

Devon SACRE Annual Report 2021/2



Forward

Introduction from the Chair of SACRE

Devon SACRE has enjoyed a busy year. Our adopted practice of meeting virtually (during the Covid period) had become an established pattern, but we were relieved when Devon County Council (DCC) gave the go ahead to return to face-to-face meetings. The technology to support hybrid meetings has improved tremendously and has now made it possible to conduct business in a more flexible manner.

Many schools have benefitted from SACRE leadership and support as they develop in their understanding of what it means to take a worldviews approach to the teaching of RE. SACRE has also continued to offer guidance on Collective Worship and to support the excellent work of our local Learn Teach Lead RE hubs. Among the significant actions taken this year was a long overdue review of SACRE constitution. The changes that we have made place SACRE in a strong position to recruit members to meet the challenges of an ever-changing educational environment. A significant change to the governance and planning environment has been navigated during the period of this report, with DCC's contract with Babcock coming to an end and Devon taking Education Services back in-house. It has been a time of some uncertainty, but we now have some confidence that the constitution will be adopted in a timely manner and that the next stage of our work to review our Agreed Syllabus will be able to proceed with appropriate support from DCC. I am pleased to report that the strong partnership between our neighbouring Authorities will continue to support this element of our work.

I would like to place on record SACRE's thanks to Ed Pawson for his work as our professional officer. Without his efforts locally, so many aspects of our work would be impoverished, and without his national profile and connections, it would be impossible for us to stay at the forefront of the development of this vital area of learning. A big thank you also goes to SACRE members who freely give of their time and experience. The collective wisdom of the group is hugely important.

Jeremy Roberts (SACRE Chair)

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1 Introduction

Membership

During the year we were pleased to welcome new members: Joe Matthews, Elizabeth Underwood and Councillor Ron Peart.

Many thanks to Councillor Sarah Parker-Khan who has stepped down.

The position for a representative from the Exeter Islamic community remains vacant. During the year the SACRE Chair and Adviser visited the Mosque to discuss this continuing vacancy, but the position remains unfilled.

Details of Devon SACRE meetings

November 2021: 19 attendees, plus clerk and adviser, meeting online

February 2022: 21 attendees, plus clerk, meeting online

June 2022: 21 attendees, plus clerk and adviser, hybrid meeting: online and in person at County Hall

2 SACRE's statutory responsibilities

Review of the Local Agreed Syllabus

Work has begun to review the current Agreed Syllabus for RE (AS), which runs from 2019-2024. This is taking place in conjunction with Torbay, Plymouth and Cornwall SACREs, (although Cornwall's AS runs until 2025). Teacher panels have met to give feedback on the way the current syllabus is working, and online surveys are planned. Evidence shows that the current syllabus, which marked a significant change from the last one, has been well received by teachers and schools. Initial findings point towards teachers asking for more time to bed-in the new syllabus. This means it is unlikely that SACRE will want to make significant changes for 2024. However, there is also an awareness amongst SACRE members that new ideas are being introduced into the subject at a national level, in particular around a developing understanding about a religion and worldviews approach.

Talks are now under way with RE Today to explore what additionality they may be able to offer in a renewed syllabus. SACRE is working with RE Today to understand what teachers say they want to change, to feedback into syllabus adjustments.

RE Today is planning to produce an updated version of the syllabus which would move in line with new understandings about the way RE is taking a more worldviews approach.

SACRE wants the LA to be aware that additional resources will be required for a syllabus review and the introduction of a new syllabus.

An Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) will be set up in 2023.

Anti-racism and RE

Devon SACRE has recommended to schools that they utilise a new pack of anti-racist resources¹, produced by RE Today, to add more depth to the way they teach about diversity and respect. These resources, for KS2 and KS3, have been made available to schools free of charge.

Standards and monitoring in RE

Secondary schools

With no publicly available exam data over recent years, due to Covid, it has been harder to monitor standards in secondary schools. Data from the DfE annual workforce survey points to the fact that a number of local secondary schools do not teach any/enough RE. Schools have been contacted and visits have taken place to explore further and offer input to enable them to develop the place of RE in the curriculum.

GCSE exam results 2022

¹ <https://www.natre.org.uk/about-natre/projects/anti-racist-re/>

Appendix 1 shows entry data for Devon schools for summer 2022 GCSE exams. Data shows that the percentage of Y11 cohort in Devon schools who were entered for GCSE RS dropped from 58% in 2018 to 45% in 2022. This fall of 13% in only 4 years demonstrates a significant reduction. This is mainly explained by a trend that is seeing schools moving away from entering their full Y11 cohort for the GCSE RS exam, moving towards entry via more limited option groups. This raises the question: what RE is being offered as part of the core curriculum, for those students who do not opt for the GCSE option.

In terms of attainment Devon schools are significantly below the national average. The national average for level 9 is 35%, as opposed to 26% in Devon. The national average for level 5-9 is 66%, as opposed to 56% in Devon. This raises concerns about standards in local schools.

Primary schools

Monitoring of RE in primary schools continues, through sampling of websites and scrutiny of recent Ofsted reports. Schools have been contacted where issues arise or where RE does not appear to be taught or delivered well. Visits have been made to 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).

Monitoring RE in Multi-Academy Trusts

Devon SACRE continues to monitor RE in schools which are in Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) to ensure that RE is given its statutory place in the curriculum.

Along with Plymouth SACRE, Devon SACRE has been engaged with the DfE over questions around the provision for RE in a specific MAT. Teachers of RE from a number of secondary schools in the MAT had made contact with Devon and Plymouth SACREs to flag up significant concerns about the projected profile of RE in their schools. Following a SACRE investigation into the RE being taught and projected to be taught, the SACREs contacted MAT leaders to raise these issues. The response from the MAT was dismissive of these concerns, so, through established systems, the SACREs made an official complaint to the DfE. This matter has been investigated by the DfE and a report has been received. Subsequently, it appears that the Trust plans to increase time allocation for RE in its schools, and a lead for RE has been appointed across the Trust.

Teaching about the Hindu tradition

Members have discussed a recent report on the State of Hinduism in RE², which asserts that the teaching of Hinduism in RE is often limited and sometimes inaccurate. This underlines the need for SACRE to have good representation for minority religion and belief communities. The Hinduism units on the Devon Agreed Syllabus are well written, but more training may be needed for schools to put these units into practice in the classroom.

3 Collective Worship

Guidance from Devon SACRE on [collective worship](#) and school assemblies has been well received by schools. This guidance supports schools in developing an up-to-date policy and encouraging active pupil participation in collective worship/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

² https://insightuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Hinduism-in-RE_Project-report.pdf

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

Devon SACRE has strong links and partnerships with a number of organisations. It works closely with Devon County Council, the Diocese of Exeter and the University of Exeter. The SACRE adviser coordinates the SW AREIAC³ network, and organises the annual SW SACREs conference. SACRE members and SACRE advisers across the SW often collaborate and share training and initiatives. A number of SACRE members have accessed training from NASACRE⁴ and attended their national conference in May 2022.

SACRE has discussed issues raised in recent NASACRE reports. The Still Standing report⁵ has helped SACRE members consider how SACREs may need to evolve their membership to be responsive to the representation of the diversity of local religion and worldviews communities.

SACRE members continue to be fully informed about national developments being made by the REC⁶. In particular to understand how a new vision for RE is being developed through a worldviews approach. SACRE is aware of the new national Religion and Worldviews resource⁷ which has been produced to enable syllabus writers to construct a new generation of RE syllabi.

SACRE works closely with the Devon Faith and Belief Forum to establish strong links to local faith and belief organisations. SACRE officers organise Holocaust Memorial Day events for schools every year. On Holocaust Memorial Day in January 2022 a service was held at Exeter Cathedral where schools participated in remembrance and reflection. This event was made available to be viewed by schools online. A video was created and sent to schools for HMD commemoration. Online talks were made available to schools from Eric Murangwa Eugene (Rwandan genocide) and Rosemary Schonfeld (Jewish holocaust). Resources and links were shared with schools⁸.

Learn, Teach, Lead RE

Devon SACRE is pleased to continue its support of the Learn, Teach, Lead RE programme⁹. Devon hubs are working well to support teachers of RE, offering termly twilight meetings and networking opportunities.

The recent evaluation of the programme has brought forward a number of recommendations which are being put in place. This includes a better system for sending

³ <https://www.arei.ac.org.uk/>

⁴ <https://nasacre.org.uk/>

⁵ <https://nasacre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Still-Standing-Appendix-6-Richmond-SACRE-action-research-project.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/>

⁷ <https://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/projects/draft-resource/>

⁸ <https://devonfaiths.org.uk/resources/>

⁹ <https://ltlr.org/>

out hub meeting dates in advance, and encouraging more recognition for the hub leaders' roles from their leadership teams in their schools.

The LTLRE conference in October 2021 took place online and attracted over 130 delegates. Feedback was very positive, valuing the input from speakers and workshops.

5 SACRE local involvement

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

6 SACRE organisation

Transferring Devon SACRE back to Devon County Council

Devon SACRE is well served through its clerk (Yvette Welsh) 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.

In July 2022 the administration of SACRE was transferred back to Devon County Council, along with all systems and materials previously available on the Babcock website.

SACRE membership is vibrant and well-engaged, although there are still a few important vacancies. SACRE is aware of the need to continue to increase the diversity of its representation, and it is a priority to bring in some training on diversity for SACRE members. All meetings in the year 2021/2 have been quorate.

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.

During 2021/2 SACRE reviewed its constitution, through input from a working party. This needs to be signed off by Devon County Council. The reviewed constitution restates the limit on the length of service on SACRE to 4 years, followed by a second period of 4 years. This change will be phased in slowly and managed carefully, so as not to create a 'cliff-edge' where too many members leave at the same time.

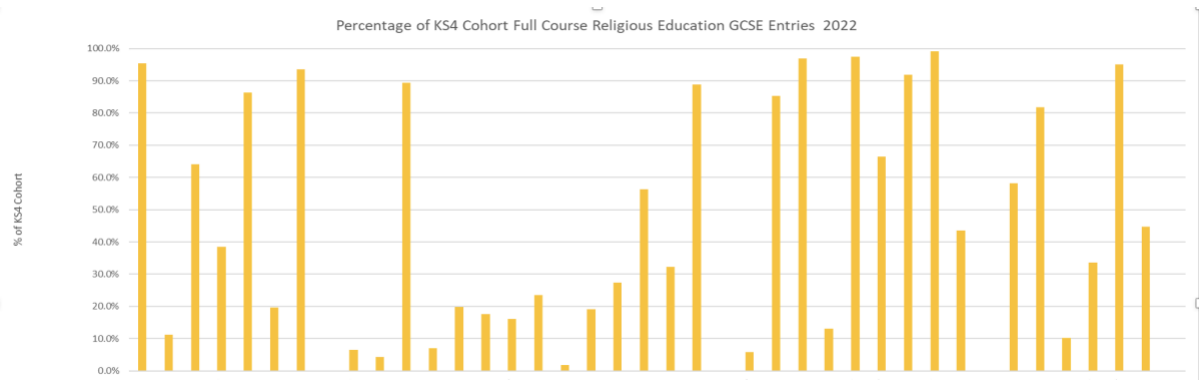
Devon SACRE logo

Devon SACRE is pleased to have adopted a new logo. Thanks go to all the schools who participated in the logo competition. But in particular, thanks to the students at St Peter's Church of England School, Exeter, for coming up with the winning design.

7 Appendices

Appendix 1

Percentage of KS4 Cohort Full Course Religious Studies GCSE Entries 2022



Appendix 2

Membership of Devon SACRE September 2022

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

Name	Faith / belief community
Keith Denby	Humanist
Richard Halsey	Jewish
Helena Hastie	Baha'i
Mary Hext	Methodist
Ravi Nathwani	Hindu
Maia Miller	Pagan
Jude Taylorson	Buddhist
Bill Becher	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
Tatiana Wilson	Church of England
Elizabeth Underwood	Church of England

Group C: Teachers' Associations

Name	Organisation
Dr Edgar Mihás	UCU (FE)
Belinda Twiggs	NAS/UWT
Phil Randall	Secondary School Leaders (DSLS)
Caitlin Cornwell	NEU
Wendy Harrison	NEU

Ruth Flanagan	UCU
Penny Hammett	Primary School Leaders (DSLs)
Gerry Winnall	NATRE
Joe Matthews	NATRE Secondary

Group D: The County Council

Name of Councillor	Organisation
Christine Channon	DCC
Margaret Squires	DCC
Ron Peart	DCC
Debo Sellis	DCC
Daniel Thomas	DCC
Tracy Adams	DCC
Janet Bradford	DCC

Co-opted Members

Name
Saxon Spence
Rosemary Khreisheh
Bex Northcott
John Goody

