

Medway Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) Annual Report for 2019/2020

1. Chair's introduction

I am pleased to introduce the Medway SACRE Annual Report for the financial year 2019/2020.

SACRE met twice during this financial year and the meetings were hosted by a local church and a local secondary school.

Medway saw a further slight decrease in the number of students sitting the GCSE examination in Religious Studies (full course) from 560 in 2018 to 548 in 2019. The percentage achieving a high grade (grade 7 and above) at GCSE is only slightly below the national average.

The number sitting the A level examination in Religious Studies also decreased slightly from 75 in 2018 to 71 in 2019. However, the percentage of students gaining an A*/A grade in 2019 (11%) at A level is significantly below the national figure of 26.5% and no students obtained the highest grade of A* This is a further decrease from the figure of 13% gaining the highest grades in 2018 (see the charts in Appendix E on page 10 and 11).

SACRE has continued to offer free training for groups of schools and professional development for staff of both academy and local authority schools. Working with the Medway Teaching School Alliance (MTSA) the SACRE commissioned work with a local primary and a local secondary RE Subject Leader to offer further support to secondary RE departments and subject leaders in primary schools and to develop an RE Subject Leaders Hub. The Medway SACRE also continues to both promote and support the Kent and Medway RE Hub organised by Canterbury Christ Church University.

SACRE's work is only made possible by the generous financial support of Medway Council who recognise the positive value that well-delivered and well-resourced religious education can bring to pupils. SACRE continues to benefit from its partnership with the different faith groups on the SACRE and the Anglican Rochester Diocesan Board of Education.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow members of SACRE who have given of their time voluntarily and ensured that Medway has had a strong, quorate Council at all its meetings. the professional support of our consultant, Ian Hartland a former HMI, is also gratefully acknowledged. SACRE remains committed to the delivery of first-class religious education in all the area's schools.

Cllr Trevor Clarke
Chairman of Medway SACRE

2. Advice to statutory bodies

a) The SACRE has not offered any specific advice to the local authority apart from the recommendation to adopt a new Agreed Syllabus for RE.

b) The SACRE continues to offer much advice to schools. This has been achieved by different means.

- The SACRE continues to publish separate primary and secondary newsletters, often three times each year, usually in March, June and November. They usually contain local and national news relating to religious education, collective worship and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They also often include reviews of books for teachers, national reports on religion and belief, RE and collective worship and suitable resources such as DVDs, CDROMs and websites. Examples of some resources reviewed are mentioned in Appendix A on page 8. The newsletter is sent to all RE subject leaders in local authority and other schools, including academies, in the local area. It is also available on the SACRE section of the local authority's website.
- The SACRE enables the RE consultant to undertake a full, day review of a school's provision for religious education and for collective worship when asked to do so by a school. This results in a brief written report which is sent solely to the school. SACRE members then receive an anonymised version of the report which enables them to gain an insight into the work of some individual schools. The SACRE does not charge schools for this service. There was no take up for this offer in the financial year 2019/2020.
- The RE consultant also undertakes, when asked to do so by schools, shorter discussions (of around two hours) with individual RE subject leaders about their school's provision for religious education. This work does not usually result in a written report. The SACRE does not charge schools for this service.
- The RE consultant provides advice via email or the telephone to schools which make contact with him.
- The SACRE commissioned work with a local primary and a local secondary RE Subject Leader to offer further support to secondary RE departments and subject leaders in primary schools. These staff hold regular meetings with teachers of RE and provide training and opportunities to share best practice.
- There has been an increasing amount of information placed on the SACRE section of the local authority's website. This includes relevant publications from the Medway SACRE, including guidance on delivering the local Agreed syllabus, the primary and secondary newsletters, minutes of the SACRE meetings as well as relevant documents from bodies such as the Department for Education, Ofsted and the Religious Education Council.

- Although most local secondary schools, along with a few primary schools, have become academies, the Medway SACRE provides advice and support to both local maintained schools as well as academies in the Medway area.

c) The SACRE has not offered any specific advice to the government or other statutory bodies.

3. Standards and quality of provision of RE

- a) Lists of the number of entrants and public examinations results in recent years can be found in Appendices C- F on pages 8-11.
- b) The SACRE does not regularly collect information about attainment in RE from its schools apart from the results of public examinations.
- c) The SACRE has only limited information about the quality of RE provision in schools in addition to the information about the outcomes of public examinations in secondary schools. The SACRE does not make local-authority-wide checks on the extent to which all schools comply fully with the legal requirements for RE. Information mostly comes from any visits made to schools each year by the RE consultant and informally from staff at the local schools. Very little information is provided in current Ofsted reports about RE or collective worship in the local area. The SACRE continues to believe that it is a matter of considerable regret that Ofsted no longer makes rigorous checks on the extent of compliance with statutory requirements for RE and collective worship when schools, especially secondary schools, are inspected.
- d) There have been no withdrawals from RE in schools that have been brought to the attention of the Medway SACRE.
- e) There have been no complaints about RE in schools that have been brought to the attention of the Medway SACRE.

4. The local Agreed Syllabus for RE

The new Medway Agreed Syllabus for RE was finalised and issued in November 2018. The introduction to the new syllabus states:

The Medway Agreed Syllabus 2018 is intended to replace the earlier agreed syllabus of 2006. The fundamental legal requirements for RE remain, in the main, the same as in 2006. However, understandings of the nature and purpose of RE and of what the government expects of English maintained schools have changed over time. The syllabus seeks to reflect new requirements and expectations. It should be implemented in full by September 2019.

The new agreed syllabus seeks not only to ensure that the fundamental legal requirements for RE are met but also to reflect best practice recommended across a number of other local authorities in recent years. A number of other agreed syllabuses for RE along with documents and reports produced by the Religious Education Council, the Commission on Religious Education, the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education, Ofsted, the Department for Education, universities

and other RE specialists and practitioners have all been consulted. Some older material has also been consulted such as the Model Syllabuses produced some years ago by the (then) School Curriculum and Assessment Authority.

The new agreed syllabus seeks to be brief, clear, direct and user friendly. Thus, unnecessary jargon is avoided where possible and, where technical or specialist terms are used, they are mostly explained. The Medway SACRE are very aware that most users of this agreed syllabus will be those with specialisms in other subjects and areas apart from RE.

Some key features of the new Agreed Syllabus are:

- The introduction of a new single principal aim for RE which seeks to incorporate the twin aims of *learning about* and *learning from* religions.
- The use of end-of-key-stage outcomes instead of level descriptions and attainment targets.

The official launch of the new Medway Agreed Syllabus took place on 11 July 2019 in the crypt in Rochester cathedral. It was attended by over 20 schools and included six headteachers. There was input from the chairman of the Medway SACRE, the RE consultant and the two local RE subject leaders who have led training on RE locally. Refreshments were provided.

5. Collective Worship

- a) The SACRE does not make local-authority-wide checks on the extent to which all schools comply fully with the legal requirements for collective worship. The SACRE continues to think that Ofsted should do so during its inspection of schools and has in the past written to Ofsted about their failure to do so.
- b) The SACRE has received no requests for a determination in the current year and none at all in previous years.
- c) There have been no complaints about collective worship that have been brought to the attention of the Medway SACRE.

6. Management of SACRE

Membership and training. All the meetings of the SACRE in the year 2019/2020 have been quorate. Training for SACRE members has been mostly undertaken at the full SACRE meetings. This has included:

- a consideration of information in the primary and secondary newsletters, with an opportunity to look at any resources that have been reviewed
- updates, for example, any key information from the Department for Education, the RE Council, NASACRE and AREIAC which is provided by the RE consultant
- group activities which have included learning about aspects of different world religions.

Members of the SACRE who attend the annual NASCRE meeting report back their experience at a full SACRE meeting.

7. SACRE meetings during the year 2019/2020

There were two meetings during the school year. The following text provides some information about the key matters considered at these two meetings. Details about members' attendance are to be found in Appendix B on page 7.

First SACRE meeting on 20 June 2019

- This meeting took place at the church hall of St Justus Church, a local Church of England church in the Diocese of Rochester.
- The SACRE meeting started at 4.15pm.
- The meeting began in the usual way, following any apologies, welcomes and introductions, with a brief moment of quiet reflection.
- The two local RE subject leaders provided information about a recent meeting which provided an update for local teachers of RE. Most of the time was spent outlining the requirements of the new Medway Agreed Syllabus, giving particular consideration to the inclusion of worldviews.
- The RE consultant gave his regular input on relevant local and national developments and on work he is undertaking for the SACRE and local schools. The main areas included were: a consideration of the notion of worldviews; matters to be included in new local RE guidance (which is to accompany the new Agreed Syllabus) and comments on two useful recent publications for RE teachers.
- The SACRE has worked for some time with The Family Trust and has provided funding for them to create lesson plans for primary schools which were discussed.

Second SACRE meeting on 1 October 2019

- This meeting took place at a secondary school in Rochester.
- The SACRE meeting started at 4.15pm.
- A moment of silence was observed.
- The Chairman and Vice Chairman were re-elected.
- There was feedback from the SACRE members who attended the launch of the new Medway Agreed Syllabus in July 2019. It was widely viewed by participants and presenters as a success. There was good feedback from teachers about the new Medway Agreed Syllabus.
- The RE consultant gave his regular input on relevant local and national developments and on other work he had been doing. Locally he pointed out that numbers of those taking GCSE and A level in Religious Studies have been declining significantly. There was a drop in the numbers of those taking the full GCSE of 43% from 2011 to 2019.
- The RE consultant led an activity for the SACRE which involved looking at a number of cards with statements about the meaning of the term religious literacy. Participants were asked to rank them in order of importance. Feedback was gathered, a helpful discussion ensued.

- The two local RE subject leaders mentioned that the next network meeting would focus on teaching about humanism and different worldviews.

Third SACRE meeting

The scheduled third meeting which usually takes place in March 2020 was cancelled because of the Government-imposed lockdown, due to Covid 19.

8. Contribution of SACRE to the wider Local Authority agenda

- a) The SACRE has not produced any further guidance which would support the local authority's wider agenda.
- b) Individual SACRE members have supported individual schools and inter-faith activities locally.

9. Summary

The Medway SACRE functions well and does as much as it can, given a limited budget, in providing advice, training and support to schools including local academies, in promoting effective RE and collective worship. The SACRE has good local links, for example, with Rochester Cathedral, the local Inter-Faith Network, the Rochester Diocesan Board of Education and with some local religious communities. The SACRE has a good national link with NASACRE. The SACRE is suitably supported by an RE consultant who is an RE subject specialist with experience in schools, higher education, a local authority and as an HMI with Ofsted.

10. Membership of SACRE, local authority officers who attend, clerk and professional advice.

The Chair of the SACRE is a local councillor and the vice-chair is a member from Group B. The SACRE is supported by a clerk from the local authority and by an RE subject specialist consultant. The consultant is commissioned to provide around 15-20 days each year to support SACRE meetings, to write the newsletters and the Annual Report, to add information to the website and to provide advice and training to schools.

The SACRE usually meets three times each year and meetings are mostly held in schools or in rooms provided at different places of worship. The agenda, along with relevant attachments, are distributed to members a week before the meetings take place. At each meeting the RE consultant provides information about relevant local and national developments. The annual budget for the SACRE for 2019/2020 was £15,094.00 which is similar to the sum allocated by the local authority in previous years.

Appendix A

Edition 14 of the Medway Primary and secondary RE newsletters for June 2019

There was information about:

- The new Ofsted framework for school inspections (from September 2019)
- Information and links to two Exeter University publications *Big Ideas in Religious Education* and *Putting Big Ideas into Practice in Religious Education*
- The work of the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues at the University of Birmingham.

Appendix B

Figures for the attendance at SACRE meetings, by members of each of the four committees and others.

Meeting	20 June 2019	1 October 2019
Group A: Christian denominations and members of world faiths		
Stephen Bello	Yes	Yes
Irina Fridman	No	No
Ayaz Iqbal	No	No
Kulwat Jhita Singh	No	Yes
Anil Patel	No	Yes
Faran Forghani	No	No
Group B: Church of England		
Helen Bradshaw	Yes	No
Virginia Corbyn	No	Yes
Helen Burn	Yes	Yes
Anna Pattenden	No	No
Group C: Teacher associations		
Carolyn Burch	Yes	Yes
Lisa Humphries	Yes	Yes
John Gray	No	No
Group D: Local authority		
Cllr Trevor Clarke	Yes	Yes
Cllr Rupert Turpin	Yes	No
Cllr Jo Howcroft-Scott	Yes	No
Cllr Gloria Opara	Yes	Yes
Others		
Ian Hartland	Yes	No
Sarah Hall (local authority clerk)	Yes	N/A
Ruth Wells (local authority clerk)	N/A	Yes
Alex Clark	No	No

Appendix C: MEDWAY SCHOOLS EXAMINATION RESULTS DATA 2013-2015

These tables give (a) the number of candidates entered for GCSE and A level examinations from 2013 to 2015 and (b) the percentage of entrants achieving different grades in Medway schools.

2013

Key Stage	Subject	Entered	A*-A	A*-C	A*-G
4	Religious Studies GCSE	891	25.8%	74.7%	98.9%
	Religious Education	1183	21.3%	50.3%	92.2%
5	A Level	95	23.2%	76.8%	97.9%
	AS Level	172	22.7%	66.3%	92.4%

2014

Key Stage	Subject	Entered	A*-A	A*-C	A*-G
4	Religious Studies GCSE	1388	24.0%	66.8%	97.3%
	Religious Education	0			
5	A Level	130	22.3%	74.6%	99.2%
	AS Level	137	21.2%	58.4%	89.1%

Difference between 2014-2013 results

Key Stage	Subject	A*-A	A*-C	A*-G
4	Religious Studies GCSE	-1.8%	-7.9%	-1.6%
	Religious Education	-	-	-
5	A Level	-0.9%	-2.2%	1.3%
	AS Level	-1.5%	-7.9%	-3.3%

2015

Key Stage	Subject	Entered	A*-A	A*-C	A*-G
4	Religious Studies GCSE	1666	22.4%	66.2%	97.6%
	Religious Education	0			
5	A Level	95	28.4%	87.4%	100%
	AS Level	214	16.4%	53.3%	87.4%

Difference between 2015-2014 results

Key Stage	Subject	A*-A	A*-C	A*-G
4	Religious Studies GCSE	-1.6%	-0.6%	0.3%
	Religious Education	-	-	-
5	A Level	6.1%	12.8%	0.8%
	AS Level	-4.8%	-5.1%	-1.7%

Difference between 2013 and 2015 entrants and results

Key Stage	Subject	Entered	A*-A	A*-C	A*-G
4 in 2013	Religious Studies GCSE	891	25.8%	74.7%	98.9%
4 in 2015	Religious Studies GCSE	1666	22.4%	66.2%	97.6%
5 in 2013	A Level	95	23.2%	76.8%	97.9%
5 in 2015	A Level	95	28.4%	87.4%	100%

Appendix D: MEDWAY SCHOOLS EXAMINATION RESULTS DATA 2016-2018

These tables give (a) the number of candidates entered for GCSE and A level examinations from 2016 to 2018 and (b) the percentage of entrants achieving different grades in Medway schools.

2016

Key Stage	Subject	Entered	A*-A	A*-C	A*-G
4	Religious Studies GCSE	1380	20%	69%	98%
	Religious Education	-	-	-	-
5	A Level	119	18%	70%	97%
	AS Level	172	17%	63%	92%

* No A* for AS level, KS5 only goes to E not G

2017

Key Stage	Subject	Entered	A*-A	A*-C	A*-G
4	Religious Studies GCSE	1229	24%	74%	97%
	Religious Education	-	-	-	-
5	A Level	117	25%	74%	97%
	AS Level	50	22%	60%	86%

* No A* for AS level, KS5 only goes to E not G

Difference between 2016-2017 results

Key Stage	Subject	A*-A	A*-C	A*-G
4	Religious Studies GCSE	+4pp	+5pp	-1pp
	Religious Education	-	-	-
5	A Level	+7pp	+4pp	0
	AS Level	+5pp	-3pp	-6pp

No A* for AS level, KS5 only goes to E not G

2018

Students who took exams for the new GCSEs are now graded 9 to 1, in GCSE Religious Studies
Grade 4 = Pass; Grade 5 = Good Pass

Key Stage	Subject	Entered	5+	4+	1+
4	Religious Studies GCSE	560	48%	61%	98%
5		Entered	A*-A	A*-C	A*-E
	A Level	75	13%	69%	95%
	AS Level	44	14%	34%	66%

Difference between 2017-2018 results

Due to changes in grading, comparisons cannot be made between 2018 and previous years

Key Stage	Subject	A*-A	A*-C	A*-E
5	A Level	-12pp	-5pp	-2pp
	AS Level	-8pp	-26pp	-20pp

Difference between 2016 and 2018 entrants and results

Due to changes in grading, comparisons cannot be made between 2018 and previous years

Key Stage	Subject	A*-A	A*-C	A*-E
5	A Level	-5pp	-1pp	-2pp
	AS Level	-3pp	-29pp	-26pp

Appendix E: GCSE and GCE A level examination data for 2019

The 2019 figures entered in the chart below seek to give comparisons with figures for the three previous years. However, making such comparisons both for the number of entrants and for results is not straightforward as different figures for entrants are sometimes to be found on different websites. Where no alternative figures have been given, it does not necessarily mean that no alternatives exist. It means only that no alternative figures have been found. Where gaps are found it also only indicates that no figures have been found.

The main sources for the figures given are those produced by:

- The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual),
- The Religious Education Council (REC) and
- The National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE). Alternatives are given in brackets

It should also be noted that the grades awarded at GCSE have changed from alphabetical grades (A*- G) to numerical grades (1-9). Figures are only given here for those achieving a grade 7 or above which is considered to be an equivalent to a grade A*/A.

AS grades have not been given as they have now been decoupled from A levels.

GCSE

Year	Entrants nationally	Medway entrants	National results: % with grades 7 and above	Medway results % with grades 7 and above
2016	296101 (284057)	1380		20 (A* or A)
2017	269839	1229		24 (A* or A)
2018	260300 (241749)	560		
2019	251140 (227195)	548	30.5 (29.8)	28.2

GCE A level

Year	Entrants nationally	Medway entrants	National results: % with grades A* or A	Medway results % with grades A* or A
2016		119		
2017	23856	117	23.3	25
2018	18422 (17265)	75	22.4	13
2019	16455 (16215)	71	26.5	11.1. There were no A*

..

Appendix F: Data from Ofqual for 2019

GCSE results for Religious Studies

Year	Grade	Cumulative percentage (national)	Cumulative percentage (Medway)
2019	7+	30.5	28.2
2019	4+	72.6	71.2
2019	1+	98.6	98.4

A-Level results for Religious Studies

Year	Grade	Cumulative percentage (national)	Cumulative percentage (Medway)
2019	A*	4.4	0
2019	A+	22.1	11.1
2019	C+	76.6	61.1
2019	E+	98.3	95.8

GCSE results for Religious Studies with numbers of entrants

Year	Grade	Cumulative percentage (national)	Cumulative percentage (Medway)
Entrants		227195	548 (+10 A/S out of 105 national)
2019	7+	30.5	28.2
2019	4+	72.6	71.2
2019	1+	98.6	98.4

A-Level results for Religious Studies with numbers of entrants

Year	Grade	Cumulative percentage (national)	Cumulative percentage (Medway)
Entrants		16215	71
2019	A*	4.4	0
2019	A+	22.1	11.1
2019	C+	76.6	61.1
2019	E+	98.3	95.8