



**Oldham**  
Council

Oldham  
Standing Advisory  
Council on  
Religious  
Education  
Report 2019-2020

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## Introduction

This annual report is prepared by Oldham SACRE

In normal circumstances the SACRE meets 3 times a year but in the present climate just one meeting was held in November 2019.

As in previous years the report provides a picture of the support given for Religious Education and Collective Worship.

SACRE as a body is required to advise the Local Authority on matters relating to Religious Education and Collective Worship.

The report is a public document which is also sent to the National Association of SACREs and the Department for Education.

## SACRE

External links were maintained with:

National Association of SACREs (NASACRE)

North West SACRE Hub

RE Today (online)

The Association of RE Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants

The Diocese of Manchester

AQA

The School Performance Team Oldham

Northern Teaching Alliance

The Oldham Inter Faith Forum

Greater Manchester Faith Network

## **The Oldham context**

The outbreak of COVID-19 virus significantly impacted Oldham. The two meetings planned for 2020 were postponed. Support and advice for schools was continued and online communications maintained to support practitioners. A significant number of SACRE members were front line workers, in schools and hospitals as well as supporting vital services.

The members of SACRE appreciate the support received from the local authority.

Oldham SACRE ensured support for Primary and Secondary Teacher networks for Religious Education. The opportunity to support Newly Qualified Teachers through the Primary Network and the support for secondary teachers through the Northern Teaching Alliance (The Blue Coat School) was anchored in the development plan 2018-2020.

Following publication of the new Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education, SACRE embarked on the creation of a new 2-year Development Plan 2020-2022 in November 2019.

SACRE would like to record thanks to the officers who support SACRE. Ms Clare Cheetham (Senior School Improvement Advisor, Oldham Learning)

Mrs Carol Hyde (Clerk to SACRE)

Mr Peter Hawkins (Learning Support Officer)

## **Financial support**

The local authority has a statutory duty to fund and support a SACRE and Oldham Council supported SACRE enabling it to fulfil the legal obligations, including the publication and distribution of the Locally Agreed Syllabus 2020-2025 and consultant support.

## **The locally Agreed Syllabus**

Publication of the Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education in October 2019 allowed schools to plan for implementation of new schemes from September 2020 with online digital support available from the Oldham Council website. SACRE indicated its desire for training for governors to be delivered in the Autumn Term 2020.

## **Launch of the new Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education**

The launch of the new Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education for Oldham 2020-2025 was held in the Council Chamber, Oldham Civic Centre on 22 October 2019. The keynote speaker was Lat Blaylock (RE today) and his theme was "Effective practice for outstanding RE."

SACRE welcomed 60 delegates from Oldham Schools. All phases were present and the percentage satisfaction rate for the day conference was over 80%

A range of workshops were provided throughout the day led by members of the Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) writing group and SACRE is also grateful for leadership and the inspirational sessions delivered by Mr Lat Blaylock.

SACRE was indebted to Mr Peter Hawkins (Oldham Council) and his team who coordinated events.

Comments from delegates about future training needs included:

- Early Years training regarding RE and effective questioning
- Using texts and stories more effectively
- A visitor register to access tried and tested speakers
- Floor books versus exercise books – effectiveness matching Ofsted requirements
- Advice about ways of assessing
- Creating 'I can....' statements for each year group
- Increase opportunities for CPD/SACRE conferences
- Training for clergy or others who go into schools to 'teach' and promote RE.
- Highlight network meetings and training for our new RE leads
- More information about an RE day where the whole school explores a question/theme
- More in-depth look at how topics can be spread out over each half term
- Lists of resources shown separate to unit plans. Recommended list of resources to support other world faiths.
- Support in getting to know where one can find people to help deliver RE within school
- Sharing ideas within key stage EYFS, KS1, KS2 etc for the future
- Governor training/awareness of requirements

These will be fed into the new development plan and agendas of network meeting over the coming year.

## **SACRE development plan**

Priorities for 2020-22

The main priorities for SACRE during 2020-22 have been proposed through a new development plan to be approved in Autumn 2020:

### **Promote continuing improvement**

- monitor standards
- further raise the quality of teaching
- assist with raising the quality provision in RE

### **Support schools**

- Evaluating the effectiveness of the new locally agreed syllabus to be implemented in September 2020 and share excellent practice

### **Collective worship**

- Promoting improvement in the provision
- Promote improvement in the quality of collective worship

### **Effectiveness of SACRE**

- Ensure a high profile for SACRE
- Build partnership between the SACRE, the Local Authority, Oldham Education Partnership and other key stakeholders

### **Contribute to cohesion across the community**

- Promotion of social and racial harmony
- Build and strengthen partnerships

These priorities will be shaped in line with available resources and the prevailing local context. There is strong evidence that effective use has been made of digital classrooms and online and web-based resources. SACRE thanks all those with responsibility for RE for their commitment in a turbulent environment.

## **The Impact of COVID-19**

Closure of schools in March 2020 launched arrangements for home learning until June 2020. There have been significant effects on education and RE, like other subjects experienced disruption. However, the challenge of securing the engagement and resilience among learners has led to imaginative and creative responses and new ways of monitoring and recognising pupil achievement and progress. Schools will be able to share the benefits gained through online forums and network meetings. SACRE will be keen to monitor the extent to which, in constructing a recovery curriculum, schools will be able to give RE appropriate attention and avoid its marginalisation.

**Advice to the Local authority**

Advice was given to the local authority and training for governors in relation to the new Agreed Syllabus was actioned.

**Complaints**

There were no formal complaints registered to SACRE throughout the academic year.

**Collective Worship**

SACRE received no complaints about Collective Worship during the year. Schools are reminded that it is a requirement for a notification of the right of withdrawal from collective worship be accessible on the school website and that it is desirable to make the school's policy for Collective Worship available on the school's website.

Further guidance is available:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/281929/Collective\\_worship\\_in\\_schools.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/281929/Collective_worship_in_schools.pdf)

## **Public examinations 2020**

Because of the suspension of public examinations, the data below is based on the assessment methods agreed with DfE.

The number of pupils taking GCSE Religious Studies in England and Wales has remained stable in 2020 despite ongoing challenges, reflecting the relevance of the subject and its popularity among young people.

In England, RS GCSE entries for the full course fell by less than 1% to 225,719 compared to 227,913 in 2019. In Wales, entries fell by a similar amount from 10,129 in 2019 to 10,037 in 2020. Overall entries in England, including both full and short courses, fell by 2.3% to 243,786, compared with 249,443 in 2019. Full course entries in 2020 were still almost one third higher than in 2010. In Wales, combined entries fell by just under 2% from 16,327 in 2019 to 16,003 in 2020.

Until this year, there has been a gradual decline in full course RS GCSE entries since a peak in 2016, when 269,839 entries were recorded in England. Full and short course entries reached a high of 461,795 in 2011 but declined rapidly as schools in England opted not to enter pupils into the short course following Government policy changes, despite a requirement among all schools, including Academies, to provide Religious Education to all pupils at all key stages. In Wales however, the short course entries have not declined at the same rate and fell by just 3.74% (from 6,198 to 5,966). In England, short course entries fell by more than 16%.

The published figures, however, provide some optimism that the decline may be levelling off. The key outcomes for Religious Education in England and Wales at Key Stage 4 in 2020 are as follows:

## **National data**

- There were 225,719 entries in England and 10,037 in Wales for the full course in GCSE RS, a fall of less than 1% from 2019 (227,913 England and 10,129 Wales).
- There were 18,067 entries in England and 5,966 in Wales for the short course in GCSE RS, a decline of 16.1% in England and 3.74% in Wales from 2019 (21,530 and 6198 respectively).
- There were 243,786 entries for GCSE RS (combined short and full courses) in England, a decline of 2.3% from 2019 (249,443). In Wales combined entry figures were 16,003 a fall of 1.98% from 2019 (16,327).
- Despite a decline since the peak in entries, the number of pupils receiving a full course GCSE in Religious Studies in England in 2020 (225,719) is still 32% greater than in 2010 (170,767). In Wales entries for the full course are 65% higher in 2020 (10,037) than in 2010 (6,100).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/results-tables-for-gcse-as-and-a-level-results-in-england-2020>

## **Statement from Professor Trevor Cooling, Chair, Religious Education Council of England and Wales (REC)**

“Over the past decade we have seen short course entries plummet as a result of school performance measures and academisation. Some pupils opted to take the full course instead, which led to a significant rise until 2016. Full course entries have tailed off since then, but we are cautiously optimistic that they may now be levelling out.

“These figures are evidence of the continuing relevance of Religious Studies, with recent events bringing racial awareness to the forefront and bringing worldviews into greater perspective. Its continuing popularity among pupils is also clear.

“RS has an important role to play in preparing pupils for life in multicultural Britain and a globalized workplace. Government policy needs to reflect this and ensure that religion and worldviews is firmly embedded in the school system, by adopting the

recommendations of the Commission on RE<sup>1</sup>, which have widespread support from across the education system.”

**Statement from Ben Wood, Chair, National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE)**

“Congratulations to those pupils receiving their GCSE RS results today, and to their teachers. They have all faced unprecedented challenges this year, but I have no doubt that their efforts will pay off, as they see the value of a deeper understanding of religion and worldviews in later life.

“With entry numbers falls appearing to level off, we are witnessing how much pupils value and enjoy studying Religious Education. The Government clearly agrees and has repeatedly emphasised the importance of young people developing their knowledge and understanding of religious and non-religious beliefs.

“It’s now time to underline that commitment by addressing the issues that may threaten the future of the subject and deny pupils access to the subject they clearly consider vital for life in modern Britain and an increasingly global social and professional environment.”

Commenting on the Government’s decision to use centre assessed grades as opposed to applying Ofqual’s algorithm he added:

“The decision to revert to centre assessed grades is good news for pupils receiving their GCSE grades today. However, this U-turn has caused an enormous amount of distress and disruption to students, in particular those A-level students who may have missed out on their first-choice university. These students deserve every support possible at this challenging time.”

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.commissiononre.org.uk/final-report-religion-and-worldviews-the-way-forward-a-national-plan-for-re/>

## Membership of SACRE 2019-2020

Major Annette Allen	Committee A
Peter Butler	Committee A (Vice Chair)
Rabbi Daniel Walker	Committee A
Nasim Ashraf	Committee A
Bilal Brown	Committee A
Rev Howard Sutcliffe	Committee A
Ian Whitehead	Committee A
Krishna Sisodia	Committee A
Rev Canon Jean Hurlston	Committee B (Chair)
Rev Dr Paul Monk	Committee B
Rev Janet Pitman	Committee B
Graham McGuffie	Committee B
Jacqueline Beattie	Committee C
Sue Callaghan	Committee C
Kate O'Connell	Committee C
Clare Harewood	Committee C
Rebecca Raftery	Committee C
Mary Butt	Committee C
Deborah Warren	Committee C
Nicola Smith	Committee D
Paul Jacques	Committee D
Cllr Vita Rose Price	Committee D
Cllr Shaid Mushtaq	Committee D
Clare Cheetham	Committee D
Carol Hyde	Clerk to Oldham SACRE