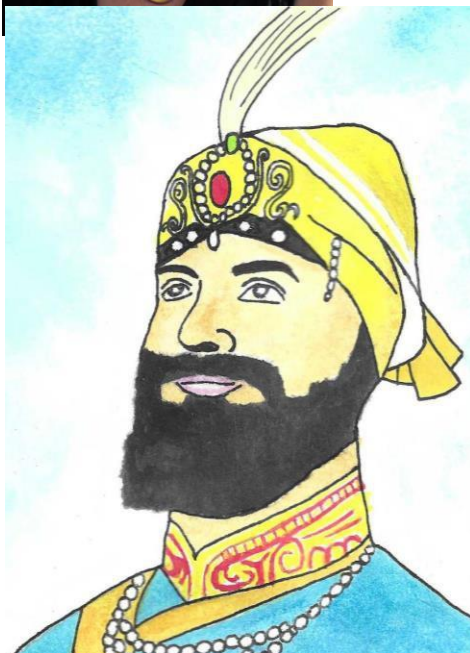




SACRE

Annual Report 2023/24



Images on the front page.

Top left: Alice Roberts (born. 1973) is a Humanist. She is a TV presenter and author. From Jan 2019 to May 2022 she was president of Humanists UK She is now vice president of Humanists UK. In 2015 she was awarded British Humanist of the year for promoting the teaching of evolution in schools.¹

Top right: Champions Church, Cinder Banks, Netherton. This is a new church. Inside it is very different from many traditional churches. Champions Church has a stage, a large auditorium and comfortable seats. It also has a coffee bar a play area for children and youth seating so that young people can sit together.

Bottom left: Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) The tenth and last human Sikh Guru. Guru Gobind Singh founded the Khalsa and the wearing of the Five Ks. He also notably resisted the violent assault inflicted on Sikhism by the Emperor Aurangzeb.

Bottom right: Zoroaster. Zoroaster is believed to have lived in the 7th and 6th Century BCE. He is the founder of Zoroastrianism. He taught that there was a good God called Ahura Mazda and an evil spirit or god called Ahriman (also known as Angra Mainyu). Between Ahura Mazda and Ahriman there was a war between good against evil which eventually Ahura Mazda will win.

¹ (photo by Dave Stevens)

SACRE

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Annual Report 2023/24

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Introduction

This report provides an account of the work of SACRE, the advice it has provided to the local authority (LA) and the issues it has considered in the academic year 2023/24.

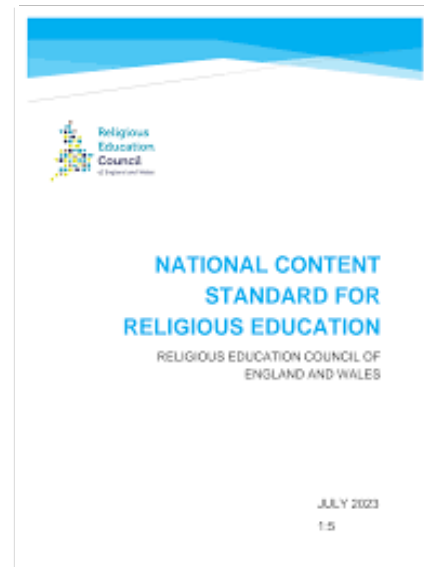
The main function of a local authority Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) is to advise the local authority and schools on religious education and collective worship. This report provides an account of the work undertaken by Dudley's SACRE in 2023. SACRE would like to thank the local authority for its support over the last twelve months without which the work that SACRE undertakes would not be possible.

In the course of 2023/24 SACRE has been involved in the following activities:

- completing the review of the Agreed Syllabus
- providing regular termly meetings for teachers of RE in secondary and primary schools and academies in Dudley
- monitoring RE provision in schools in Dudley using a range of sources including information provided by teachers that attend the regular termly meetings, Ofsted and Section 48 inspections
- giving consideration to the “National Content Standard for Religious Education” (NCS) published by the Religious Education Council (REC) which attempts to provide a “National Content Standard for Religious Education” within the context of a National Plan for RE
- advising and working with the LA regarding Secondary schools and academies that appear not to be meeting the legal requirement to teach all students on role RE
- analysing of the GCSE Religious Studies results achieved by students in Dudley in 2022/23 and advise schools and the LA accordingly in the light of that analysis
- receiving early indications of the financial difficulties the LA is facing and the implications this may have on whether SACRE will be able to secure the services of a professional RE to advise SACRE in the financial year 2024-2025 and in future financial years
- Appointed two Co-Chairs to support the ongoing work of SACRE

The National Content Standard for Religious Education was published by the Religious Education Council (REC) in 2023. The document claims to “set a benchmark for what constitutes high quality” in RE/Religion and Worldviews. The document can be freely accessed using the link below.

[National Content Standard for RE for England 1st Edition 2023 – REC](https://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/national-content-standard-for-re-for-england-1st-edition-2023-REC)
([religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk](https://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk))



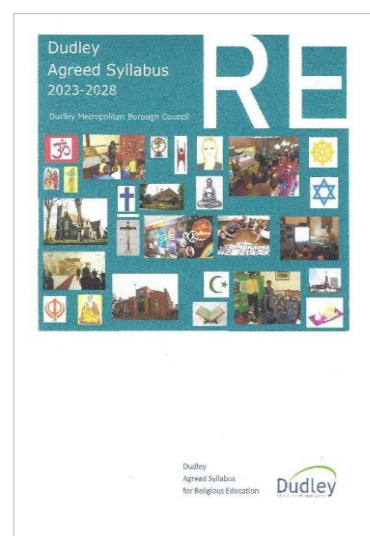
Review of the Year

Review of the Agreed Syllabus

As was reported in SACRE's Annual Report 2022 the writing of the final sections of the new Agreed Syllabus were completed in January, February and March of 2023. Members of the Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC)¹ met on the 20th April 2023. Prior to that meeting a complete draft of the proposed new Agreed Syllabus was circulated to all members of the ASC. Members of the ASC were also notified that the expectation was that a formal vote would be taken at the meeting on the 20th April to decide whether the ASC wished to endorse, amend or reject, the proposed new Agreed Syllabus.

If all four groups that make up the ASC² voted in favour of adopting the new syllabus the document would then be made available to Dudley Council members for them to make the final decision regarding its adoption or not. At the ASC/SACRE meeting on the 20th April three of the four groups, that is Group A, Group C and Group D all voted in favour of adopting the proposed new syllabus. However, the Group B representative was unable to attend the 20th April meeting. Fortunately, however fifteen days later on the 5th May having had an opportunity to scrutinise the syllabus in detail the representative for Group B made known their view which was that they also wished to cast their vote in favour of adopting the new Agreed Syllabus. The representative for Group B did however express one reservation and that was work should be undertaken to ensure the availability of resources to teach the content specified in the new syllabus. The representative was assured that the production of resources to help teachers effectively teach the new syllabus would be provided and that this had always been part of the plan. Moving forward the development of resources will sit with the RE Networks for Primary and Secondary Schools, supported by the LA's School Improvement Team.

With all four groups that make up the Agreed Syllabus Conference having voted to adopt the proposed new Agreed Syllabus, the syllabus was made available to the LA Councillors to consider. Following the appropriate process no objections were raised by any Council members regarding the new Agreed Syllabus. With the vote in favour being unanimous the new syllabus was formally adopted by Dudley's LA on Wednesday 19th July 2023. On the 26th July all schools and academies in Dudley were informed that a new Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education had been approved and that it replaced the previous Agreed Syllabus as the main legal document Community and Voluntary Controlled schools are required to refer to when planning and delivering RE in their school. A pdf electronic version of the new syllabus was also circulated to all schools and academies in the borough.



¹ When SACRE takes on the role of reviewing an agreed syllabus it is known in as the "Agreed Syllabus Conference".

² The four groups that make up an Agreed Syllabus Conference are the same as those which constitute a SACRE, they are: Group A: Christian denominations and other faiths active in the area, i.e., Baptist, Pentecostal, Methodist, Roman Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, etc.
Group B: The Church of England Group C: Teacher associations Group D: The Local Authority

Planning and Implementing the new Agreed Syllabus

With the adoption of the new Agreed Syllabus a question which had to be addressed was “Is there planning time available to schools to implement the new syllabus or are schools required immediately to provide RE in accordance with the new Agreed Syllabus?” A large number of teachers had regularly attended the termly meetings, had followed and had contributed to the review process. Consequently, they were well placed to be able to deliver RE in accordance with the new syllabus. Many of these teachers felt they needed little planning time to put in place the new Agreed Syllabus. Subject Leaders for RE in these schools were confident that they could teach RE in their school substantially in accordance with the requirements in the new Agreed Syllabus and that they needed only two or three months to make the changes needed. Some teachers, however, were aware that the new syllabus specified content that they were not teaching and had never previously taught and they felt they needed more than two or three months to undertake the planning needed to meet the new requirements.

The LA recognised these concerns. The decision was made to give schools a large measure of choice regarding how much planning time they could have. Those schools that were confident they could deliver RE in line with the new syllabus and required only a couple of months to undertake the planning needed were permitted to go ahead and establish the teaching of RE in accordance with the requirements of the new Agreed Syllabus quickly into their school. However, those schools that felt they needed more time to plan a new programme of study, write lesson plans and acquire the resources needed were permitted up to three terms to undertake the planning needed. Whichever pathway a school chose to undertake, all schools needed to complete their planning by the end of the summer term 2024 and be in a position to teach RE in accordance with the new Agreed Syllabus from the start of the Autumn term 2024. So far, the indications are that the new Agreed Syllabus has been well received. There are some schools that report that they are experiencing difficulties accessing some resources but in general the implementation of the new Agreed Syllabus appears to be going reasonably well.

A specified Core Content for KS1 and KS2

An important feature of the new Agreed Syllabus is that it has a specified core Christian content for KS1 and KS2 which all primary Community schools and Voluntary Controlled schools must teach. The core Christian content must also be taught in primary academies if their policy is to provide RE in line with the new Agreed Syllabus. There is also a specified KS1 and KS2 core content for Islam and the recommendation is that primary schools and academies should teach this core Islam content. If a school or academy has a good reason for not teaching the KS1 and KS2 core Islam content, they must instead teach the KS1 and KS2 core content provided for one of the four other principal religions (i.e. Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism or Sikhism). A lower KS2 and upper KS2 core Humanism content is also in the Agreed Syllabus for those who wish to introduce their pupils to a non-religious worldview.

Why have a KS1 and KS2 specified Core Content?

There are two main advantages in having an RE Agreed Syllabus that has a specified core content. The first of these advantages is that an Agreed Syllabus that has a clearly specified content greatly improves the conditions in which better and more accurate assessment may be undertaken. The second main advantage is that it creates the circumstances in which neighbouring schools can work together and mutually support each other. In a situation where schools are teaching RE to pupils of the same age and are teaching the same specified core content, they are likely to be facing the same challenges and issues. In such circumstances it makes sense for schools to work with other neighbouring schools to overcome the same challenges that they are likely to come up against when teaching RE. Schools are likely to teach the RE specified in the new syllabus much more effectively if they collaborate with other neighbouring schools, for example by exchanging ideas and resources and comparing results they are likely to gain a better idea of what works and what doesn't. Schools that are teaching the same specified RE content are also well placed to share with other neighbouring schools the cost of visitors, visits or CPD which a school on its own might struggle to afford. Having an Agreed Syllabus with a clearly specified core content also makes it possible for an LA to support its schools by providing resources, teaching strategies and assessment activities which are specifically targeted to help teachers teach what is specified in the LA's Agreed Syllabus.

Ofsted's Reporting on RE

In 2023 Ofsted reported on 49 schools in Dudley, six of which were secondary schools, 39 were primary and four were special schools. Ofsted mainly reports on the school as a whole and rarely comment in any detail about a particular subject like art and design, or music, or religious education.



Occasionally, Ofsted alludes to religious education or to "faiths". For example, in a primary school inspected in 2023 Ofsted reported that, "Pupils get along well with one another and develop a sound understanding of the value of respecting people of different faiths and culture". Similarly, in 2023 Ofsted reported that, "through lessons and assemblies, staff teach pupils about safe, respectful relations and responsible behaviour". In another school, Ofsted reported that, "pupils talk about the importance of tolerance and fairness." Ofsted when it does report on RE it tends to refer to it as a subject that engenders respect and tolerance, but Ofsted rarely refers to RE as a subject that develops pupils' knowledge or understanding of religious concepts, beliefs, doctrines or rituals. Even when comments of this kind are made, they are usually brief and lacking in detail. For example, in 2023 Ofsted reported, "...in religious education leaders have thought about important concepts to teach, revisit and develop over time". The report does not say what "important concepts" were taught, or revisited, or developed over time.

The same tendency of Ofsted in their primary school reports to focus on RE as a subject that engenders respect and tolerance rather than improving young people's knowledge and understanding of a wide range of religions and belief can also be seen in secondary school reports. For example, in a secondary school in Dudley that was inspected in 2023 Ofsted reported that, "The school's inclusive nature means that pupils respect different cultures, beliefs and characteristics". The report makes no comment which indicates whether or not the school helps pupils to develop a deeper understanding of a particular belief that is held by members of a religion or by

those who have a non-religious worldview. The lack of any comment from Ofsted about deeper understanding about religion and belief doesn't of course mean that in Dudley's schools and academies attempts to develop in pupils a greater depth of understanding is not being undertaken in RE.

Compliance with the Legislation

It is a legal requirement that, "every maintained school shall comprise a basic curriculum which includes: provision for religious education for all registered pupils at the school".¹ This legislation makes it a requirement that all pupils attending a maintained state-funded school or academy must be taught RE. The legislation applies to all pupils, in all Key Stages. The only exception to this requirement is parents who have exercised their right to withdraw their child or children from RE or to students that are aged 18 or over, who may if they wish, withdraw themselves. Over the last three years progress has been made with SACRE and the LA working together and establishing contact with secondary schools and academies where there were doubts that all of their pupils were being taught RE. SACRE continues to monitor schools and academies compliance with the legislation.

¹ The Education Act 1996 Part V, The Curriculum, Chapter 1, Section 352 (page 199)

Collective Worship.

Provision in primary schools

The quality of collective worship in primary schools and academies remains good. No primary schools were reported to be failing to meet statutory requirements regarding collective worship. Many primary schools continue to provide collective worship by making use of good educational, classroom strategies which pupils find engaging as, more often than not, they are being asked to be participants in assemblies rather than simply being passive observers. Music is often being used to evoke an atmosphere and pupils are being given clear opportunities to reflect. Pupil's work and achievements more widely both in the school and outside are brought to the attention of the whole school during assemblies and are celebrated. Schools report that few parents request that their child should be withdrawn from collective worship.

Provision in secondary schools

Nationally provision for collective worship in secondary schools and academies continues to be more variable than in Primary Schools. There is nothing to suggest the situation in Dudley is any different. Many secondary schools generally provide good opportunities for moral and spiritual development by encouraging discussion and reflection in the classroom, but this may not be reflected during assemblies. Few parents request that their child should be withdrawn from more formal collective worship where this takes place. No school or academy, primary or secondary has made a request to seek a "determination".

Appendix 1 GCSE Religious Studies 2023 results¹

	No on roll	No entered for exam	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	U	X	9-5	9-4	9-1 %	Avg Pts
Dormston School	225	213	7	22	28	34	31	28	21	18	13	4	7	57.3	70.4	94.8	4.8
Bishop Milner	150	144	8	8	14	18	20	27	21	19	9	-	-	47.2	66.0	100.	4.6
Windsor Academy	283	115	6	10	14	19	15	13	23	10	4	1	-	55.7	67.0	99.1	4.9
Earls High School	232	71	-	2	10	11	13	11	16	4	3	1	-	50.7	66.2	98.6	4.5
Kingswinford Academy	169	51	6	2	6	11	4	8	10	2	1	1	-	100.0	100.0	100.	7.0
Summerhill School	205	31	-	3	4	4	7	4	5	3	1	-	-	58.1	71.0	100.	4.8
Ellowes Hall Sports College	220	24	1	2	4	7	3	2	2	2	-	1	-	70.8	79.2	95.8	5.3
St James Academy	125	19	-	2	2	3	2	3	3	3	1	-	-	47.4	63.2	100.	4.5
Pedmore Academy	104	17	-	2	2	2	7	2	1	1	-	-	-	76.5	88.2	100.	5.3
Wordsley Academy	150	17	-	-	2	4	4	5	1	-	-	1	-	58.8	71.0	94.1	4.8
Leasowes Academy	184	16	5	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	-	-	-	68.8	81.3	100.	6.1
Crestwood Academy	173	15	1	2	-	5	3	2	2	-	-	-	-	73.3	86.7	100.	5.6
The Link Academy	169	13	-	3	-	5	1	1	3	-	-	-	-	69.2	76.9	100.	5.5
Old Swinford Hospital	82	13	-	1	3	4	3	1	1	-	-	-	-	84.6	92.3	100.0	5.8
Ridgewood Academy	143	12	1	-	1	2	2	3	2	1	-	-	-	50.0	75.0	100.	4.8
Thorns Collegiate (Edexcel exam)	171	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	0.0	100.0	100.	4.0
Redhill Academy	249	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	100.0	0.0	0.0	5.0

¹ The above table shows the number of students entered for a Religious Studies GCSE 2023 full course examination that achieved a grade 9 to 5, 9 to 4 and 9 to 1 in 2023. The table shows schools and academies that entered most students for the exam at the top of the table and schools and academies that entered the fewest students are at the bottom of the table in descending order. There are two academies for which no data is provided as they appear to have not entered any students for a Religious Studies GCSE exam in 2023.

Appendix 2 GCSE Religious Studies 2023 gender profile¹

	N ^o on Roll	N ^o entered	Females entered	Males entered
Dormston School	225	213	103	110
Bishop Milner	150	144	75	69
Windsor Academy	283	115	63	52
Earls High School	232	71	57	14
Kingswinford Academy	169	50	35	15
Ellowes Hall Academy	202	24	18	6
Summerhill School	205	32	19	13
St James Academy	125	19	9	10
Wordsley School	150	17	17	-
Pedmore Academy	104	17	4	13
Leasowes Academy	184	16	12	4
Crestwood Academy	173	15	7	8
Old Swinford Hospital	82	13	-	13
The Link Academy	169	13	10	3
Ridgewood Academy	143	12	6	6
Redhill Academy	249	1	1	-
Thorns Collegiate Academy	171	1	1	-
Dudley total No. entered	2,791	773	437 56%	336 44%
UK total No. entered	-	243,735	131,881 54%	111,854 46%

¹ The table above shows the percentage of female students and the percentage of male students that were entered for a GCSE Religious Studies examination in the Summer of 2023. The table shows that more females (56%) than males (44%) were entered for a GCSE RS examination in Dudley. In the UK the figures for GCSE Religious Studies in 2022 shows 54% of the total number entered for a GCSE RS examination were females and 46% were males.

Appendix 5 How SACRE works

The 1998 Education Reform Act required each Local Authority to set up a Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) for area. SACRE's statutory duties are briefly:

- to advise the LA on Collective Worship in its schools
- to advise the LA on Religious Education, including methods of teaching, choice of materials. and training of teachers.
- to advise the LA on other related matters.
- to require the LA to convene an Agreed Syllabus Conference to review its syllabus if necessary
- to deal with applications from headteachers asking that the Act's requirements for Collective Worship to be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character, shall not apply to. the Collective Worship provided for some or all of the pupils in their particular schools.
- to publish an Annual Report

SACRE appoints a chairperson from among its members. Members of SACRE are nominated by their parent body. Any voting in SACRE takes place by panels, each panel having a single vote. Up to four additional members may be co-opted by SACRE. Meetings of the SACRE shall be quorate if at least 7 members are present and at least one representative member from three of the four representative groups is present. At any stage the SACRE may co-opt up to three co-opted members who shall be non-voting in its proceedings.

Meetings are to be held at least three times a year and are open to the public.

SACRE is made up of four groups, as follows:

- | | |
|---------|--|
| Group 1 | Christian denominations and other faiths active in the area – Baptist, Pentecostal, Methodist, Roman Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu and Sikh, each nominated by the relevant parent body. |
| Group 2 | The Church of England nominated by the Diocese |
| Group 3 | Teacher' Association nominated by ATL, NASUWT, NEU, ASCL |
| Group 4 | Local Authority members nominated by Dudley Metropolitan Council |

Appendix 6 Membership of SACRE

Group 1

Pastor. H James	Pentecostal Church representative
Mr D Cody	Catholic Church representative
Mr H Woolf	Jewish representative

Group 2

Rev. D Hutchinson	Church of England representative
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Group 3

Mrs A Shackleton	NEU representative
Miss K Rani	Secondary School Representative

Group 4

Cllr R BATTERY	LA representative
Cllr J Foster	LA representative

An RE consultant Mr D Hunt, in a professional capacity, attended all SACRE meetings in 2023.

The membership list quoted represents those who attended in the year 2023-24. Dudley SACRE has renewed its constitution (in 2024-25) to better reflect the population of Dudley (Based on the 2021 Census). A recruitment initiative is underway to ensure all posts are filled with representatives who are able to attend the majority of meetings.

Glossary

AS	Agreed Syllabus (AS). The locally agreed syllabus is the statutory document for RE in a local authority. It sets out what should be taught to pupils in all key stages. It is produced by an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) which in terms of membership may in reality be identical to the local SACRE.
ASC	Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC). An Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) is an occasional body which an LA is required to establish to produce an agreed syllabus for RE. It is made up of representatives from the same interest groups as a SACRE so although it is a separate legal body from a SACRE it may consist of the same members as a SACRE.
ASCL	<i>Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)</i> . The <i>Association of School and College Leaders</i> is a leading professional body representing more than 18,000 school, college and system leaders across the UK
Attainment 8	Attainment 8 measures the achievement of a pupil across 8 GCSE qualifications. However, Attainment 8 only uses data based on GCSE full course qualifications. Regardless of how successful a student may be attaining a grade in GCSE Religious Studies short course a school's contribution to achieving success is not credited to the school.
CoRE	Commission on Religious Education (CoRE). The Commission on Religious Education was established by the Religious Education Council for England and Wales to review the legal, education, and policy frameworks for religious education (RE).
Curriculum Cohesion	A phrase used to refer to the additional support often provided by central government in the form of text books, resources and training to support a National Curriculum that has a clearly specified core content.
GCSE	General Certificate for Education (GCSE). Probably the most widely used national qualification taken by pupils in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. GCSE RS is the General Certificate for Education in Religious Studies.
Determination	A "determination" with regard to collective worship refers to the legal requirement that collective worship should be "wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character" These words provide schools with a great deal of discretion. However should a school believe this requirement should be modified or lifted in their case the headteacher may apply to the local standing advisory council on RE (SACRE) for a "determination" to determine whether the requirements should be modified or lifted given the circumstances that may exist in that school.
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage

L4L	L4L is an acronym for “Literacy for Life” which is a Key Stage 3 thematic curriculum. Advocates of L4L believe it is an effective way of teaching the Nation Curriculum and also RE to pupils in Key Stage 3 and that it also offers a smoother transition for pupils from primary to secondary education. Critics of L4L however, claim it is prone to providing RE that is weakened or undermined.
NASACRE	The National Association of SACREs (NASACRE). NASACRE supports the aims and the work of SACREs and provides a forum for the exchange of good practice. It lobbies for quality provision and represents the interests of SACRE nationally.
NATRE	The National Association of Teachers of RE. NATRE is the subject teacher association for RE professionals. It works to support those who teach and lead in all schools and institutions and at all stages of their career.
Ofqual	The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation regulates qualifications, examinations and assessments in England.
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment. A world wide study intended to evaluate educational systems by measuring 15-year-old school pupils performance in mathematics, science and reading.
Progress 8	Progress 8 was introduced in 2016 along with Attainment 8. It aims to capture the progress a pupil makes from the end of primary school to the end of secondary school. It does not make use of GCSE short course grades.
p.o.s	A programme of study outlines what should be taught in a key stage with respect to a particular subject.
REC	The Religious Education Council (REC) The Religious Education Council of England and Wales was established in 1973 to represent the collective interests of a wide variety of faith communities and professional associations that are involved in Religious Education. It aims to promote Religious Education and influence decision and policy making at national level in matters that relate to RE.
RS	Religious Studies (RS). Religious Studies is the term used to identify GCSE and GCE A level national qualifications in the area to do with religion and belief. For some Religious Studies is the academic study of religions. Unlike Religious Education some believe Religious Studies has no role to play in helping young people to consider the truth or worth of religion but is solely concerned with knowledge and information about religion and related matters. For some Religious Studies and Religious Education are identical in every respect however, some prefer to use the term Religious

SKE	Studies as they believe it helps to give the subject a more objective and academic status.
SLA	Subject Knowledge Enhancement course Service Level Agreement (SLA). A service level agreement is a contract between a service provider, for example an external professional RE adviser, and the end user, for example a local authority, that defines the level of service expected from the service provider.
SMSC	Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC). Section 78 (1) of the 2002 Education Act states that all pupils should follow a balanced and broadly based curriculum which 'promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, social, mental and physical development of pupils and of society, and prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life'. Religious education has an important part to play in promoting spiritual, moral, social and cultural development but it is not the preserve of RE alone. There is an expectation that all National Curriculum subjects provide opportunities to promote pupils' SMSC development. The school ethos, effective relationships throughout the school, collective worship and other curriculum activities also contribute to SMSC development.

SACRE may be contacted on: sacre@dudley.gov.uk

SACRE website: <https://www.dudley.gov.uk/residents/learning-and-school/school-information/religious-education-dudley-sacre/>