

Gloucestershire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Annual Report

September 2024 - August 2025

Foreword

Welcome to the Annual Report for Gloucestershire SACRE for 2024/25

It has been another incredibly busy year for Gloucestershire SACRE and I am pleased to present this annual report which details the activities and work of SACRE over the last year.

This report serves not only as a record of our collective work and achievements, but also as a testament to the ongoing commitment of SACRE members to the promotion of high-quality Religious Education (RE) across our schools.

I would like to give particular thanks to Deborah Glover as she retires from teaching and moves on from SACRE. Deborah has been a dedicated and committed member of SACRE since at least 2009, serving previously as vice chair and as chair from between 2016 to 2020. Deborah's contributions will be greatly missed.

As we say goodbye to Deborah, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome new members to our SACRE committee:

- Jane Hill, Jewish representative
- Claire Giblin, a secondary headteacher
- Chris Mooney, RE Lead across DGAT
- Vicky Allen, head of department at a secondary school and a NATRE representative
- Joanne Wykes, RE lead in a primary school

Thanks too, must go to Stephen Pett, National RE Adviser, for his expert support, guidance and sheer hard work in shaping our new syllabus which has been enthusiastically received as a modern and inclusive framework that better reflects contemporary society.

Creating and launching the new syllabus has been a huge undertaking drawing on the expertise and views of our members, taking in to account the national updates as well as canvassing the opinions of stakeholders to ensure their views have been heard.

This information will guide us as we now work diligently to further support schools in delivering a curriculum that not only meets statutory requirements but also inspires students to think critically and reflect on the complex world around them.

Julia Matson
Chair, Gloucestershire SACRE
October 2025

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1. Introduction

1.1. Overview of the work of SACRE

- 1.1.1. The Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) is a statutory body set up to advise the Local Authority on matters related to religious education and collective worship. Its members are drawn from teachers, Local Authority representatives including Councillors, faith representatives from the Church of England and a range of Christian denominations, and representatives from other religious and non-religious groups represented in the region.
- 1.1.2. SACRE's key functions include monitoring the provision and quality of RE, and providing advice and support on the effective teaching of RE in accordance with the agreed syllabus. This includes advice on methods of teaching, choice of teaching material and provision of teacher training. This is primarily done through the review and implementation of the locally agreed syllabus, a process which is required every five years. This is followed by on-going monitoring of its effectiveness in the light of changing national education policy.
- 1.1.3. It is a legislative requirement that each SACRE produces an annual report of its work and that this is published, sent to the local authority, to NASACRE and to other interested parties such as the Department for Education.
- 1.1.4. This year, SACRE has been engaged in the on-going process of developing a new agreed syllabus, given a 'soft' launch in June 2025. It held three meetings of the Agreed Syllabus Conference followed by SACRE at Sir Thomas Rich's School on Thursday 7 November 2024, at Shire Hall, Gloucester on Monday 10 February 2025 and Thursday 15 May 2025. All three meetings were hybrid, with the in-person meetings also accessible via Teams.
- 1.1.5. The Chair is Julia Matson, formerly the Vice Chair, Headteacher at Barnwood CE Primary School, Gloucester, and Matthew Morgan, Headteacher at Sir Thomas Rich's School and representative for NAHT. The Local Authority Officer is Teresa Cross, Education Lead, Education Outcomes and Intervention.
- 1.1.6. Standing items in meetings:
 - Welcome
 - Apologies for absence
 - Minutes and matters arising
- 1.1.7. A brief overview of each meeting can be found below:

7 November 2024, Agreed Syllabus Conference

- Revising the agreed syllabus: reviewing the draft pages
- Discussing feedback from secondary and SEND teachers
- Planning agreed syllabus launches

SACRE

- Support for teachers: primary RE Hubs, GRETA secondary network
- Updated visits and visitors guide
- Evaluations from secondary conference 2024
- Annual Report
- National RE news update

Monday 10 February 2025, Agreed Syllabus Conference

- Agreed Syllabus Review draft
- Syllabus launch conferences 2025 plans
- Engaging with 'hard to reach' schools

SACRE

- Support for teachers: primary RE Hubs, GRETA secondary network
- Visits and Visitors Guide
- Annual report
- National RE news update

Thursday 15 May, Agreed Syllabus Conference

- Agreed Syllabus Review: interim approval of draft plus non-statutory guidance for 'soft' launch in June
- Details for primary launch conferences 2025

SACRE

- School workforce data
- Curriculum and Assessment Review
- National RE news update

2. Religious Education (RE)

2.1. The locally agreed syllabus and RE in schools

- 2.1.1. The Gloucestershire agreed syllabus was launched in 2017. It set out a pedagogy based on three elements: enabling pupils to make sense of beliefs, understand their impact in people's lives, and make connections between their studies and their own understanding of the world and of themselves. Feedback from schools has been very positive. The Agreed Syllabus Conference was established in February 2021 for review. One decision taken was to extend the current 2017-2022 syllabus to 2025. This was partly to take into account the challenge of the pandemic, with its impact on how much RE time has realistically been given during lockdowns and during catchup. This meant that the syllabus would not have had its full five-year use. A second reason was to allow for more progress in the RE Council's Religion and Worldviews Project (final report published May 2024), so that it could inform the review.
- 2.1.2. Feedback was sought from teachers at the annual conferences. The initial plan was to apply the Religion and Worldviews (RW) approach as set out in the Draft Handbook (2022) and then the final Handbook for Curriculum Writers (2024) to the 2017 syllabus. That is, to adapt the current syllabus to a new approach. However, in 2024 SACRE agreed that this would result in a hybrid that would not best serve the interests of pupils or teachers, and so the SACRE agreed to apply an approach that fulfils the RE Council's National Statement of Entitlement (NSE) directly (as found in the [Handbook for Curriculum Writers](#) and the basis of the draft [National Content Standard](#)), building a pedagogy around the elements of the NSE: content, engagement, position.
- 2.1.3. The draft syllabus takes these three elements from the NSE as the basis for its pedagogy, equipping pupils to 'understand how religious and non-religious

worldviews influence people's lives', 'engage with religious and non-religious worldviews in thoughtful and scholarly ways', and 'understand themselves, and others, and their personal worldviews better'. These three elements are woven together through exemplar units of work, which engage pupils in investigating key questions. Each key question is supported by a double-page medium term plan, including sequencing of content, suggested teaching and learning idea, and high-level assessment outcomes. The engagement element includes the application of a variety of tools and methods, reflecting different disciplines.

- 2.1.4. The syllabus was given a 'soft' launch to primary schools in June 2025. This provided the new syllabus with non-statutory medium-term planning for the first term of key questions. Opportunities for feedback will be given during the first year, with adjustments completed for a final version to be released in summer 2026, complete with all the non-statutory guidance.

2.2. Standards and monitoring of RE

- 2.2.1. GCSE and A level Religious Studies examinations data can be seen in Appendix 3 below. At present, exam results from 2025 are unvalidated. As always, SACRE thanks teachers who have supported students and taught them in extremely difficult circumstances.
- 2.2.2. SACRE regularly reviews school workforce survey data when it is available, reviewing school websites and surveying schools to explore provision further.
- 2.2.3. Ofsted reports also provide a way of monitoring RE. The new Ofsted inspection framework and RE research review appear to be bringing a renewed focus on RE in schools where RE was struggling to get sufficient curriculum time.

2.3. Teacher training and materials and advice for schools

Network meetings

- 2.3.1. The Diocese of Gloucester ran online and face to face hub groups for primary schools, run by hub leaders who were supported with training by the Diocesan adviser, Debbie Helme. The groups met termly and were attended by teachers from Church of England schools and community schools and academies. As well as the hub groups, the Diocese also provided training sessions on SIAMS, subject leadership, spirituality, justice and responsibility, collective worship and responding to bereavement.

SACRE primary RE conferences, 16 and 17 June 2025

- 2.3.2. The annual primary RE conferences became the 'soft' launches for the revised agreed syllabus. These took place at the Hilton Puckrup Hall Hotel and the Marriott Cheltenham Chase Hotel. 227 teachers from 143 schools attended, along with SACRE members. It was led by Stephen Pett, Julie Childs and Debbie Yeomans from RE Today. The conference was set up to introduce a religion and worldviews approach, to equip teachers to plan units using the syllabus and non-statutory guidance, and there was a particular focus on adapting the long-term plan for mixed-age classes.

2.3.3. The programme was as follows:

- Keynote 1: Introducing the new Agreed Syllabus: content, engagement, position
- Workshop 1: A religion and worldviews approach in practice
- Workshop 2: Planning great RE for 4-7s
- Workshop 3: Planning great RE for 7-11s
- Keynote 2: Excellent RE: applying the religious and worldviews approach; admin and practicalities

2.3.4. 200 teachers gave feedback. 60% rated the day as 'excellent', 36% as 'good' and 4% as 'satisfactory'.

A summary overview of all the feedback comments generated using ChatGPT:

Summary from ChatGPT, analysing the raw comments:

Strengths of the New Syllabus

- Clarity and accessibility
 - Widely praised as clear, detailed, and easy to navigate.
 - Repeated praise for the syllabus being clear, well-structured, and flowing logically.
 - Double-page unit plans highlighted as "brilliant", "super helpful", and "a great time saver".
 - Several comments highlighted that a great deal of work and expertise had gone into the document, which was appreciated.
- Support for non-specialists
 - Structured lesson breakdowns and terminology aid non-specialist teachers.
 - Icons like "ways of knowing" and rationales appreciated for helping guide teaching.
- Religion and worldviews approach
 - Enthusiastically received as a modern and inclusive framework that better reflects contemporary society.
 - Praised for giving greater rationale and evidence for RE teaching.
 - Seen as relevant, reflective of diversity, and empowering for students to explore personal and societal beliefs.
 - Exciting and forward-looking: Many said it would shape RE across the county positively.
 - Reflects national developments: The alignment with the religion and worldviews approach and the REC statement of entitlement was seen as both timely and appropriate.
- Mixed-age planning
 - The syllabus's attention to mixed-age classes was positively acknowledged by small schools and federations.
- Pedagogical support
 - Integration of prior work (e.g., Ofsted's 3 types of knowledge, REC entitlement).
 - Emphasis on reflective, inquiry-based learning welcomed.
- Resources & format
 - Interactive PDFs, visual icons, and online handouts appreciated.
 - Positive feedback on user-friendliness and planning aids.

Areas of Concern

- Implementation challenges: Some worried about how to practically embed the syllabus into existing school structures.
- Mixed-age classes: A recurring theme—teachers requested help adapting units for 1/2, 3/4, 5/6 and other non-standard groupings.
- Workload: Some noted it felt like “a lot to take in” and needed time/support to digest.

Requests for additional support include editable planning documents, knowledge organisers, vocabulary banks, example outputs, guidance on tracking progress, best practice for evidencing learning, on-going hub training support, additional exemplars for range of mixed-age classes, etc.

Overall, the conference was viewed as highly successful, and the new syllabus is widely embraced as a progressive, well-structured development. There was particular approval of the religion and worldviews approach, detailed planning support, and teachers were especially grateful for the attention to mixed-age classes.

Concerns were not about the syllabus itself but about implementation practicalities.

Overall, the feedback reflects confidence in the syllabus and a readiness to engage with the new Religion and Worldviews approach, provided schools receive ongoing support and training.

2.4. REaction award

- 2.4.1. Gloucestershire SACRE has been running its REaction award for four years now. It celebrates high quality RE in schools, with teachers demonstrating the impact of visits and visitors on pupils, involvement in a competition beyond the school (such as NATRE’s Spirited Arts, and the impact of CPD on teachers). In 2024-2025 11 schools successfully achieved their Bronze award and 3 silver. The criteria for Gold were established, and one school successfully applied and met the criteria, being the first of our Gloucestershire schools to have achieved this. It was valuable working with the school as feedback on the Gold criteria has meant we can tweak it for the new academic year 2025-2026.

Altogether, since 2023, we now have 30 schools who have achieved their Bronze award and 10 have achieved their Silver award. SACRE Baptist representative, David Crunkhurn, has advertised the award at headteacher meetings, subject leader network meetings, and visited many schools to help them with their applications and to personally present them with their certificates.

2.5. Other information

- 2.5.1. There were no formal complaints to SACRE about RE during the year.

2.6. Advice given to the local authority

- 2.6.1. No advice was given to the local authority.

3. Collective worship

3.1. Standards and monitoring of collective worship

- 3.1.1. SACRE has found it difficult to monitor collective worship over the past few years.

3.2. Determinations

- 3.2.1. No applications for a determination (to alter the character of collective worship for some or all pupils in a school) have been requested in the year 2024-25.

3.3. Teacher training provided

- 3.3.1. No SACRE training on collective worship has been provided in 2024-25, although the Diocese of Gloucester continues to support its schools in this area.

3.4. Other information

- 3.4.1. There were no formal complaints to SACRE about collective worship during the year.

3.5. Advice given to the local authority

- 3.5.1. No advice was given to the local authority.

4. Links with other bodies

4.1. National bodies

- Gloucestershire SACRE is a member of NASACRE. Its newsletters are circulated to all members.
- Stephen Pett, RE Today, connects SACRE with NATRE, and provides national updates at each meeting. Reports from NATRE, including the School Workforce Data and regular primary and secondary surveys have proved useful to SACRE when monitoring schools.
- Information from the RE Council has been used in meetings and shared with schools where appropriate.
- The REC Religion and Worldviews Project Handbook for Curriculum Writers on a religion and worldviews approach (May 2024) has been a helpful resource for discussion for SACRE, and in the shaping of the syllabus review.

4.2. Local bodies

- Gloucester Diocese provides excellent support to SACRE and local schools.

5. SACRE involvement in the local area

- 5.1.1. SACRE updates governors and headteachers on resources and training via briefings, the Heads Up and What's Up Gov bulletins.

6. Managing SACRE and partnership with the local authority

6.1. Professional and administrative support

- 6.1.1. Clerk to SACRE

Abbie Maskell
Executive Support Assistant
Gloucestershire County Council
Shire Hall, Westgate Street, Gloucester GL1 2TP

6.1.2. Local authority officer

Teresa Cross
Education Lead
Education Outcomes and Intervention
Gloucestershire County Council
Shire Hall, Westgate Street, Gloucester GL1 2TP

6.1.3. Adviser to SACRE

The local authority has a contract with RE Today Services. Stephen Pett is the RE Today national adviser who delivers the contract to Gloucestershire local authority and SACRE.

RE Today Services, S5-S6 1 Devon Way, Longbridge, Birmingham B31 2TS

6.2. Membership, representation and attendance

6.2.1. SACRE regularly reviews membership and seeks representation from local communities. Current vacancies, and repeated absences are discussed by the Chair and local authority officer. It also considers co-opting those with skills, knowledge and experience who can help to develop SACRE's work.

6.2.2. All groups have been represented according to SACRE's terms of reference at each meeting.

6.3. Training for SACRE members

6.3.1. The SACRE Chair, local authority officer, clerk and RE adviser are on hand to advise SACRE members.

6.3.2. All members are invited to attend the training provided for schools. Several SACRE members attend the primary and secondary conference each year, providing support to the RE adviser and spending time meeting and supporting teachers. Members often attend NASACRE CPD and the SouthWest SACRE conference, reporting back to members.

Appendices

[Appendix 1: SACRE membership](#)

[Appendix 2: Circulation details for this annual report](#)

[Appendix 3: Gloucestershire examination results](#)

Appendix 1: SACRE membership

Group	Representative	7 Nov 2024	10 Feb 2025	15 May 2025
Group (A):				
Baha' i community	Tanya George		✓	
Baptist community	David Crunkhum		✓	✓
Buddhist community	<i>Vacancy</i>			
Community Churches	<i>Vacancy</i>			
Gloucestershire Humanists	Sarah Pinegar to Nov 2024; Hannah Hart from Feb 2025		✓	
Hindu community	Daxa Mehta	✓	✓	✓
Jewish community	Jane Hill			
Methodist community	Revd Rachael Leather	✓	✓	
Muslim community	Atique Miah			
Pentecostal community	Howard Padley	✓	✓	
Quaker community	Chris Lee			
Roman Catholic Church	<i>Vacancy</i>			
Salvation Army	Cliff Matthews			
Sikh community	<i>Vacancy</i>			
Unitarians	<i>Vacancy</i>			
United Reformed Church	<i>Vacancy</i>			
Group (B): Church of England representatives				
	Debbie Helme	✓	✓	✓
	Christopher Mooney (from May 2025)			✓
	Joanne Wykes (from May 2025)			✓
	John Millin		✓	
	Trevor Cooling	✓	✓	✓
Group C: Teacher representatives				
NEU	Lynda Britton	✓		✓
NASUWT	Clare Tilling (Feb 2025)		✓	
NAHT	Julia Matson (Chair)	✓	✓	✓
ASCL	Claire Giblin (from May 2025)			✓
Group D: Gloucestershire Council members				
LA Officer	Teresa Cross	✓	✓	✓
Cabinet Member for Education	Cllr Philip Robinson (to May 2025)	✓		
In attendance				
Clerk to SACRE	Abbie Maskell	✓	✓	✓
Adviser to SACRE	Stephen Pett, RE Today	✓	✓	✓

Appendix 2: Circulation details for this annual report

Copies of this annual report will be sent electronically to the relevant individuals and bodies below:

- Kirsten Harrison, Director of Children's Services, Gloucestershire LA
- Cllr Linda Cohen, Cabinet Member for Education, Gloucestershire LA
- The Department for Education (Central Government)
- NASACRE (National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education)
- Headteachers and Governing Bodies of Gloucestershire schools
- All members of Gloucestershire SACRE, for distribution to the bodies/communities they represent

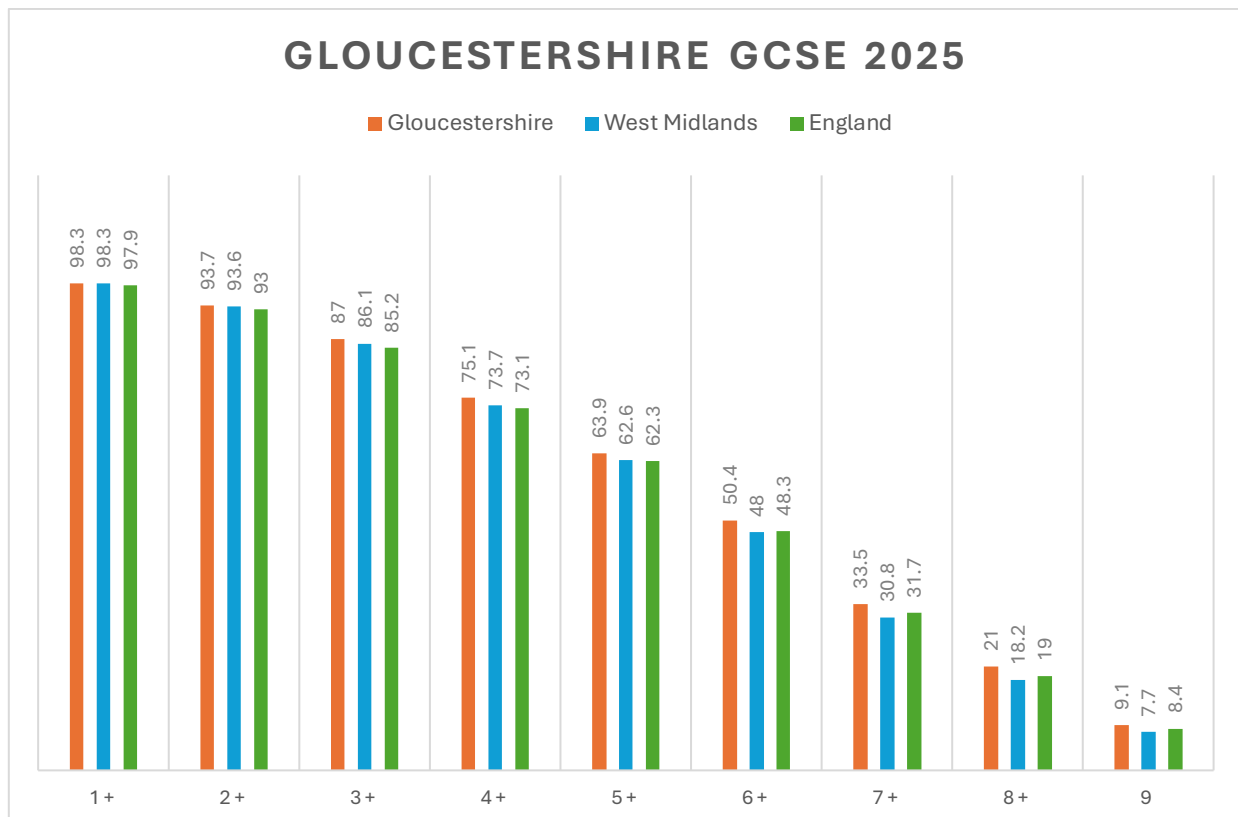
Appendix 3: Gloucestershire examination results

The provisional data GCSE Religious Studies outcomes show:

Gloucestershire GCSE results

The unvalidated data shows Gloucestershire GCSE results against nearby counties, the West Midlands and England. There were 2310 entries in 2025. [Map of GCSE \(9 to 1\) grade outcomes by county in England](#) Results for all ages.

Grades	Gloucestershire % (2310)	Herefordshire % (535)	Worcestershire % (1,560)	West-Midlands	England %
1+	98.3	98.1	98.7	97.6	97.9
2+	93.7	91.6	94.2	92.1	93
3+	87	82.2	86.2	83.5	85.2
4+	75.1	64.5	73.7	70.4	73.1
5+	63.9	49.5	61.2	59.6	62.3
6+	50.4	32.7	45.8	45.7	48.3
7+	33.5	17.8	28.5	29.3	31.7
8+	21	6.5	16.3	17.2	19
9	9.1	3.7	5.8	7.6	8.4



Compare with 2024, where there were 2565 entries in Gloucestershire.

Grades	Gloucestershire %	West Midlands %	England %
1+	97.5	97.9	98.1
2+	92.2	93.1	93.2
3+	83.8	84.7	85.2
4+	71	72.2	72.5
5+	59.3	61.3	62
6+	45	47	47.9
7+	29	29.9	31.1
8+	17.2	17.9	18.8
9	7.6	7.3	7.9

2019-2025:

	Entries	Grade 4+	England
2025	2310	75.1	73.1
2024	2565	71	72.5
2023	2770	72.2	72.2
2022	3020	72.5	76.7
2021	2835	78.3	80.2
2020	2910	81.4	80.5
2019	2885	71.0	72.3



Gloucestershire A level results

			2024/25															
			A level							AS level								
			Exam entries	Number at grade A*.	Number at grade A.	Number at grade B.	Number at grade C.	Number at grade D.	Number at grade E.	Number at grade U.	Exam entries	Number at grade A*.	Number at grade A.	Number at grade B.	Number at grade C.	Number at grade D.	Number at grade E.	Number at grade U.
Total Religious Studies	West Midlands	Herefordshire, County of	31	3	8	9	7	4	0	0	3	0	0	1	1	0	1	0
		Worcestershire	115	2	16	39	35	15	7	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	South West	Gloucestershire	158	8	26	53	33	18	16	3	14	0	4	3	5	1	1	0
	West Midlands		1,405	47	200	413	419	219	85	14	133	0	15	23	25	30	20	17

