of Religion or Belief

The Devon SACRE Advisor has been partnering with the Dartmoor Multi-Academy Trust to train up a group of Young Ambassadors for RE and for Freedom of Religion or Belief. The project ran from 2023-25, in collaboration with RE staff at the Okehampton College, working with students from Years 9-11. The aim was to skill the students to become spokespersons, able to express the importance of high quality RE in the classroom, and with an understanding of the value of Freedom of Religion or Belief in wider society.

These are some of the group's achievements over two years:

- creating short films for a national REady work campaign, inspired by Lord Bilimoria, which advocates for the importance of RE in the workplace
- Campaigning about the need for a suitable prayer room in the school
- Generating questions to be answered by Children's Commissioner Rachel De Souza

- Visiting places of Religion and Worldviews significance in Exeter, including the Exeter Synagogue, The Quaker Meeting House and Exeter Mosque
- Working with and inspiring their primary school peers
- Giving a presentation at the RE agreed syllabus launch event
- Planning Interfaith Week activities
- Speaking at the Enthronement of Bishop of Exeter
- Candle lighting and speaking at Exeter Cathedral HMD event
- Leading HMD assemblies across the whole school
- Hosting a community Iftar for local Muslim families in Okehampton
- Visiting Parliament to lead round table event, speaking with MPs about Religious Education in schools
- Taking on leadership roles in school, setting up debate and politics clubs, Christian Union Club and Pride alliance
- Bringing Sir Mel Stride MP into school to talk to him regarding Education and RE within Okehampton College

SACRE has, on several occasions, invited the Young Ambassadors to come to address a SACRE meeting, but this hasn't, so far, been possible.

The project is led by the Association of RE Inspectors and Advisers (AREIAC) and funded by Culham St Gabriel's Trust.

7 SACRE organisation

7.1 SACRE leadership and organisation

Devon SACRE is well served through its clerk (Yvette Welsh), LA lead (Simon Bissett/Alice McShane), LA admin support (Sally Watts), Chair (Belinda Twiggs), Vice-Chair (Kelly Keatley) and adviser (Ed Pawson). Devon County Council is responsive to SACRE's needs and supportive in its administration and organisation. It is well supported financially.

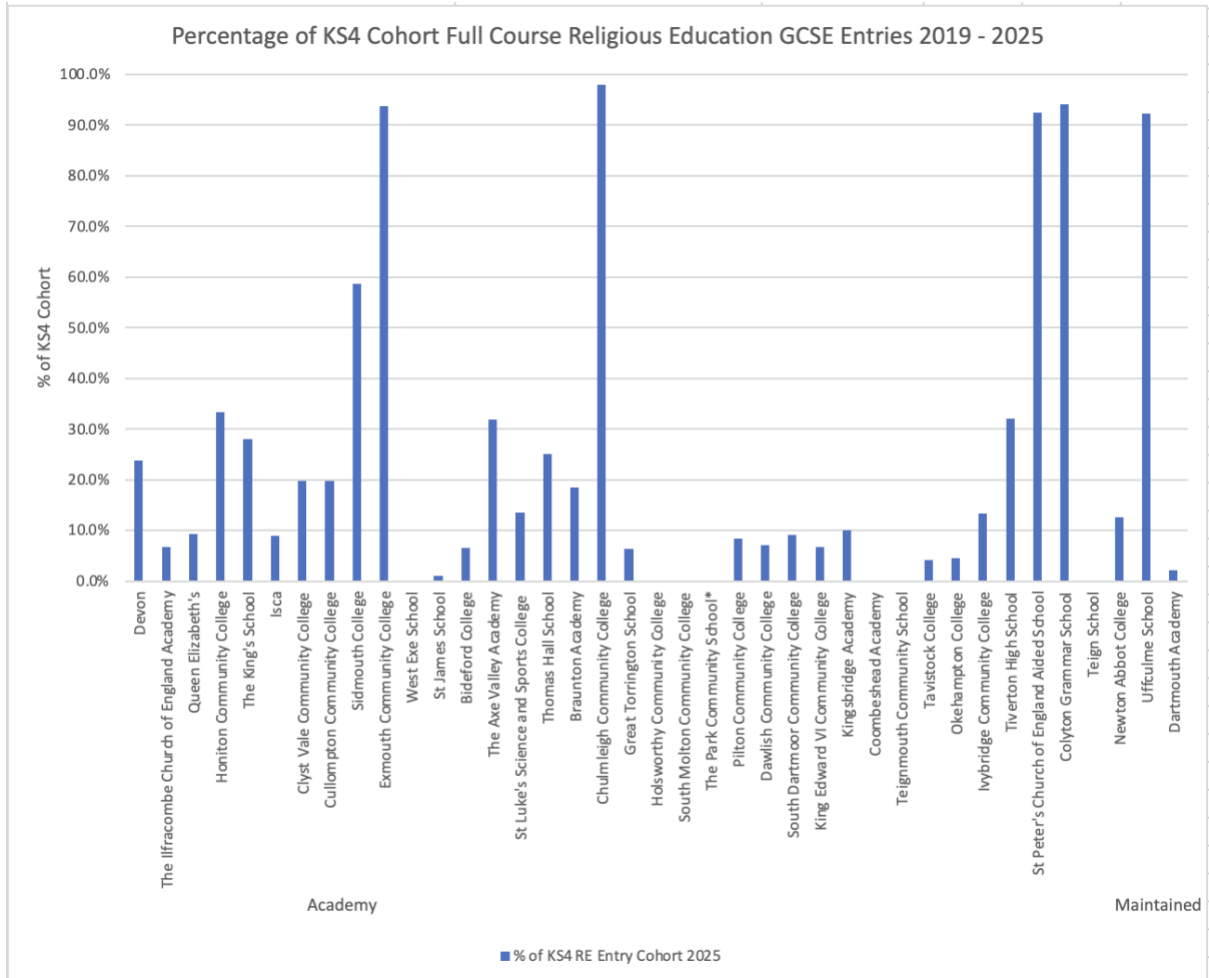
SACRE membership is vibrant and well-engaged, although there are still a few significant vacancies.

A number of SACRE members have taken advantage of useful training opportunities over the last year, both through attendance at the SW SACRE conference and national online NASACRE training events.

8 Appendices

Appendix 1

Percentage of KS4 Cohort Full Course Religious Studies GCSE Entries 2025 (Devon schools)



Appendix 2
Religious Studies Full Course GCSE Outcomes 2025

School Name	9-7	9-5	9-4	9-1
The Ilfracombe Church of England Academy	66.7%	83.3%	91.7%	100.0%
Queen Elizabeth's	50.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Honiton Community College	32.5%	65.0%	75.0%	97.5%
The King's School	40.0%	68.0%	80.0%	98.0%
Isca	70.6%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Clyst Vale Community College	25.7%	65.7%	74.3%	100.0%
Sidmouth College	14.3%	48.8%	64.3%	100.0%
Exmouth Community College	14.0%	40.2%	55.4%	95.3%
West Exe School (previously 4014)	-	-	-	-
St James School	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Bideford College	40.0%	73.3%	73.3%	100.0%
The Axe Valley Academy	18.2%	52.3%	65.9%	100.0%
St Luke's Science and Sports College (previously 4501)	45.5%	77.3%	86.4%	100.0%
Thomas Hall School	0.0%	23.1%	30.8%	92.3%
Braunton Academy	17.9%	64.3%	78.6%	96.4%
Chulmleigh Community College	15.5%	53.5%	63.4%	97.9%
Great Torrington School	18.2%	36.4%	36.4%	100.0%
Holsworthy Community College	-	-	-	-
The Park Community School*	-	-	-	-
Pilton Community College	31.6%	57.9%	63.2%	94.7%
Dawlish Community College	12.5%	62.5%	62.5%	100.0%
South Dartmoor Community College	45.5%	90.9%	90.9%	100.0%
King Edward VI Community College	10.0%	50.0%	60.0%	100.0%
Kingsbridge Academy	40.0%	75.0%	80.0%	100.0%
Coombeshead Academy	-	-	-	-
Teignmouth Community School	-	-	-	-
Tavistock College	11.1%	66.7%	77.8%	100.0%
Okehampton College	55.6%	77.8%	88.9%	100.0%
Ivybridge Community College	32.7%	83.7%	87.8%	100.0%
Colyton Grammar School	83.2%	96.5%	98.6%	100.0%
Teign School	-	-	-	-
Newton Abbot College	19.2%	73.1%	80.8%	100.0%
Uffculme School	25.2%	67.3%	79.2%	100.0%
Dartmouth Academy	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Cullompton Community College	16.7%	56.7%	73.3%	100.0%
South Molton Community College	-	-	-	-
Tiverton High School	11.9%	32.8%	46.3%	95.5%
St Peter's Church of England Aided School	24.3%	58.4%	70.0%	99.2%
Devon	27.5%	60.1%	70.8%	98.3%
National	31.1%	61.5%	72.3%	97.3%

Appendix 3

Membership of Devon SACRE August 2024

Group A: Christian and Other Religion and Belief Communities, with the Exception of the Church of England

Name	Faith / belief community
Dr Dave Regis	Humanist
Jane Carpenter	Jewish
Warren Houghton	Baha'i
Mary Hext	Methodist
Ravi Nathwani	Hindu
Nic Gibson	Pagan
Jude Taylorson/ Jenny Morse	Buddhist
Dr Pat Hannam	Quaker
Gurmit Kang	Sikh
Helen Brown	Catholic

Group B: The Church of England (Diocesan Board of Education)

Name	Organisation
Sandra Gill	Church of England
Claire Hulbert	Church of England
Jeremy Roberts	Church of England
Jo Hunter	Church of England
Elizabeth Underwood	Church of England
Kelly Keatley (Vice- Chair)	Church of England

Group C: Teachers' Associations

Name	Organisation
Dr Edgar Mihas	UCU (FE)
Belinda Twiggs (Chair)	NATRE
Phil Randall	Secondary School Leaders (DSLs)
vacancy	NEU
Wendy Harrison	NEU
Ruth Flanagan	UCU
Penny Hammett	Primary School Leaders (DSLs)
Prof Brandon Gallaher	HE
Zoe Bullamore	NATRE Secondary
Rosie Lee	LTLRE

Group D: The County Council

Name of Councillor	Organisation
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Dan Thomas	DCC
Graham Bell	DCC
Nick Hookway	DCC
Ed Hill	DCC
Neil Stevens	DCC
Jack Eade	DCC
Andrew Leadbetter	DCC

Co-opted Members

Name
Neomi Alam
Bex Northcott
John Goody

SACRE Officers

Clerk: Yvette Welsh

Adviser: Ed Pawson

LA lead: Simon Bissett/Alice McShane