

Medway Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) Annual Report for the academic year 2021/2022

1. Management of SACRE

Introduction from the Chair of Medway SACRE

I am pleased to introduce the Medway SACRE Annual Report for the academic year 2021-2022. The SACRE met three times during the year 2021/2022 on 18 November 2021, 17 March 2022 and 9 June 2022. All meetings were held online. All meetings were quorate.

As GCSE and GCE A level examination results for 2021 were not assessed in the usual way no rigorous analysis is possible by making comparisons with figures from previous years as well as national averages and so this exercise has not been undertaken for this report.

Training for groups of schools, both academies and local authority schools, has taken place both virtually and in person during the year 2021/2022. Contact has been maintained with schools through locally produced RE newsletters, informally via email and by the use of Twitter and the SACRE website.

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 good partnerships with the different faith groups on the SACRE, the Rochester Diocesan Board of Education (Anglican) and Rochester Cathedral.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow members of SACRE who have given of their time voluntarily. The professional support of our consultant, Ian Hartland, a former HMI and subject specialist, is also gratefully acknowledged. SACRE remains committed to the delivery of first-class religious education in all the area's schools.

Cllr Trevor Clarke

Funding: Professional and financial support

The SACRE receives suitable funding from the local authority most of which is used to purchase professional support from a former HMI who is a subject specialist with experience in schools, higher education and local authorities.

Medway SACRE meetings 2021-2022

Information about attendance at the Medway SACRE meetings is given in Appendix A on page 6.

SACRE meeting on 18 November 2021

- This meeting took place online via Microsoft Teams.
- The meeting began in the usual way, following any apologies, welcomes and introductions, with a brief moment of quiet reflection.
- Minutes from the previous meeting on 17 June 2021 were considered and agreed along with any matters arising.
- Reports were provided by different members of the SACRE. There was an update about work undertaken by the Rochester Diocesan Board of Education with local Church of England schools. There was a report from a local authority officer on the latest developments relating to the SACRE section of the authority's website. Members of SACRE made contributions, for example, about the national Inter-Faith week and about school visits to local places of worship.
- Two local RE subject leaders, who are SACRE members, gave information about a local RE Hub meeting on 15 November 2021 with 10 attending in person and eight virtually. It provided an update for local teachers of RE and was judged to have been successful.
- The RE consultant gave his regular and more detailed input on relevant local and national developments and on work he is undertaking for the SACRE and local schools. The main matters included were: the numbers taking Religious Studies examinations at A level, Holocaust Memorial Day, RE vocabulary and local guidance, further work nationally about the notion of worldviews and the debate nationally about collective worship.
- The meeting ended with an update from the Chair and a consideration of the budget.

SACRE meeting on 17 March 2022

- This meeting took place online via Microsoft Teams.
- The meeting began in the usual way, following any apologies, welcomes and introductions, with a brief moment of quiet reflection.
- Minutes from the previous meeting on 18 November 2021 were considered and agreed along with any matters arising.
- The two local RE subject leaders gave details of plans for an RE Network Leaders Day with drop in sessions. Questionnaires were sent out to schools to ascertain possible content for the day.
- There was a detailed update about the SACRE section on the local authority website which went live in January 2022. Links to the website were sent to schools and local teachers have been enabled to download resources.
- The RE consultant gave his regular input on relevant local and national developments and on other work he had been doing. He attended a training session on the use of the revised NASACRE self-evaluation tool issued in July 2021. A copy will be sent to all SACRE members and it will be looked at in June. A discussion was initiated on the future of the local agreed syllabus for RE as academies are not required to use it and almost all Medway secondary schools and an increasing number of primary schools are becoming academies. There was further discussion on the theme of worldviews as an increasing amount of information about its meaning is appearing.
- There was input from members including the Rochester Diocesan Board of Education. Topics mentioned included; forthcoming dates of religious festivals, support for Ukraine and meeting requests from schools for visits to places of worship.

SACRE meeting on 9 June 2022

- This meeting took place online via Microsoft Teams.
- The meeting began with apologies, welcomes and introductions, followed by a brief moment of quiet reflection.
- Minutes from the previous meeting on 17 March 2022 were considered and agreed along with any matters arising.
- The two local RE subject leaders advised the planned RE Network Leaders Day would be held on 27 June 2022 at a local hotel. There would be a number of workshops including a consideration of the idea of worldviews, creativity in RE and current Ofsted expectations.
- There was a detailed update and discussion about the SACRE section the local authority website which went live in January 2022. Links to the website were sent to schools and local teachers have been enabled to download resources.
- The RE consultant gave his regular input on relevant local and national developments and on other work he had been doing. A discussion was again initiated on the future of the local agreed syllabus for RE as academies are not required to use it and almost all Medway secondary schools and an increasing number of primary schools are becoming academies and further discussion of the theme of worldviews was held.
- There was input from members including the Rochester Diocesan Board of Education.
- It was agreed that the next meeting in September 2022 would be a hybrid one at Rochester Cathedral where there could be attendance in person or virtually.
- The meeting ended with an update from the Chair on the issues raised at a NASACRE conference meeting in May he attended and a consideration of how the SACRE budget had been spent.

The SACRE has generally good relations with the Academies sector. These school are sent the local RE newsletter and are invited to training sessions.

2. Religious Education

Almost all secondary schools in Medway are now academies and an increasing number of primary schools are seeking and gaining academisation. SACRE has no information about which academies are using the Medway Agreed Syllabus for RE. SACRE has not monitored the use of the local Agreed Syllabus for RE in locally maintained schools.

The latest Medway Agreed Syllabus for RE was issued in November 2018. The official launch of the new Medway Agreed Syllabus took place in 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. Two 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.

As there is often very little in Ofsted reports about standards and the provision for RE for Key Stages 1, 2 and 3, it is not possible to provide a clear and comprehensive overview of standards and the quality of provision in the Medway area.

As GCSE and GCE A level examination results for 2021 were not assessed in the usual way no rigorous analysis is possible by making comparisons with figures from previous years as well as national averages and so this exercise has not been undertaken for this report.

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, the two SACRE RE subject leaders, informally from staff at local schools and contact with RE subject leaders on the SACRE. Very little information is provided in recent Ofsted reports about RE in the local area.

Training for groups of schools, both academies and local authority schools, has taken place both virtually and in person during the year 2021/2022. Contact has been maintained with schools through locally produced RE newsletters, informally via email and by the use of Twitter and the SACRE website.

The SACRE provides support to all local schools with regular RE newsletters two or three times each year. They contain local and national news relating to religious education, collective worship and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They sometimes include reviews of books for teachers, information about national reports on religion and belief, RE and collective worship and on suitable resources such as DVDs and websites. The newsletters are sent to all RE subject leaders in local authority and other schools, including academies, in the local area. They are also available on the SACRE section of the local authority's website. There are also meetings of the RE Hub and the provision of resources and guidance on the dedicated SACRE website.

SACRE have received no information about any withdrawals from RE lessons nor any complaints.

It advises the local authority via the chair and the local councillors on the SACRE.

3. Collective Worship

Scrutiny of some recent Ofsted reports have found that there are few references to collective worship in these reports and that they are of limited value as they rarely indicate if a school's collective worship is good or if schools fail to ensure that it occurs daily.

There have been no requests for a determination.

SACRE have received no information about any withdrawals from collective worship nor any complaints. There has been no recent training provided.

4. Links with other bodies

It receives relevant information about documents and developments at the REC, AREIAC, NATRE, NASACRE and Ofsted along with any key material related to faith/religious groups from the RE Consultant. One member of the SACRE is much involved with the local Inter-Faith group and keeps SACRE updated about significant local and national developments. There is usually input from the Rochester Diocese and Rochester Cathedral at each SACRE meeting and from members of different religious traditions as appropriate, for example, what events will be taking place at the annual Holocaust Memorial Day. Medway SACRE is affiliated to NASACRE.

5. SACRE's involvement locally

The SACRE has not been directly involved recently in any governor training. It issues guidance to schools on an ad hoc basis should any issues arise locally.

6. SACRE's own arrangements

The SACRE receives professional and administrative support. There has been some difficulty in recruiting individuals from a few of the religions represented locally. The SACRE receives a suitable remuneration for its work which enables it to have suitable professional support and to pay for cover for teachers for additional work undertaken by the two RE subject leaders on the SACRE.

The Chair of the SACRE is a local councillor. 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 guidance for schools, the local newsletters and the annual report, to add information to the website, to update SACRE members on national developments and to provide advice and training to schools.

The SACRE usually meets three times each year and meetings are usually held in schools, rooms provided at different places of worship or at Rochester Cathedral. The agenda, along with relevant attachments, are distributed to members before the meetings take place. The annual budget for the SACRE for 2021-2022 was approximately £15,000.00 which is similar to the sum allocated by the local authority in previous years.

7. Appendices

See page 6 for information about attendance at the three SACRE meetings, by members of each of the four committees and others.

Appendix A

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

Groups on SACRE	18 November 2021	17 March 2022	9 June 2022
Group A: Christian denominations and members of world faiths			
Stephen Bello	Yes	Yes	Yes
Irina Fridman	No	Yes	Yes
Kulwat Jhita Singh	Yes	Yes	Yes
Faran Forghani	Yes	Yes	No
Dean Collins	No	No	Yes
Joanne Burford	Yes	Yes	No
Sharon Millar	N/A	Yes	No
Group B: Church of England			
Helen Bradshaw	Yes	Yes	No
Virginia Corbyn	No	Yes	Yes
Helen Burn	No	No	Yes
Tristan Thorpe	Yes	No	No
Group C: Teacher associations			
Carolyn Burch	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lisa Humphries	Yes	Yes	Yes
Emily Calder-Evans	No	Yes	No
Caroline Beadle	N/A	Yes	Yes
Group D: Local authority			
Cllr Trevor Clarke	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cllr Elizabeth Turpin	No	Yes	Yes
Cllr Jo Howcroft-Scott	No	Yes	Yes
Cllr Gloria Opara	Yes	Yes	No
Others			
Ian Hartland (consultant)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ruth Wells (local authority)	Yes	Yes	Yes