



**The Merton  
Standing Advisory Council  
on  
Religious Education**

**Annual Report  
for 2021 - 2022**

**June 2023**

## Introduction

I am pleased to send you Merton SACRE's Annual Report for the academic year 2021-2022. Every SACRE is required to publish a report and make it available to schools and the wider public.

The main focus for SACRE over the last year has been to increase the direction of dialogue between teachers and SACRE members in the quality of RE in schools. This was very successful. It was also for SACRE to be a catalyst of activity to improve dialogue and understanding through project work in schools.

Our Syllabus is popular and well used but Covid has delayed our review. In addition, national conversations about worldviews and the Ofsted report on RE have raised more questions than answers in members' minds.

Merton is a unique and religiously diverse community to grow up in. Our children need to be helped to navigate this local as well as global world. We will seek to continue to help schools to understand and celebrate the diverse faith presence in Merton.

Merton SACRE had no chair in 2021-22.

This report has been compiled by the Head of Education Inclusion for Merton on behalf of Merton SACRE.

## **SACRE MEETINGS**

Cllr Brunt, who had been chair, had to stand down while he was Mayor. No one person wished to chair SACRE in the interim. It was agreed that at each meeting a chair would be agreed and one nominee from each group made decisions. This situation continued all year. Three meetings were held during the academic year: minutes are available from the LA and on the council website. These were not posted up at the time and this mistake has been rectified.

SACRE brought forward, in their continuous review of RE, that the following should be developments in 21-22:

- Diversity review of the syllabus
- Interfaith dialogue in primary schools
- Improving support for RE leads
- Syllabus Review – outstanding from 2019/20

The SACRE group focused on understanding how RE is working in Merton schools. Two of the three meetings were held in schools: Abbotsbury Primary and Rutlish Secondary. In this way SACRE members understood how RE is led in a school and allowed direct questions from members to RE leaders and headteachers in primary and secondary schools.

The key issues debated were:

### **Quality of RE teaching in schools**

- This was seen as a strength in both schools and there was detailed discussion with headteachers and RE leads in two schools. School Improvement leads also came and spoke to SACRE about how they propose to support SACRE function through a focus on RE and a collation of feedback on RE from maintained schools. This included understanding what support RE leads needed.

### **Support for Teachers**

- SACRE agreed to continue to provide religious buildings for the RE coordinators to meet in. It received feedback on the success for the training offer in Merton for RE teachers and found that this was in line with the agreed syllabus. SACRE also had feedback on the training for RE teachers. They debated whether there were better models to support primary and secondary.

### **Syllabus review**

- Feedback from the NASACRE conference also led to a discussion on how we might approach a review of the current syllabus and whether a worldviews approach was more appropriate. There was no consensus reached.

### **Diversity review of the syllabus**

- It was agreed that the syllabus needed to be checked for diversity within faith and belief groups. This was offered via a paid review but no teachers came forward. A desk-based review was undertaken by Roehampton University and no specific areas of amendment or addition were identified.

### **Interfaith dialogue project in primary schools.**

- It was agreed to pilot an interfaith dialogue approach in a primary school, building on the work of sixth formers. Abbotsbury Primary School set up a Year 6 Interfaith Group led by pupils representing their faith and belief perspective. They decided to focus on how to ensure all children in their school felt included. They aimed to achieve this by presenting assemblies about their faith or belief group to the whole school. The group was very diverse and included Christians and Muslims, but also Buddhist, Sikh, Atheist and Hindu Pupils. They note that as no-one in the group was Jewish they would learn about Judaism so they could lead an assembly on Judaism. The group were visited in school by the Local Authority and also presented to the whole-borough Equalities Forum to inspire others.

### **Schools contacted SACRE to agree amendments:**

- It was agreed that Buddhism can be taught in KS1. This was requested by schools that have a Buddhist pupil intake. Schools teaching Buddhism should read the summary of Buddhism in the syllabus and be mindful not to replicate KS2/3 subject content.
- It was agreed that units in KS3 could be reordered to suit the lead-up to GCSE if a school chose to. It was noted that some secondary schools are teaching an additional introduction to the study of religion and concepts. This included a wider discussion of atheistic and agnostic perspectives.

### **Time allocation for RE in secondary schools**

- SACRE looked at NATRE data on hours of RE taught in Merton secondary schools. They were pleased that the hours were strong in all schools including academies – however, two Harris Academies did not teach RE in Year 11, as GCSE was taken in Year 10.

### **SACRE going forward into 2022/23**

It was agreed that the following issues needed to be addressed in 22/23:

- A review of the syllabus
- Year 12 Interfaith Dialogue Group to be established and SACRE to meet with the sixth form students.
- Membership to be confirmed and expanded if possible.
- It was agreed that meetings should be held in faith buildings again next year.
- To keep a focus on hours of RE taught.

SACRE members would like to thank all hosts for their hospitality. The aim of holding meetings in different education and faith or belief venues is to evidence the interfaith agreement of the SACRE: to support children of all faiths and beliefs or none to be educated about all the main local religions and belief groups. Members attended the NASACRE conference and had an annual meeting with the Merton Director of Children Services to update on the work of Merton SACRE.

[www.merton.gov.uk/learning/schools/standing-advisory-council-on-religious-education.htm](http://www.merton.gov.uk/learning/schools/standing-advisory-council-on-religious-education.htm)

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

**The Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education in Merton Schools – Hard Copies are available from Merton Civic Centre**

[https://www.merton.gov.uk/assets/Documents/sacre\\_agreed\\_syllabus\\_2017.pdf](https://www.merton.gov.uk/assets/Documents/sacre_agreed_syllabus_2017.pdf)

**Directory of places of worship 2017 – Hard Copies are available from Merton Civic Centre**

[https://www.merton.gov.uk/assets/Documents/re\\_directory\\_of\\_places\\_of\\_worship.pdf](https://www.merton.gov.uk/assets/Documents/re_directory_of_places_of_worship.pdf)

**Talking about difficult things in RE**

[https://www.merton.gov.uk/assets/Documents/sacre\\_guidance\\_talking\\_about\\_difficult\\_things\\_in\\_re.doc](https://www.merton.gov.uk/assets/Documents/sacre_guidance_talking_about_difficult_things_in_re.doc)

**Meeting the needs of Muslim Pupils in Merton schools**

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/assets/Documents/NeedsMuslimPupilsMerton.pdf>

**SACRE constitution**

[https://www.merton.gov.uk/assets/Documents/merton\\_sacre\\_constitution\\_june\\_2016.doc](https://www.merton.gov.uk/assets/Documents/merton_sacre_constitution_june_2016.doc)

## **STANDARDS**

### **SMSC, British Values, faith and culture references in school Ofsted reports inspected 17 – 18**

These are direct quotations from the reports. Under the new OFSTED inspection system comments about RE are unlikely unless it is a deep dive.

#### **Links Primary**

Links Primary School continues to be a good school.

Staff teach pupils how to keep safe and encourage them to respect one another. Leaders take pupils' safety and well-being seriously. Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. Every pupil has access to the school's broad and rich curriculum. Pupils talk in detail about their learning and what they know and remember. They feel supported and challenged. Pupils have many opportunities to learn beyond the classroom. They participate in extra-curricular clubs and educational visits.

#### **Ursuline High School**

Overall effectiveness Good  
The quality of education Good  
Behaviour and attitudes Outstanding  
Personal development Outstanding  
Leadership and management Good  
Sixth-form provision Outstanding  
Previous inspection grade Outstanding

#### **The Priory**

Overall effectiveness Good  
The quality of education Good  
Behaviour and attitudes Good  
Personal development Good  
Leadership and management Good  
Early years provision Good  
Previous inspection grade Good

#### **St Mary's RC Primary School**

Overall effectiveness Good  
The quality of education Good  
Behaviour and attitudes Outstanding  
Personal development Good  
Leadership and management Good  
Early years provision Good  
Previous inspection grade Outstanding

#### **Joseph Hood**

Joseph Hood Primary School continues to be a good school.

Pupils are extremely proud members of their school community, and they would eagerly recommend their school to others. The school is inclusive and diverse. Pupils treat each other respectfully.

In religious education, for example, pupils build on their knowledge of major faiths as they progress through the years. In the early years, children learn that some stories are special to religions, such as the Bible for

Christians and the Qur'an for Muslims. By Year 6, pupils build on this knowledge and can explore the similarities and differences between major faiths.

### **William Morris**

William Morris Primary School continues to be a good school.

Leaders celebrate individuality and diversity through their vision of 'strength through difference'. They have created an environment with high ambitions for every pupil.

Pupils understand the importance of democracy, tolerance and respect for others.

### **Pelham Primary School**

Pelham Primary School continues to be a good school.

Leaders have put in place an ambitious and well-thought-through curriculum. Where possible, the curriculum includes subject content that reflects the school's diverse community. For example, during diversity week, pupils learned about a range of cultural, religious, physical and gender differences.

### **Rutlish**

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

The curriculum is broad and ambitious. Leaders plan the curriculum so that knowledge and skills build logically over time, from Year 7 through to the sixth form. For example, pupils in Year 8 are prepared to understand complex concepts such as 'impermanence' in Buddhism because they learned the necessary foundational knowledge before.

### **West Wimbledon**

Overall effectiveness Good  
The quality of education Good  
Behaviour and attitudes Good  
Personal development Good  
Leadership and management Good  
Early years provision Good  
Previous inspection grade Requires improvement

Pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain. They understand and respect each other's differences. They have a good understanding of democracy and can explain why blind voting ensures people are not put under peer pressure.

### **St Teresa's Catholic Primary School**

St Teresa's Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES EXAMINATIONS 2021 - 22

## GCSE

In 2018 there were 1025 entries for RE GCSE in Merton and 73% of year 11 pupils took at a GCSE in RE in Merton Secondary Schools. We can see how over time this number and the percentage taking GCSE has risen to 1117 and 87% of pupils. In 2022 there is still one secondary school with no Year 11, as the school is growing, and one secondary school that did not offer RS GCSE, so the 87% represents approx. 100% in most secondary schools. The results in RE GCSE continue to be strong. National average for four and above is 77.2%, whereas in Merton it is 82.7%. We also have much higher levels of top grades at 8/9's.

	Grade										Grand Total
	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	U	
<b>Merton</b>											
<b>Number of candidates</b>	133	156	154	239	175	116	113	67	21	2	<b>1177</b>
<b>Merton percentage</b>	<b>11.3</b>	13.3	13.1	20.3	14.9	9.9	9.6	5.7	1.8	<b>0.2</b>	
<b>National Percentage</b>	<b>9.7</b>	<b>11.9</b>	<b>13.0</b>	<b>17.3</b>	<b>14.3</b>	<b>10.7</b>	<b>11.0</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>1.5</b>	

## A level RS/Philosophy

The number of schools offering RS A level has dropped to two and the number of candidates has fallen from 48 in 16/17 to 15 in 21/22. Philosophy has been offered by some schools as an alternative, but total numbers of candidates were lower at 22. Results in RS A level have been historically higher than national averages. Philosophy results by percentage were below national averages but numbers were low. We will see how the takeup of philosophy develops.

Centre	NOE	A*	A	B	C	D	E	A*-A	A*-B	A*-E
Merton 21/22	15	20	20	33	20	6.7	0	40	73	100

time_period	202122											
geographic_level	Local authority											
school_type	All state-funded schools and colleges											
la_name	Merton											
<b>Distribution of A level grades</b>												
<b>LA</b>	<b>Total students</b>							<b>A*- A</b>	<b>A*- B</b>	<b>A*- C</b>	<b>A*- D</b>	<b>A*- E</b>
Logic/Philosophy	7							14.3	28.6	85.7	100.0	100.0
Religious Studies	15							40.0	73.3	93.3	100.0	100.0
<b>Distribution of A level grades</b>												
<b>LA</b>	<b>Total students</b>							<b>A*- A</b>	<b>A*- B</b>	<b>A*- C</b>	<b>A*- D</b>	<b>A*- E</b>
Logic/Philosophy	5270							26.9	51.9	72.8	88.1	97.7
Religious Studies	25482							29.9	63.3	86.0	95.2	99.0



## **CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD) FOR TEACHERS**

Penny Smith-Orr has been commissioned by the Local Authority to provide sessions for RE subject leads. Training workshops were run for RE subject leads. Two sessions were run in the year, a session on 01/02/22 with 20 attendees, and on 17/05/22 with 19 attendees. Following a review of delivery, both sessions were based on the following model:

- Subject content delivery to up-skill subject leaders' knowledge base – covering Judaism, different Christian denominations and Sikhism
- A section on festivals and events – so the calendar of events would have been covered relevant to that point in the year
- A section around leadership of RE and around measuring impact.

## **COMPLAINTS CONCERNING RE**

No complaints were received under Section 23 of the Education Reform Act 1988 regarding Religious Education in Merton schools.

## **COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

### **Determinations**

There are no determinations in Merton

## **GENERAL**

### **Links with other agencies**

Merton SACRE is a member of NASACRE and a representative attends national meetings. Full reports are given at the SACRE meetings so that all members are aware of current topics and issues. Members of SACRE are also representatives on the Merton Faith and Belief Forum and this facilitates communication between the two committees. A member of SACRE attended the NASACRE AGM meeting and reported back to SACRE.

### **List of organisations to which the SACRE report is sent**

A copy of this report will be placed on the SACRE section of the Merton LA website, at [www.merton.gov.uk/learning/schools/standing-advisory-council-on-religious-education.htm](http://www.merton.gov.uk/learning/schools/standing-advisory-council-on-religious-education.htm)

Relevant officers will be informed.

The National Association of SACREs) NASACRE will also receive a copy.

### **Contacts**

If you have any issues that you would like to raise with the Merton SACRE, please contact the Merton LA Advisor to the SACRE [keith.shipman@merton.gov.uk](mailto:keith.shipman@merton.gov.uk).

**Appendix 1: SACRE Membership****STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)****MEMBERSHIP – between September 2021 and September 2022****Group A – Christian, Other Faiths & Beliefs**

Buddhism	Kamontip Evans
Free Churches	<i>Vacancy</i>
Hinduism	Ms. G Maheshwaran
Humanism	John Carter
Islam	Mr. S Sheikh (Deputy Mr. M Khan)
Judaism	Mr. M Freedman
Roman Catholic Church	Ms Clare Bennett
Sikhism	Mr. A Singh Bahra
Ahmadiyya Muslim Association	Mr. Waleed Ahmad

**Group B – Church of England**

C of E	Mrs Jane Savill
C of E	Mr Andrew Williams
C of E	Ms Rachel Norman

**Group C – Teacher Associations**

NAHT/SHA	Ro Maybury
NASUWT	<i>Vacancy</i>
NUT	Debra Beale

**Group D – Local Authority**

Liberal Democrat Group	Cllr K Dresselaers
Labour Group	Cllr M Brunt
Labour Group	Cllr L Attawar

**Others**

Local Authority Adviser	Mr. K Shipman
Clerk	Ms A Oliver