

GATESHEAD
Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

ANNUAL REPORT
2023-2024

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Chair's Foreword

As the incoming Chair of Gateshead SACRE, it is a privilege to be able to write my first foreword to our Annual Report for the academic year 2023-2024. The global context in which our pupils and students are growing up and being educated in our schools points clearly towards the need for high-quality Religious Education in our schools. Ethical topics such as assisted dying, global warming, wars and conflicts with a religious character, and the rise of the far right across Britain and Europe all provide compelling reasons for better religious literacy.

In Gateshead, our SACRE works within a local context of considerable diversity, with almost all major religions and Christian denominations being well represented in our borough. Gateshead schools include faith schools, church schools, and non-denominational schools that are under local authority control and those that are academies. Our children in these schools, of all faiths and none, have shared needs and shared life experiences. Well-resourced Religious Education in our schools should be an essential and integral part of our students' education. Collective Worship, which will differ in nature according to the schools' identity and context, also has a vital role to play in providing our children with opportunities for reflection and spiritual growth.

Gateshead SACRE is fortunate to enjoy the support of Education Gateshead and Gateshead Council, through the regular attendance and contribution of councillors at SACRE meetings, and through the provision of professional services and advice. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Steve Horne and Jon Ward, who have recently retired from Education Gateshead and who have contributed so much to the work of the SACRE during the past academic year. I would also like to thank all SACRE members for their contributions and attendance at meetings, and to welcome our new professional adviser, Andrea Ingram.

Dr Andrew Fowler, Chair of Gateshead SACRE

1.0 SACRE Members 2023/24

The membership of the council was:

Name	Representing	Committee
Brian Howell (Chair)	Church of England	B
Andrew Fowler	Church of England	B
Councillor John McElroy	Local Authority	D
Councillor Freda Geddes	Local Authority	D
Councillor Paul McNally	Local Authority	D
Councillor Tom Graham	Local Authority	D
Joanne Whitehead	Teacher – Hill Top	C
Jennifer Howliston	Teacher – Front Street	C
Rebecca Harle	NET/Thorp Academy – Secondary	C
Kathleen Farrell	Teachers' Union Rep	C
Rajwant Kaur Nibber	Sikhism	C
Ari Gluck	Judaism	A
Kirtida Richardson	Hinduism	A
Angela Kumar	Hinduism	A
Pandit Nayankumar Vyas	Hinduism	A
Les Milne	Humanism	A
Steve Horne	RE Professional	
Jon Ward	Local Authority Education Service	
Julie Latimer	SACRE Clerk	

The Gateshead SACRE met three times in the academic year 2023/2024. The first two of these were hybrid meetings using Microsoft Teams as well as a room at Gateshead Civic Centre so that members had the option to travel to the session or not. The third meeting was held face to face to facilitate a vote for a new Chair as Revd Brian Howell stepped down from this role after many years of service. His presence will be missed, though we look forward to a period under the new Chair: Dr Andrew Fowler.

SACRE is still working with the local authority to increase the representation of local faith communities.

Once again, Gateshead SACRE offered the online NASACRE Training sessions to its members.

2.0 Supporting RE Teaching

SACRE was once again very pleased to have the services of Steve Horne as an RE Professional supporting the teaching of RE in Gateshead this year.

Mr Horne made good progress with implementing his development plan to support the teaching of RE in Gateshead, which had three main aims:

- To support the teaching of RE in schools through active teacher networking and the sharing of expertise and effective practice.

- To ensure that SACRE has an accurate assessment of the quality of RE provision within Gateshead schools and uses this knowledge to celebrate success and direct support, when appropriate.
- To begin to prepare to produce the next Gateshead Agreed Syllabus for RE.

As last year, three RE Networks for local teachers were run by Steve Horne, our RE Professional. These were attended by Primary School RE Lead Teachers.

Topics covered at these sessions included:

- Les Milne gave a presentation on Humanism and how to incorporate teaching of the main themes of this world view, as well as highlighting a bank of useful teaching resources.
- Brother Khadim from Newcastle Central Mosque spoke about his experience of Islam and gave information to staff about visiting the mosque and what the children would experience.
- Karenza Passmore from the North East RE Hubs spoke to leaders about what the RE Hubs can offer in terms of supporting schools' RE curriculums.
- There was a presentation by the Curriculum Leader (who is also Deputy Head) of Harlow Green Primary School about their recent Ofsted deep dive into RE during an inspection. This gave attendees valuable insights into the process and tips for preparation.
- A presentation by representatives from 'Jigsaw' outlining the commercially available resources and planning tools they offer. This included demonstration of a tool to match the available resources to the Gateshead Locally Agreed Syllabus. There was also a description of the way the syllabus could be taught with regard to progression as well as 'spiralling' to re-visit topics and themes. These resources were not actively recommended by the LA or by SACRE, but there was recognition that several schools in Gateshead use them and find them useful.
- A presentation by the RE Lead at a small, local Primary School, where the teacher is responsible for more than one subject. This gave a first-hand account of experiencing an Ofsted deep dive into RE and again was found to be very useful.

3.0 Monitoring of RE provision

It is clear from the analysis of GCSE results (see dedicated section) that a number of schools appeared to stop offering RE as an examination subject. This led SACRE to question the provision of RE at KS4. It is good that two of these schools (Thorp Academy and Heworth Grange School) have reported that they once again offer a GCSE in RE. We should see the data reflect this in future.

The RE Professional produced a self-assessment form for Primary School RE Leads to complete. This has been piloted by a small number of volunteers and then slightly revised. The updated version will be agreed and sent out to schools in the new academic year.

Additionally, the RE Professional has looked at new Ofsted reports as they are produced for our schools and has pulled out information about either: deep dives into the teaching of RE; or, comments on pupils' personal development - which can sometimes be indicative of the breadth of learning about 'other' cultures and viewpoints and may therefore be taken as a proxy view of RE teaching. This is leading to the development of a concise document which is building up a picture of the overall quality of children's experiences of RE in our schools.

4.0 Examination Data Analysis 2023/24 outcomes. This is based on Provisional data

Introduction:

1. The aim of this analysis is to promote SACRE's understanding of the quality and breadth of provision of RE at KS4 and KS5 across Gateshead. It is based on provisional data.
2. The report provides headline information relating to outcomes. It also highlights individual school outcomes and, where this is high, there could potentially be support enlisted to bolster future developments.
3. These outcomes are based on provisional data sourced from the National Consortium for Examination Reporting's Nova analysis software.

GCSE Short Course and Entry Level Qualification

3. As last year, there appear to have been no entries to a short course or ELQ this year.
4. GCSE Full Course

Overview of entries.

Establishment	Number on roll in Y11			Number of entries			% of cohort entered		
	2022	2023	2024	2022	2023	2024	2022	2023	2024
Gateshead Local Authority	2035	2044	2030	902	795	858	44.3%	38.9%	35.8%
Cardinal Hume Catholic School	257	240	246	255	236	240	99.2%	98.3%	97.6%
Emmanuel College	222	233	235	216	224	218	97.3%	96.1%	92.8%
Furrowfield School			12	0	0	0	0%	0%	0%
Grace College	208	212	210	9	11	23	4.3%	5.2%	11%
Lord Lawson of Beamish Academy	255	228	240	77	43	46	30.2%	18.9%	19.2%
St Thomas More Catholic School	236	246	238	230	241	232	97.5%	98.0%	97.5%
Thorp Academy	171	226	215	23	0	1	13.5%	0%	0.5%
Whickham School	258	253	266	92	38	73	35.7%	15.0%	27.4%
Heworth Grange School	207	195	204	0	1	25	0%	0.5%	12%
Kingsmeadow School	155	158	164	0	0	0	0%	0%	0%

Overview of attainment.

Establishment	Proportion entered in 2022	Proportion of entries attaining 9 – 4 in 2022	Proportion entered in 2023	Proportion of entries attaining 9 – 4 in 2023	Proportion entered in 2024	Proportion of entries attaining 9 – 4 in 2024
National						72.7%
Gateshead Local Authority	44.3%	83.9%	38.9%	79.6%	35.8%	62.9%
Cardinal Hume Catholic School	99.2%	85.1%	98.3%	72.9%	97.6%	83.3%
Emmanuel College	97.3%	83.3%	96.1%	80.8%	92.8%	84.9%
Grace College	4.3%	44.4%	5.2%	81.8%	11.0%	78.3%
Lord Lawson of Beamish Academy	30.2%	80.5%	18.9%	76.7%	19.2%	80.4%
St Thomas More Catholic School	97.5%	77.7%	98.0%	76.7%	97.5%	78.9%
Thorp Academy	13.5%	87.0%	0%		0.5%	0%
Whickham School	35.7%	91.3%	15.0%	81.6%	27.4%	72.6%
Heworth Grange School	0%		0.5%	0%	12.0%	88.0%
Kingsmeadow School	0%		0%		0%	0%

The proportion of young people who took an RE GCSE and successfully attained at least grade 4 declined this year from 79.6% to 62.9%. The national figure for this was at 72.7%, higher than the Gateshead picture.

The entry proportion for students taking RE as a GCSE subject has fallen from 38.9% to 35.8%.

Kingsmeadow School has again had no GCSE entries.

5.0 National links

Gateshead SACRE has been affiliated to NASACRE for many years and we value the input we get from this body.

6.0 Locally Agreed Syllabus (LAS)

The RE Professional has continued to lead a review into the LAS by consulting with local teachers about the merits and areas for development of the current version. He has also discussed the issue with other professionals. These discussions, added to the tenor of the Ofsted review 'Deep and Meaningful? The Religious Education Subject Report, which hints at the development of a National Curriculum for RE, lead us towards the conclusion that this may not be the right time to make major changes to the LAS.

The SACRE Chair and the Director of Education Services in Gateshead have written a joint letter to all our schools making it explicit that if schools decide it would be appropriate for their cohort of pupils to add aspects of a particular faith to those included in the LAS, or to change the teaching order, then they are at liberty to do so.

7.0 Self assessment

It has been good to have another series of successful RE Networks this year, and we are grateful to our RE Professional for facilitating these, and to SACRE members who have made contributions to them. It is also good to see some progress in monitoring the quality of RE provision across Gateshead, and we look forward to further development in this area.

8.0 Action plan for 2024-25

The RE Professional will be asked to continue the development of work started last year by developing 3 strands of work with SACRE, based on priorities:

1. To support the teaching of RE in schools through active teacher networking and the sharing of expertise and effective practice.
2. To ensure that SACRE has an accurate assessment of the quality of RE provision within Gateshead schools and uses this knowledge to celebrate success and direct support, when appropriate.
3. To begin to prepare to produce the next Gateshead Agrees Syllabus for RE.

To support the teaching of RE in schools through active teacher networking and the sharing of expertise and effective practice.

Actions

- I. To ensure all teachers of RE and especially subject leaders are invited to networking sessions. The network sessions to be organised by the Council's school improvement team and agendas to be with schools a week before sessions. One session to take place per term.
- II. To ensure that network sessions are driven by the requirements of RE teachers.
- III. The Council's RE consultant to visit a range of schools on invitation.
- IV. To explore the possibility of some schools agreeing to take RE focussed visits from other schools.

To ensure that SACRE has an accurate assessment of the quality of RE provision within Gateshead schools and uses this knowledge to celebrate success and direct support, when appropriate.

- I. SACRE to receive presentations for any RE focussed visits made by the consultant.
- II. SACRE to devise a method that assesses the quality of RE provision within schools. Through.
 - Production of an RE audit for schools to complete, that identifies perceived strengths and weaknesses of the RE curriculum in schools.
 - A desktop exercise that identifies any RE related strengths or weaknesses through analysis of Ofsted inspection reports of Gateshead schools. It should be noted that RE as a subject may not be mentioned but the Personal Development judgement made by Ofsted may cast some light on the quality of the RE curriculum and the pupils' understanding of faiths and cultures other than their own.

To begin to prepare to produce the next Gateshead Agreed Syllabus for RE.

- I. Following full consultation with schools, an agreed approach to the production of the next Agreed Syllabus to be shared by SACRE.
 - At this time (Autumn term 2023), Gateshead schools are keen not to make significant changes to the Agreed Syllabus. However, SACRE is mindful of the potential national developments in relation to the review of RE as a subject and the growing call around the concept of world view. Essentially, a national set of expectations may be published in regard to RE and world views.
 - While the Agreed Syllabus is under review, further guidance to be given to schools in relation to ensuring that flexibility is given to the RE curriculum if the school's community has children of a faith group not specified in the AS.

SACRE Action Plan 2024/25				
Action	By when	By whom	Intended outcome	Progress Monitoring
1. Analyse secondary school data (summer 2024)	Within 4 weeks of data becoming available	LA Officer	Performance in examinations reviewed and Issues identified	Item on SACRE agenda
2. To ensure that SACRE has an accurate assessment of the quality of RE provision within Gateshead schools	Ongoing	RE Professional, education Gateshead staff, SACRE members	Use this knowledge to celebrate success and direct support, when appropriate.	Item on SACRE agenda
3. Support a local RE Network for teachers.	Ongoing	RE Professional, SACRE members	Teachers offer mutual support in raising the quality of RE education. SACRE finds out the issues facing schools regarding teaching RE and about items of interest to include in the newsletter.	Item on SACRE agenda
4. To continue to prepare to produce the next Gateshead Agreed Syllabus for RE.	Ongoing	RE Professional, education Gateshead staff, SACRE members	Agreed syllabus can be brought up to date with principles of best practice and assist teachers with following Ofsted guidance where appropriate	Item on SACRE agenda