

Devon SACRE Annual Report 2022/3



Forward

As ever, I am grateful to members of SACRE for their attendance at and contribution to meetings. We have continued to hold 'hybrid' meetings allowing for members to attend through an internet platform if they are unable to attend in person. Varying degrees of success have been enjoyed with the technology but attendance has been good.

During this year we have embarked upon the process to review our Agreed Syllabus. This has been undertaken in partnership with Torbay and Plymouth SACREs and once again with the support of RE Today. Feedback from teachers gave a very clear sense of direction to the review with the emphasis on revising in line with national developments rather than any substantial re-writing. As I write this report the revision is underway and launch events for the syllabus are being planned.

SACRE has been pleased to support the work of Learn Teach Lead RE through local hubs and the leadership and support of Religious and World Views Education and Collective Worship remains at the heart of what we seek to do. We are also aware of the need to seek positive partnerships with Multi Academy Trusts and work continues to engage with them at leadership level.

I would like to record my thanks and the thanks of SACRE to Ed Pawson for his outstanding work as our professional officer. So much of what we do is dependant on him. His local knowledge, his breadth of understanding and his national profile in the subject is so important.

Jeremy Roberts (SACRE Chair)

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1 Introduction

Membership

During the year we were pleased to welcome new members: Jane Carpenter, Kelly Keatley, Warren Houghton, Neomi Alam, David Tollerton

Many thanks to Richard Halsey, Helena Hastie who have stepped down.

Details of Devon SACRE meetings

November 2022: 15 attendees, plus clerk and adviser, hybrid meeting

February 2023: 20 attendees, plus clerk, hybrid meeting

June 2023: 25 attendees, plus clerk and adviser, hybrid meeting

2 SACRE's statutory responsibilities

Review of the Local Agreed Syllabus

Work has been ongoing to review the current Agreed Syllabus for RE (AS), which runs from 2019-2024.

During the year an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) was set up to advise SACRE in how to proceed with the AS review. The ASC fed back to the full meetings with its findings. The ASC considered whether the introduction of a new syllabus should be delayed beyond 2024, given the expected publication of new exemplar frameworks on a worldviews approach in 2024. However, it was agreed that a new, updated syllabus is needed in 2024 to ensure that schools continue to see the SACRE syllabus as the most fit-for-purpose way to teach high quality RE.

This review is taking place in conjunction with Torbay, Plymouth and Cornwall SACREs, (although Cornwall's AS runs until 2025). Teacher panels and online surveys have been utilised to gain feedback on the way the current syllabus is working, and to gather views on what needs changing or updating. Evidence shows that the current syllabus, which marked a significant change from the last one, has been well received by teachers and schools. This means the new syllabus will not look radically different from the current model. However, there is a need for it to embody the significant changes in approach to the subject and new ideas being introduced at a national level, in particular around a developing understanding about a religion and worldviews approach.

RE Today have been working on this update and will be presenting a draft version in Autumn 2023.

SACRE wants the LA to be aware that additional resources will be required for the introduction of a new syllabus. The LA has indicated that it is prepared to underwrite the changes being proposed.

Here is a summary of changes to the AS:

- Availability of more 'lesson-ready' resources
- Teaching units to embody more diversity
- Teaching units to reflect the local lived experience of people's religious and non-religious worldviews
- More input on Humanism required in primary phase
- More detail on assessment
- More input for special schools
- More input on progression in language and vocabulary across the syllabus
- Updated use of terminology and information on demographics
- More materials on how to link learning into local places of interest and places of worship

Launch events are planned for June 2024 with teachers being offered opportunities for follow-up training

Standards and monitoring in RE

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

GCSE exam results 2023

Appendix 1 shows entry data for Devon schools for 2019-23 GCSE exams. This chart shows that the percentage of Y11 cohort in Devon schools who were entered for GCSE RS has dropped by more than half in the last 5 years from 58% in 2018 to 27% in 2023. This fall demonstrates a significant reduction and is mainly explained by a (national) 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. In some ways this is a positive shift, where schools are more accurately targeting students who want to study RS as an exam subject. However, it 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. This is something which has been raised with a number of Devon schools in conversation over the last year, to explain the legal requirement that schools offer 5% of curriculum time at KS3 and 4. In terms of attainment, Devon schools are significantly below the national average. However, Devon schools have caught up a bit over recent years which is encouraging. The national average for level 9 is 29%, as opposed to 24% in Devon. The national average for level 5-9 is 60%, as opposed to 53% in Devon. This continues to raise 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. There are an increasing number of MATs who have appointed RE leads across their schools, which is a positive development. SACRE, along with NATRE and RE Hubs, is active in drawing these hub leaders together and working with them to develop an understanding of how MATs need to make provision for the subject.

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 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 Universities of Exeter and

St Mark and St John. The SACRE adviser coordinates the SW AREIAC network of advisers (SWARE), and organises the annual SW SACRE conference. We were pleased to invite Trevor Cooling (former Chair of the RE Council) to speak at the 2023 SW SACRE conference, with a number of other workshops offering a range of important inputs for SACRE member training.

SACRE members and SACRE advisers across the SW often collaborate and share training and initiatives. A number of SACRE members have accessed training from NASACRE and the adviser attended the NASACRE national conference in May 2023 in London.

SACRE has discussed issues raised in recent NASACRE reports. The Still Standing report 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 REC. 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 resource which has been produced to enable syllabus writers to construct a new generation of RE syllabi. SACRE members are fully supportive of development of a National Content Standard for RE.

SACRE works closely with the Devon 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.

Learn, Teach, Lead RE

Devon SACRE is pleased to continue its support of the Learn, Teach, Lead RE programme (LTLRE). 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 out hub meeting dates in advance, and encouraging more recognition for the hub leaders' roles from their leadership teams in their schools.

A teacher survey with regard to LTLRE showed that engagement with a local hub had given teachers greater confidence in leading RE and Hub leaders were reported as approachable and supportive.

The LTLRE conference in October 2022 took place online and attracted over 100 delegates. Feedback was very positive, valuing the input from speakers and workshops. Delegates were especially interested in the address from Dr Richard Kueh, Ofsted lead for RE.

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

SACRE officers organise Holocaust Memorial Day events for schools every year. On Holocaust Memorial Day in January 2023 a service was held at Exeter Cathedral where schools participated in remembrance and reflection. The key speaker, Rob Rinder (AKA Judge Rob), attracted a large audience and much media attention. Over 200 school pupils

were involved in the Exeter events from eight schools across the County. Presentations were given on Kindertransport and the Gypsy Holocaust. The closing ceremony was hosted by the Jewish community.

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

6 SACRE: regional and national involvement

Following a presentation from Exeter University about the current shortage of secondary RE teachers SACRE members have expressed concern about the recruitment and retention crisis facing the subject. Consequently a letter was sent to Nick Gibb (schools minister) to raise this issue with the Department of Education.

SACRE has been keen to be updated on the development 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.

7 SACRE organisation

Devon SACRE is well served through its clerk (Yvette Welsh), LA lead (Simon Bissett), LA admin support (Sally Watts) 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. The new SACRE constitution, approved by DCC in Feb 2023, stipulates that SACRE members will serve a 4 year period, followed by a further 4 year period, if invited to continue. After this (8 years) most SACRE members will come off SACRE, to allow others to join and gain the valuable experience of being on this body. This change will begin to be enacted in 2024.

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 2022/3 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.

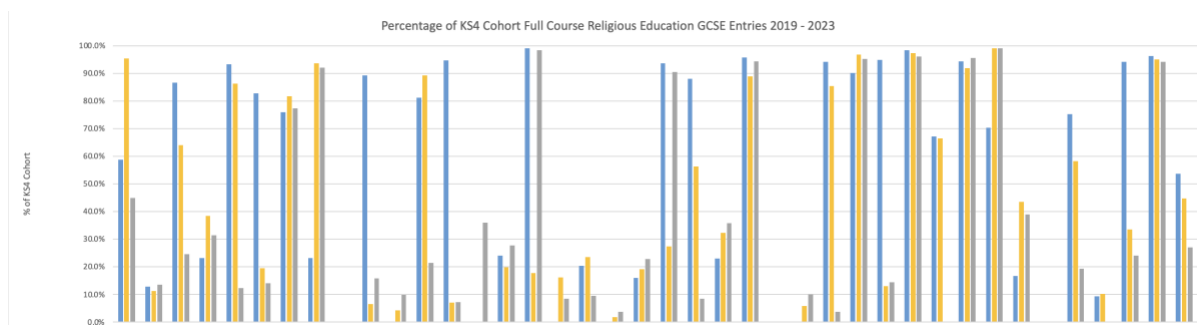
Devon SACRE logo

Devon SACRE is pleased to have adopted a new logo in 2022. This has been well received.

8 Appendices

Appendix 1

Percentage of KS4 Cohort Full Course Religious Studies GCSE Entries 2019-23



Appendix 2

Membership of Devon SACRE August 2023

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

Name	Faith / belief community
Keith Denby	Humanist
Jane Carpenter	Jewish
Warren Houghton	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 Mihas	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

SACRE Officers

Clerk: Yvette Welsh

Adviser: Ed Pawson

LA lead: Simon Bissett

