

**Annual Report of the
Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)
Blackburn with Darwen September 2024-2025**

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Words from the Chair

SACRE has had another incredibly exciting year this year after the previous three years, when we reported significant change. Together we have re-established a high quality SACRE, ensuring that the Local Authority has met its statutory duties. Together we have ensured that we remained focused on our aim of ensuring that our learning offer from Blackburn with Darwen is vibrant, relevant, and inspiring for the young people.

The membership continues to reflect the diversity of the wider religious and professional community. SACRE meetings continue to be representative, engaging, and productive. All members feel that their views are considered and respected. The SACRE has now embedded a well-developed process of co-option of where local teachers of RE have been co-opted as well as representatives from each School Improvement Group. SACRE continues to have a broad representation from all types of school in the LA.

We have a reputation for using our funding from the Local Authority to support significant initiatives across schools. This year has been no exception with support for Interfaith events linking to one of Blackburn with Darwen's Core Values namely, "Respect: We embrace diversity and value our differences."

As Chair I am incredibly grateful to all who have positively embraced our meetings and have again demonstrated their commitment to support SACRE.

We look forward, to be able to report further progress of our work in our report next year.

Alison Ashworth-Taylor



2. SACRE meetings, 2024-2025 venues and a brief overview of content of these meetings.

<p>Date</p> <p>All meetings face to face at Blackburn Enterprise Centre. We also offer a Hybrid option via TEAMS</p>	<p>Brief overview of content of these meetings.</p> <p>Comprehensive copies of minutes can be found at: https://blackburn.gov.uk/schools-and-education/school-and-pupil-support/standing-advisory-council-religious-education-sacre</p>
<p>Tuesday, 21st January 2025</p>	<p>Chair Alison Ashworth Taylor and Vice Chair Chris Dugdale were elected</p> <p>County Lines Tour - Evaluation Emma Owen Message Trust</p> <p>Key points highlighted:</p> <p>12 schools participated in the tour.</p> <p>8,465 students seen.</p> <p>5,944 feedback forms completed.</p> <p>High school colleagues gave feedback from the tour and noted that it had been positively received in their schools.</p> <p>AAT added that the evaluation report had been sent to Joanne Siddle (DCS)</p> <p>AAT reported that she would like to share this with the Scrutiny committee to make them aware of the issues in the borough.</p> <p>Annual Report</p> <p>Annual report was distributed prior to the meeting and members had been asked to look at the report prior to the meeting.</p> <p>AT highlighted key points from the report including where the SACRE funds had been spent.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evaluated Action/SACRE Improvement Plan 23-24 2. SACRE Action/Improvement Plan 24-25 <p>The SACRE Improvement Plan was approved and accepted.</p> <p>The Action/Improvement Plan 24-25 was shared members prior to the meeting and AAT highlighted key areas from the Plan:</p> <p>Data</p> <p>Budget</p> <p>Locally agreed syllabus</p> <p>Website Compliance</p> <p>Collective worship – to be discussed under Item 13</p> <p>Determinations – to be discussed under Item 12</p> <p>Linking schools – to be discussed under Item 14</p> <p>All were in agreement with the objectives and accepted the plan for 2024/25.</p> <p>1-16 Climate Change Projects -updates etc</p>

	<p>AAT shared the PP of the projects that school undertaken with the funds provided by SACRE. A new bid had been received by SIG 2 and AAT asked SACRE if this can be accepted. The following were accepted by SACRE. 17 SIG 2 new bids a) Avondale b) Fenisowles c) St Gabriel's d) The Olive e) ST Thomas f) Roe Lee g) Sacred Heart h) ST Aidan's i) St Luke's and Philips j) Wensley Fold Sub Committee meeting: Determinations It was noted that the request for determinations had been received from Audley Infants Audley Juniors, Brookhouse and Daisyfield. AAT had been to these schools and the report was provided to SACRE prior to the meeting. AAT asked for formal approval by the board. It was noted that there should be more schools that should have applied for a determination. AAT to request information from these school directly to ask evidence in terms of collective worship and assemblies and then AAT will arrange visits to the observe these. AAT will contact the Primary schools and then will follow up with the Secondary schools. Agreed syllabus updates: • Illuminating Pathways a. March 2024 b. May 2024 c. July 2024 d. November 2024 AAT thanked FA and LF for their comprehensive syllabus update. LF and FA to email AAT and let her know of any schools that are not engaging in the process. Linking Schools Update 24-25 SV gave an update on the Linking Schools Programme for 24/25. 23 Schools participating this year in the Linking programme 46 classes involved Successful bid of £10000 by the LA – this has been paid to the schools participating in the project. CPD1 took place in November and CPD2 will take place on February 26th.</p>
22 nd April 2025	<p>Presentation Derek Estill Secretary - BwD Interfaith Forum Derek Estill the Secretary from the Interfaith Forum attended the meeting to speak to the group about he the work of the forum and the work they have been doing with schools across BwD. Derek confirmed that the interfaith forum works with the school's curriculum and accordingly plan their visit including any particular topics relevant for their setting. AAT thanked Derek for attending the meeting and for his input. The link to the interfaith website is below: https://bwdinterfaith.org.uk/ Interfaith Day JS updated the group around the interfaith day for Secondary schools: Proposed date - Tuesday 1st July</p>

	<p>JS gave an overview of the what the day will entail. 5 pupils per school to attend. Invite SACRE members. Outlined costings for the day. Share artefacts from the major world faiths. It was agreed to go ahead with this date and keep AAT informed of the costings. SV to send a list of the Independent schools to JS. JA reported that they meet with FA every term with regards to the Agreed Syllabus. This is going really well and a google drive has been set up for colleagues to access different resources etc. It was noted that JE had met the King on Maundy Thursday in relation to his services to the community. Colleagues congratulated him on receiving the monies.</p>
<p>10th June 2025</p>	<p>Interfaith Day JS updated the group around the interfaith day for Secondary schools: JS and JK had been in contact with AAT and a budget of £2500 has been agreed for this event. JS confirmed that she had sent and invite out to all High Schools in the borough including Independent Schools. Responses received from TIBHS, Darwen Vale, BCHS and Witton, Pleckgate and St Wilfrid’s CEP These schools will be involved in the Interfaith day, and they will be able to bring up to 7 pupils per school to the event. Action: JS to send an invitation email to SACRE members so that she can keep track of any members that will be attending the event.</p> <p>Data Presentation by Victoria Dugdale Vicki Dugdale (Intelligence Officer, BwD) shared with the group the RE data. Membership review CD went through the updated membership and concern was expressed at the lack of LA reps on the Board. Action: It was agreed that CD with support from DT would write to the leader of the Council, Phil Riley and Denise Parks (CEO) Agreed Syllabus update LF reported that there had been a decrease in the number of people contacting her with regard to the syllabus. This was a positive sign as it was felt that staff the syllabus is more embedded and more focused with the syllabus. LF meets regularly with the RE co-ordinators and a network meeting is due to be held at the Redeemer tomorrow. An RE Co-ordinator conference was held at Dunkenhalgh and was well attended by staff from BwD schools. The focus of the day was Diversity within Faiths. LF shared what the focus will be going forward and was assured that Questful has a sound foundation and is in a good position to make sure that there is good quality RE in our Primary Schools. FA gave an update on the high school syllabus Illuminating Pathways. This builds upon what happens at primary schools with Questful. Engagement has been sporadic with full engagement from DACA, St Thomas and Pleckgate. It was noted that Darwen Vale had struggled to recruit a RE specialist to lead the syllabus. They have now recruited to this post and Jake is working to bring the school up to date with the syllabus. LF has also been contacted by QEGS and Witton Park. All schools are invited to the network meeting and notes of these are shared with all.</p>

3. SACRE Funded Initiatives

Our core missions



A more prosperous borough where no one is left behind



Every child and young person to have opportunities to fulfil their potential



Deliver our climate emergency action plan



Build happier, healthier and safer communities

Our Values – Proud to be BwD

- **Trust:** We believe in and can rely on each other.
- **Respect:** We embrace diversity and value our differences.
- **Ambition:** We have the courage to try new things and strive to be better.
- **Collaboration:** We achieve more by working together.
- **Kindness:** We are self-aware and considerate in all that we do.

Our outcomes

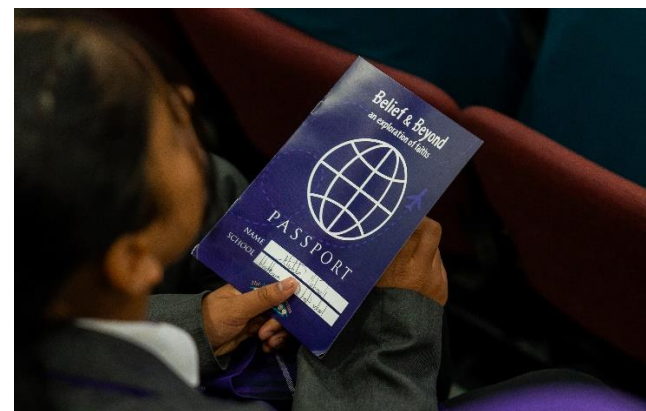
If we are making progress on our missions, we will see:

- Fewer people living in deprivation
- Increased life expectancy
- Borough closer to carbon neutral
- Higher educational attainment
- More people who need help or support continuing to live in their own homes

“ To help achieve our missions, the Council will be innovative and forward thinking and tackle the budget challenge. ”

Interfaith Day

In 2025 SACRE again linked into the aims and aspirations of Blackburn with Darwen’s corporate plan; specifically linking this year to the Core Value **“Respect: We embrace diversity and value our differences .”**



Interfaith Day Report

Venue: Pleckgate High School

Organised by: Mrs. J. Kellow and Mrs. J. Savage (Members of Blackburn with Darwen SACRE)

Participating schools: Pleckgate, St Wilfrid's, Darwen Vale, BCHS, Witton Park and Islamiyah Girls School

Overview

The Interfaith Day brought together students from several schools to explore and celebrate religious and cultural diversity. The event aimed to foster mutual respect and understanding through engaging, hands-on workshops and meaningful dialogue.

The day included three core activities:

1. **Expressing Faith Through the Arts**
2. **Beyond Artefacts**
3. **Beyond Stereotypes**

These sessions were followed by a chance for students to meet and interact with members of the Interfaith Forum, representing a variety of faiths and worldviews: **Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Humanism, and Judaism.**

Session Summaries

1. Expressing Faith Through the Arts

Led by: Mrs. Savage and Zainab

Zainab, a Fine Arts graduate, showcased her artwork inspired by her faith and cultural identity. Students were invited to explore her sketchbooks and gain insight into how art can be a powerful medium for expressing belief and spirituality.

Students also took part in a variety of artistic activities linked to different faith traditions:

- **Mehndi (Henna patterns)** – *Hinduism*
- **Mandalas** – *Buddhism*
- **Hebrew Calligraphy** – *Judaism*
- **Stained Glass Design** – *Christianity*
- **Rakhi and Prayer Beads** – *Hinduism and Sikhism*

Each station was supported by information sheets outlining the religious or spiritual significance of the activity.

Highlights:

- Most girls engaged enthusiastically with Mehndi designs.
 - All the boys attempted to write their names in Hebrew.
 - The session was praised for its creativity and hands-on engagement.
-

2. Beyond Artefacts

Led by: Mrs. G. Barton

This session focused on exploring the deeper meanings behind religious artefacts. Students were given a selection of items to observe, handle, and discuss. They were encouraged to consider:

- Is the item worn or used in the home?
- Does it belong to a specific faith?
- What is its purpose or meaning?

Students later explored a wider range of artefacts displayed around the room. They identified items that resonated with them and discovered shared themes across different beliefs:

- Clothing as a sign of belonging
- Objects to aid focus and prayer
- The use of light to represent good
- Respect for sacred items
- Symbols of spiritual identity

The session concluded with a personal reflection where students identified an item (religious or personal) of significance in their own lives and shared what they would like others to understand about it.

3. Beyond Stereotypes

Led by: Mrs. J. Kellow

This session provided a safe space for open discussion and challenged preconceived ideas about people of different faiths.

Key elements included:

- **Facilitated Discussion:**
Students reflected on an image of two friends, Renee Blackburn (Jewish) and Sadiq Patel (Muslim), mourning together at a Manchester bombing memorial. This sparked conversation about grief, prayer, friendship across faiths, and common humanity.
- **Guest Speaker – Sikhi Perspective:**
A teacher from Pleckgate shared how values like compassion and honesty shape his life. He also addressed misconceptions about the Kirpan, emphasizing its significance as a symbol of faith, not violence.
- **Student Voice – Empowerment and Islam:**
A Year 13 student from St Wilfrid's CE Academy presented a compelling reflection on empowerment in Islam. Using contrasting images—one of a hijab-wearing athlete and another of a fashion model—she challenged assumptions about oppression and choice.
Her message: *"Move in silence and let success be your noise."* Wearing a hijab can be a powerful, conscious expression of faith, not a sign of voicelessness.



Interfaith Forum: Dialogue and Discovery

Students were divided into mixed groups and rotated through short sessions with representatives from the Interfaith Forum. Each representative shared personal insights into their faith or worldview. Faiths and beliefs represented included:

- Christianity
- Islam
- Sikhism
- Hinduism
- Judaism
- Humanism

As they moved through the stations, students recorded their new learning and formulated questions for a panel Q&A session at the end of the day.

Conclusion

The Interfaith Day at Pleckgate High School was a dynamic and enriching experience for all involved. Students not only learned about diverse beliefs and practices but also developed empathy, critical thinking, and appreciation for shared human values.

The collaborative efforts of Blackburn with Darwen SACRE, the participating schools, and the Interfaith Forum created a powerful example of education fostering respect, inclusion, and community cohesion.

Staff voice:

1. What worked well?

- *"This was an excellent opportunity to bring schools together to share ideas and collaborate as learnings"* Blackburn with Darwen SACRE
- *"The various activities kept students engaged while they also learned about different religions"* Islamiyah Girls School
- *"Working with different schools and giving students the opportunity to communicate with others of varying faiths/viewpoints"* Witton
- *"The activities were engaging and informative"* BCHS

2. What could be improved for future events?

- *"More opportunity to hear from younger people of faith"* Blackburn with Darwen SACRE
- *"Give more time to ask questions"* Islamiyah Girls School
- *"More interactive activities with the interfaith panel"* Witton

3. Any additional comments?

- *"This was the first school led RE conference. I hope it leads to more opportunities for similar events in the future"* Blackburn with Darwen SACRE
- *"It was a great event and students really benefitted from the experience of the day, the conversations they had the knowledge they gained"* BCHS

Student voice:

1. What is one new thing you learned today that changed how you think about another religion or belief?

- *"How all religion even though they are different get along."* – St Wilfrid's student
- *"I learned about humanism – I didn't realise that faiths could have a belief in no God"* Islamiyah Girls School student
- *"That Sikhs have baptisms as well as Christians"* Pleckgate student

2. Did anything today challenge a stereotype or assumption you had? If so, what?

- *"Yes, that everyone is equal it doesn't matter if they are Muslim, Christian or any other religion"* Islamiyah Girls School student
- *"No, because as a hijabi I know how hurtful stereotypes can be, so I never assume something about a person"* Pleckgate student
- *"That not everyone with a durag are in a gang"* Pleckgate student

3. How has today's experience made you think differently about people with different beliefs?

- *"That there actually do go through a lot of stereotypes but we should show more respect"* – St Wilfrid's student
- *"I thought they hated each other's religion but that's not true, everyone is equal"* Islamiyah Girls School student
- *"It made me less confused"* BCHS student
- *"That there is much more to each religion than appearance shows"* Pleckgate student

4. What will you do differently after today when it comes to understanding or respecting others' faith or cultures?

- *"Be more open minded."* – St Wilfrid's student
- *"I will now be able to communicate more effectively with others of different religion and cultures"* Islamiyah Girls School student
- *"I will respect and remember what I have learnt"* Pleckgate student
- *"Treat others how I would like to be treated"* Pleckgate student



4. Religious Education

Local Agreed Syllabus

The new Blackburn with Darwen agreed syllabus for religious education 2023-2027 Questful RE (Primary) and Illuminating Pathways (Secondary) was officially launched on 12th January 2023, after unit trials in volunteer schools had taken place in Autumn Term 2022.

Positive and informative feedback was gathered from attendees on the following:

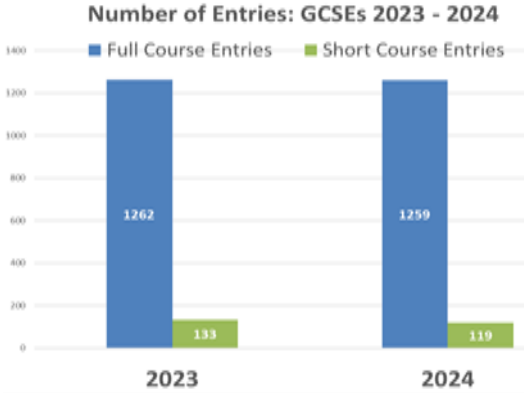
The quality of the experience, general reflections on the content and learning strategies used in this session, next steps for individual schools/academies. Attendees were also asked to outline the steps that they needed to take to implement the new syllabus and to identify further future Professional development needs.

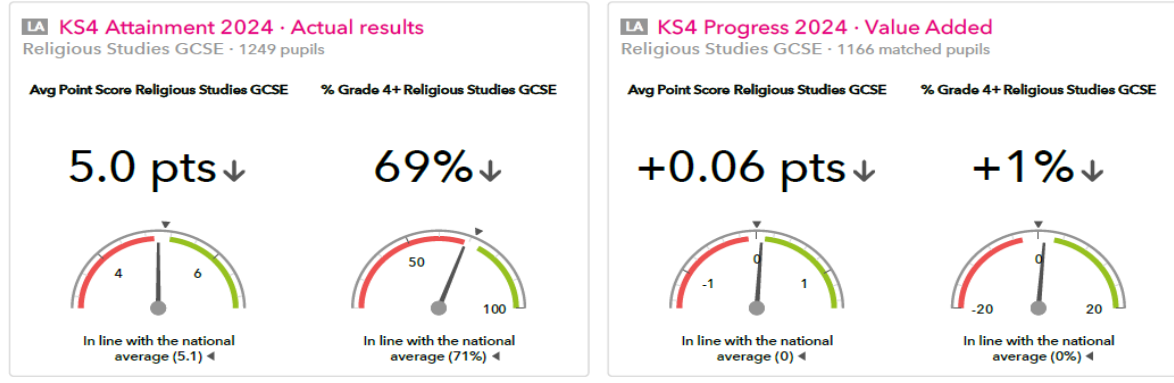
Regular subject leader networks continue to be well attended and are positive in evaluations.



Standards and monitoring of RE

On the 10th June Vicki Dugdale (Intelligence Officer, BwD) shared with the RE data with SACRE as follows: Key Stage 4





LA KS4 higher and lower performing schools 2024 Religious Studies GCSE
Minimum group size = 25

	Higher performing	Lower performing
Overall attainment <small>actual results</small>	Tauheedul Islam Girls' High (124) 🟢 ↓ St Wilfrid's CoE Academy (125) 🟢 Tauheedul Islam Boys' High (122) 🟢 ↓ Blackburn Central High (47)	Our Lady and St John RC High School a Voluntary Academy (141) 🔴 Witton Park Academy (154) 🔴 Pleckgate High (250) 🔴 ↓ St Bede's RC High School Blackburn (192) Queen Elizabeth's Grammar (74)
Overall achievement <small>pupil progress</small>	Tauheedul Islam Girls' High (124) 🟢 ↓ Tauheedul Islam Boys' High (118) 🟢 ↓ Blackburn Central High (46)	Our Lady and St John RC High School a Voluntary Academy (119) 🔴 Queen Elizabeth's Grammar (69) Witton Park Academy (131) Pleckgate High (228) ↓ St Wilfrid's CoE Academy (124)

Attainment & progress



Key Stage 5

A Level entries by School/college

A Level	2024			
	Number of entries	% A*-B	% A*-E	Avg Pts
National	14530	54.5%	97.4%	35.3
Blackburn College	4	0.0%	100.0%	25.0
Darwen Aldridge Community Academy	10	70.0%	100.0%	41.0
St Wilfrid's Church of England Academy	7	14.3%	100.0%	22.9
Tauheedul Islam Girls' High School	11	63.6%	100.0%	38.2
Westholme	4	75.0%	100.0%	40.0
TOTAL	36	50.0%	100.0%	

AS Level entries by School/college

AS Level	2024			
	Number of entries	% A-B	% A-E	Avg Pts
National	2070	48.5%	91.8%	15.8
Darwen Aldridge Community Academy	2	0.0%	50.0%	5.0
Tauheedul Islam Girls' High School	29	62.1%	100.0%	18.6
TOTAL	31	58.1%	96.8%	

Attainment & progress



Religious Studies and Humanities

The difference between Religious Studies and the average for ALL humanities subjects is below – Religious Studies outperforms the average at most schools

% 5+	32.9%	46.5%			2.7%	15.5%	16.4%	1.5%	27.2%	12.6%	18.5%	5.6%
% 4+	31.4%	38.5%			-0.4%	12.1%	5.4%	1.2%	23.0%	6.2%	14.5%	9.8%

5. Collective Worship

This year our SACRE have worked tirelessly again to communicate the clear procedure already established, to ensure an efficient response to any request for determination. The procedure and protocol for dealing with any requests for determination is now in place. All maintained schools currently who have a determination or may need to renew have been identified. The RSC and ESFA have also been contacted to ascertain the status of worship included in the agreements of academies and free schools.

SACRE received 0 new applications from primary schools to apply for or to continue a “determination.”
SACRE have not received any withdrawals by phase or complaints.

6. Links with other bodies

SACRE is a member of NATRE, NASACRE and members actively attend conferences.

7. Blackburn with Darwen, SACRE’s local arrangements

At the beginning of the academic year 2020 the deputy director of children’s services, Jo Siddle (now Director), made a firm commitment to re-establish a high quality SACRE, to ensure that the Local Authority was properly able to meet its statutory duties. To demonstrate this commitment, they have appointed a Clerk, Sharifa Valli to SACRE. They funded the independent consultant Dot Thomson and provide support for the website design and upkeep from IT services. Legal Support is also provided each meeting by either Paula Johnson, Solicitor, or Gillian Emmott, Solicitor, from Democratic Services. They have also allocated £15,000 annually as a budget.

Induction support will be provided each Autumn Term to all new members who have joined and will be a refresher for existing members.

