

Bedford Borough SACRE annual report 2021-22

1. Introduction

Table of contents

- 2. RE (statutory responsibilities):**
- 3. Collective Worship (statutory responsibilities)**
- 4. Links with other bodies**
- 5. Other areas of SACRE involvement locally**
- 6. SACRE's own arrangements (statutory responsibilities)**
- 7. Appendices**

Words from the Chair of SACRE

Welcome to this year's SACRE annual report for the school year 2021 – 2022. This is a legally required document which summarises the work of Bedford Borough SACRE . For this term only it will replace our newsletter as it is a lengthy document to put together and will cross over with much of the information that we would normally give in our newsletters. Thank you to Ian Lindsay and Jeremy Welsh who have collated and written much of the content. Thank you also to Victoria Morrell, Primary Head teacher and SACRE member, who has written the very helpful piece on the current RE syllabus.

The aim of this report is to update readers about the work of the members of SACRE. Our function is to advise the Local Authority (LA) on matters relating to collective worship in community schools and on religious education delivered in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus.

The last school year was a mixed picture as the schools emerged from Covid. We wanted to visit schools again in person and these will start in a small way this coming year. Training stayed online mostly but we had a good uptake of the religion specific training we organised with 'RE Today'. Online professional study groups were helpful for staff in our schools to keep in touch. Thank you Ryan Parker, for organising and running these. We hope to be able to continue this over the coming year, but our main priority will be the forthcoming syllabus refresh. There is a statutory time scale within which we are required to look at the RE syllabus for our schools and we are currently carrying out our review in conjunction with the other SACREs in Central Bedfordshire and Luton. The review is being carried out by consultants from 'RE Today' who have also advised the SACRE for the last few years. Thanks to Julia Diamond-Conway and Lat Blaylock, from 'RE Today' for their help. Lat is reviewing the content of the current syllabus with teachers help and we are aiming to build on and update our current syllabus which will be launched during the autumn term 2023.

During the year, we have met each term and members have given up their time to contribute to the work of SACRE. Thank you to all of them for their hard work over the year.

CLlr Jane Walker

Chair of Bedford SACRE

Bedford Borough SACRE meets once per term and, since Covid, these meetings have taken place virtually on Microsoft Teams. The membership is made up of 4 main groups – representatives from the Church of England, representatives from other religious denominations, teacher representatives from schools and Local Authority representatives. In addition, there is a local support officer who is the Secretary of the SACRE and a Local Authority Education Advisor as well as a representative from RE Today, operating in an advisory capacity. Membership has remained reasonably stable this year with 20 members (*see Appendix A*) and attendance at termly meetings being generally around 55% across the year. The only change of personnel was Councillor Masud leaving and being replaced by Councillor Burley. A range of topics have been discussed at these meetings including, and in line with the Development Plan for the year, the revised agreed syllabus which is due to come into being by September 2023, school visits, feedback from the NASACRE Conference and the contents of the termly newsletter to schools.

2. RE (statutory responsibilities)

In February this year, the SACRE members agreed a new vision statement which now reads ***“To support and advise the Local Authority and teachers on all matters related to the Religious Education syllabus to ensure pupils receive excellent education on religion, values and ethics and times of collective worship and reflection”***

Summary of the Agreed Syllabus 2018-2023

The Agreed Syllabus for RE for Bedford Borough has been written by Lat Blaylock, National RE Adviser from RE Today and created in collaboration with Central Bedfordshire Council and Luton SACREs. The current syllabus is due to be updated for the academic year from September 2023 and will be established using the same principles of collaboration and partnership as the current iteration.

The agreed syllabus embodies the purpose of RE and contains a number of statements which underpin the syllabus itself.

- ✚ RE contributes dynamically to children and young people’s education in schools by provoking challenging questions about meaning and purpose in life, beliefs about God, ultimate reality, issues of right and wrong and what it means to be human.
- ✚ In RE, pupils learn about religions and beliefs in local, national and global contexts, to discover, explore and consider different answers to these questions.
- ✚ They learn to weigh up the value of wisdom from different sources, to develop and express their insights in response and to agree or disagree respectfully.
- ✚ RE teaching therefore should equip pupils with systematic knowledge and understanding of a range of religions and beliefs, enabling them to develop their ideas, values and identities.
- ✚ It should develop in pupils an aptitude for dialogue so that they can participate positively in our society, with its diverse religions and beliefs.

- ✚ Pupils should gain and deploy the skills needed to understand, interpret and evaluate texts, sources of wisdom and authority and other evidence. They should learn to articulate clearly and coherently their personal beliefs, ideas, values and experiences while respecting the right of others to differ.

The principle aim of RE is to explore what people believe and what difference this makes to how they live, so that pupils can gain the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to handle questions raised by religion and belief, reflecting on their own ideas and ways of living.

The principle of RE is developed further by threefold aims which puts the purpose of the subject into action.

- 1.) Make sense of a range of religious and non-religious beliefs, so that they can:
 - ✚ Identify, describe, explain and analyse beliefs and concepts in the context of living religions using appropriate vocabulary.
 - ✚ Explain how and why these beliefs are understood in different ways, by individuals and within communities.
 - ✚ Recognise how and why sources of authority (e.g. texts, teachings, traditions, leaders) are used, expressed and interpreted in different ways, developing skills of interpretation.
- 2.) Understand the impact and significance of religious and non-religious beliefs, so that they can:
 - ✚ Examine and explain how and why people express their beliefs in diverse ways
 - ✚ Recognise and account for ways in which people put their beliefs into action in diverse ways, in their everyday lives, within their communities and in the wider world.
 - ✚ Appreciate and appraise the significance of different ways of life and ways of expressing meaning.
- 3.) Make connections between religious and non-religious beliefs, concepts, practices and ideas studies, so that they can:
 - ✚ Evaluate, reflect on and enquire into key concepts and questions studied, responding thoughtfully and creatively, giving good reasons for their responses.
 - ✚ Challenge the ideas they study, and consider how these ideas might challenge their own thinking, articulating beliefs, values and commitments clearly in response.
 - ✚ Discern possible connections between the ideas studied and their own ways of understanding the world, expressing their critical responses and personal reflections with increasing clarity and understanding.

The Locally Agreed Syllabus works on the principle that RE is legally required for all pupils. RE is a core subject of the curriculum for all pupils, it is an entitlement for all pupils through their schooling from reception year up to and including Key Stage 5.

The syllabus details that pupils are to study, in depth, the religious traditions of the following groups:

| | | |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| 4-5s Reception | Children will encounter Christianity and other faiths as part of their growing sense of self, their own community and their place within it. | Consideration of other religions and non-religious worldviews can occur at any key stage, as appropriate to the school context. Examples are included across the age ranges in the units of study. |
| 5-7s Key Stage 1 | Christians, Jews and/or Muslims. | |
| 7 – 11s Key Stage 2 | Christians, Muslims, Hindus and Jews. An additional study of Sikhs is appropriate if the school has Sikh pupils. | |
| 11 – 14s Key Stage 3 | Christians, Muslims, Sikhs and Buddhists. Additional studies are suitable where pupils from other religions are in the school. | |
| 14 – 16s Key Stage 4 | Study of two religions is required, including Christianity. This will be through a course in RS or RE leading to a qualification approved under Section 96 (normally GCSE RS) | |
| 16 – 19s RE for all | Religions and worldviews to be selected by schools and colleges as appropriate. | |

The new agreed syllabus for RE 2023-2028

The Chair met with Chairs of the Central Bedfordshire and Luton SACREs to agree a way forward working together jointly to develop a new agreed syllabus for 2023-2028. It was agreed that each SACRE would carry out a survey of teachers in its area to ascertain what changes to the syllabus were required by teachers. Each survey would use the same set of questions and the responses would be collated by Ryan Parker. The results would be used to decide what changes were required and RE Today would be commissioned in September 2022 to carry out any revisions with a launch date of September 2023.

Standards and monitoring of RE

In 2019-20 and 2020-21 it was not possible to analyse data on examination results in RE at GCSE and A Level due to the disruption caused by Covid to these exams. This year, however, these exams did take place again and the results for Bedford Borough have been published (*see Appendix B*).

This year we have produced a termly newsletter to schools and teachers and SACRE members are encouraged to contribute articles and features. Our three newsletters this

year have included an item on one of the faiths represented on our SACRE (Judaism, Catholicism and Hinduism) as well as links to RE resources useful to teachers. We have also held termly Professional Study Groups for teachers in the Borough to meet up (on Microsoft Teams) and share ideas and good practice. These sessions, led by Ryan Parker and attended by about 30 teachers at a time, also invite along speakers on a variety of topics e.g, RE resources for Early Years and Key Stage 1.

We have published a School Visits policy and a Visit template for use when visiting schools (*see Appendices C & D*). Covid restrictions continued to affect school visits this year although some did occur (see below in Section 3), however, next year it is proposed to invite schools to volunteer to have a visit by SACRE members to enable us to further monitor the delivery of RE in our schools.

Although, in the SACRE Development Plan, we committed to promote and fund up to 5 Borough schools for 50% of the costs of REQM accreditation, no schools requested funding for the REQM (Quality Mark) this year and, given financial pressures and limited interest, it was decided at our February meeting to cease financial support for REQM next year.

Teacher training, materials and advice for schools

We purchased the NASACRE training package for 2021-22 and some of our members attended virtual sessions run by NASACRE e.g. LA Advisor attended session on 'Self-evaluation of your SACRE' in March 2022. In addition, following on from previous training on Hinduism we also offered a full day's training on Islam held via Zoom on 6th July 2022. This training was free of charge to teachers in Bedford Borough and was bespoke having been commissioned by the SACRE in response to requests from local teachers. **"RE CPD: Better teaching of Islam: improving subject knowledge for all pupils and for teachers** – carried out 6 July 2022 from 9.30am to 3.30pm via Zoom. The course provided teachers with a deepening understanding of Islam including its roots and history and its current British and global manifestations, with a strong focus on teaching and learning materials that are authentic, engaging and enabling a rich knowledge for learners. Resources - including lots of ready to use classroom materials for 4-11s and for 11-14s – were provided to attendees". Next year, in the Autumn term, we will also provide similar bespoke training around Sikhism for teachers in the Borough.

3. Collective Worship (statutory responsibilities)

Three SACRE members were invited into schools to speak about their faith or Worldview and these visits have successfully taken place as Covid restrictions have eased. We also conducted a survey to all our schools asking them about their current arrangements for collective worship. We received replies from 14 local schools, 4 of which were Academies. 11 Primaries replied, along with one Special school and 2 Secondary schools. One question asked if they had ever considered applying for a determination and all the schools who answered this question replied 'No'. Only one school, a Primary school, indicated that they had any students withdrawn from Religious Education (5) and one of the aspects schools highlighted for external support was dealing with educating their children about other faiths

than Christianity. This led to SACRE commissioning teacher training for teaching other faiths e.g. Islam and Sikhism.

4. Links with other bodies

Bedford Borough SACRE is a subscribing member of NASACRE and are, therefore, able to access their supporting materials including FAQs and their self-evaluation tool. We also send representatives to the NASACRE annual Conference, which was held virtually during the period of Covid restrictions. We also commission RE Today consultants to advise, lead teacher training and help with the review of the current RE syllabus. Bedford Borough SACRE also promote and fund the uplift costs of Queens Park Faith Tours for Bedford Borough Schools, enabling local schools to visit some of the impressive religious buildings located in this area of the town. Unfortunately, due to Covid restrictions, these Faith Tours have been postponed this year but it is hoped that these can re-start next year.

5. Other areas of SACRE involvement locally

As a Borough, we are proud of the diversity of the town's population with a wide range of religions and faiths represented and many languages spoken. Religious leaders work closely with each other and the Borough recognises and celebrates many religious festivals and gatherings e.g. Ramadan, Diwali. We have a mix of schools including Christian faith schools but all our schools promote religious tolerance and understanding. The Bedford Borough web-site has a section dedicated to SACRE which explains the responsibilities of SACRE, the aims of Religious Education and details the membership of SACRE in Bedford Borough.

6. SACRE's own arrangements (statutory responsibilities)

The Local Authority (Bedford Borough Council) provide an officer who is the clerk of SACRE, organising the termly meetings, liaising with all the members, collating the annual Development Plan and fielding any enquiries from schools and parents. He works closely with the Chair person, who is also a local Councillor, and the Borough Education Advisor who is also a member of SACRE. The Education Advisor is responsible for editing the termly newsletter to schools, facilitating visits by SACRE members to schools, monitoring progress in schools through analysis of workforce data, website audits and exam results and writing the annual SACRE report. Membership of SACRE has remained stable this year but we have some members who have not attended the termly meetings so contact will attempt to be made and, if necessary, new members will be sought due to lapsed membership. SACRE members are able to access additional training through NASACRE as well as being encouraged to attend Professional Study Groups and teacher training sessions led by RE Today. The Local Authority has supported SACRE in the Borough by providing a budget of £10,000 in 2021-22 from public funds to enable the Development Plan objectives to be fully resourced (**see Appendix E**)

7. Appendices

Appendix A : Bedford Borough SACRE membership 2021-22

Group A (Religious Denominations)

Susanne Szal, Jewish representative
Dr Virendra Soni, Hindu representative (Vice-chair)
Charles Baily, Humanist representative
Chris Damp, Free Church representative
Becky Lovesey, Roman Catholic representative
Rubina Shaikh - Muslim
Tirath Singh Bhavra - Sikh
Ven Akurala Samitha - Buddhist

Group B (The Church of England)

Ryan Parker, Christian Ethos Adviser, St Albans Diocese
Rev Stephen Holroyd, Church of England

Group C (Teachers' Associations)

Victoria Morrall, Ursula Taylor School
Rachel Francis, Ridgeway Special School
Ben Rowlands, Bedford Modern School
Ruth Wilkes, Castle Newnham

Group D (Local Authority)

Councillor Jane Walker
Councillor Tim Hill
Councillor Kay Burley

Co-opted Members

Cassandra Howes, University Chaplain

ALSO:

Mr Ian Lindsay, Local Authority Advisor

Mr Jeremy Welch, Local Authority Support Officer

Appendix B – GCSE and A level RE exam results

| Subject: Religious Studies (4610) / Exam: GCSE (9-1) Full Course (391) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------|------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|---------|-----|
| | NOE | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | U | X | 9-5 | 9-4 | 9-1 | Avg Pts | |
| LA Total | Number | 1004 | 44 | 96 | 131 | 198 | 173 | 108 | 137 | 67 | 31 | 12 | 7 | 642 | 750 | 985 | 5.1 |
| LA Total | percentages | | 4.4% | 9.6% | 13.0% | 19.7% | 17.2% | 10.8% | 13.6% | 6.7% | 3.1% | 1.2% | 0.7% | 63.9% | 74.7% | 98.1% | |

| Subject: Religious Studies (4610) Exam: GCSE (9-1) Short Course (394) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|------|-----|---|---|---|---|---|------|---|---|------|---|---|------|---------|--|
| Est. No. | Centre | NOR | NOE | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | Q | U | X | Avg Pts | |
| - | LA (State Funded) | 2152 | 3 | - | - | - | - | - | 33.3 | - | - | 33.3 | - | - | 33.3 | 0.0 | |

| Count of GCE A Level Religious Studies (AA) | A | B | C | D | E | U | Total |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| | 7 | 6 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 22 |
| | 31.82% | 27.27% | 13.64% | 18.18% | 9.09% | 0.00% | 100% |

Appendix C – School visits policy



SACRE School Visits Policy

“The aim of the Bedford Borough SACRE is to support and advise the Local Authority and teachers on all matters related to the Religious Education syllabus to ensure pupils receive excellent education on religion, values and ethics and times of collective worship and reflection.”

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for SACRE members to make visits to schools in order for the SACRE to gain a better understanding of RE teaching in the area.

SACRE Members should remember that it is a privilege to visit a school and that they are not there to make judgements or to “inspect” the school.

PURPOSE OF VISIT (it may be one or all of these)

- To develop a greater understanding of how RE is taught in that school.
- To build relationships between the school and the SACRE.
- To observe a particular aspect of collective worship/reflection, such as a specific religious area or a specific key stage.
- To help the SACRE identify and plan any future support and/or training for RE teachers.

PREPARING FOR THE VISIT

- The date and time for each visit, as well as the purpose of the visit, should be agreed at least 2 weeks in advance between the SACRE LA Advisor, the Head-teacher and staff.
- Visits are best carried out in pairs of SACRE members. Make sure the school know who to expect.
- Agree beforehand with the contact person what you want to achieve. What is the focus of the visit? You should consider:
 - Who will you speak to during the visit, RE Lead, Head-teacher etc.?
 - Do you wish to see a class being taught?
 - Do you want attend an assembly/act of collective worship/reflection?
 - Do you want to look at the work of the Department as a whole?
 - Can you speak to pupils about their views of RE
- Write the agreed aims onto the Visit Report Template and make sure you keep to what has been agreed.
- Do some research to be familiar with the school’s aims, ethos and policies in RE and collective worship/reflection.
- Make sure you can explain what SACRE does,

PROTOCOL FOR THE VISIT

- Arrive on time or 15 minutes early.

- Adopt a friendly but professional manner, being courteous and considerate to all staff. Remain neutral and enter with an open mind. Avoid saying anything which could be viewed as denigrating or giving your own opinion about controversial issues. Remember you are not an inspector.
- Discuss the agreed focus and aims of the visit with appropriate staff.
- Check with staff where you should sit. Listen quietly unless asked to comment or take part and always respect confidentiality.
- If this has been previously agreed, talk to and ask questions of the children where appropriate. Make sure you sound like an interested lay person, with no note of challenge.
- Avoid talking to the teacher when he/she is involved with the children. Remember that it is someone's work place and you are a visitor.
- Make appropriate notes on the Visit Report in an unobtrusive manner.
- Do not make judgements on the effectiveness of the teaching
- Thank the teacher when leaving the classroom.
- If something concerns you try to speak to the SLT link before you leave the school.
- Share your Report with the RE teacher/Head-teacher and obtain their signature before you leave.

Possible questions to ask RE co-ordinator or Head

- How often do you hold acts of collective worship/reflection, who attends, is it the whole school? Who delivers them and how are they planned?
- How is RE taught in this school, how often? By whom?
- Do you use the agreed syllabus and how useful do you find it?
- How can SACRE help you? (e.g. visit the school, organise visits to your place or other places of worship)

Possible Questions you might ask the Teacher:

- How do you plan the programme of lessons throughout the year?
- Before the lesson can the teacher tell you the teaching plan for the lesson, its purpose and the intended outcome?
- What will happen next, after this lesson?
- How does the teacher check what progress students have made in the class?
- How does the teacher support students who are making slower progress?

Possible questions to ask pupils/students

- Do you enjoy RE – which parts do you like and why, if not why not?
- Do you think it is important to study RE
- Do you enjoy assemblies/celebrations
- Have you visited any places of worship?

Things to look out for

- Displays in open areas and classrooms
- Pupils enjoyment of the lesson or activity – are they listening to the teacher and each other, do they contribute and ask questions?
- Relationships between students, staff and each other
- Resources available – books, equipment, pictures.

AFTER THE VISIT

- Write up the Visits Report within a week of the visit.

- Report back to SACRE members at the next SACRE meeting.
- Send a thank you note to the member(s) of staff and, if you visited a class, to the students.

Approved June 2022

Appendix D – School visit report template



SACRE School Visit Report

BEDFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

..... School

Please do not carry out a visit or complete this report without first being familiar with the SACRE School Visits Policy

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Names of SACRE visitors: | Date: |
| | |

Focus of Visit as arranged in advance

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

Key Personnel to meet and Activities to be carried out

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

Reflections of the visit

(To be shared with SACRE members at the next meeting)

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

Signed: _____
(SACRE member)

Signed: _____
(Head teacher/Subject Leader/Teacher)

Additional sheet if required

Appendix E : Development Plan 2021-22

(See attached)