

**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OXFORDSHIRE
STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)**

September 2017 – July 2018

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FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIR

2017 – 18 continued to be an important one for RE nationally, with the publication of the Interim Report from the Commission on RE. We were most fortunate to have an invitation for one of the Commissioners, Dr Joyce Miller, to present at a meeting and, having invited teachers to attend, we had a good turn out with some interesting questions and discussions. A report from this is included in Annex 3. This was the first event, we hope of many, that we planned to raise the presence of SACRE and of RE across Oxfordshire.

I am keen to examine and address membership representation on SACRE. This is an important group within, but independent of, the Local Authority, with representatives from Christian churches, different faiths and beliefs, teachers and County Councillors. With a full and active membership, it supports schools in providing good religious education across all phases and types of school. RE is not just learning about religions and studying people and ideas from the past. It must also build bridges to the future through the development of thoughtful belief and ways of living, reflecting on the wisdom of the past and applying it to the issues and challenges of today. I hope that schools will do all they can, to use SACRE to ensure that they provide the best experience of RE for their pupils that they can.

SACRE meets once each term from 4pm to 6pm. We are keen to recruit effective representation from schools and, as the system becomes more diverse, we are looking to establish a membership that truly reflects the range of provision across the county. We discuss issues concerning the statutory provision of RE across all schools and how we can support teachers more effectively. This is much better achieved if we have a broad representation within the meetings. If you are interested in becoming a teacher representative on SACRE and contributing to the development and provision of RE in Oxfordshire, please contact our Clerk to SACRE, Helen Batten at Helen.Batten@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

SACRE needs to be more than a talking-shop; it must proactively make a difference in schools and in pupils' experience of quality RE. This can only be achieved through active partnership with schools and shared commitment from all stakeholders to this important subject.

It is my view that RE represents a vital ingredient in understanding the essence of world affairs; it is not the heavy indoctrination of each religion but the basic understanding of the different approaches to life's motives informed by different beliefs and therefore a clue to world peace in the future.

I want to thank the members of SACRE who represent their constituent groups with such commitment and for the support of Oxfordshire County Council. This is a voluntary role and yet so important and the passion of discussions and for religious education is marvellous. I look forward to helping SACRE develop its working relationships with the Local Authority and schools. I also want to express gratitude for the support we get from our adviser, Bill Moore and our SACRE Clerk, Helen Batten.

Councillor Charles Mathew
Chairman

1. Standards and Quality of provision of RE

Taking the A Level results first, this is the first cohort of students to sit the new and more challenging A Level introduced in September 2016. As such, there is no valid correlation to be made between this year and previous years other than in the percentage of entries. This sees a continuing if slight decline, which is of concern given the impact that examination RS can have on staffing and therefore on the provision of religious education in KS3 in secondary schools. In terms of attainment at A Level, Oxfordshire schools continue to perform less well in the highest grades (A*-A) than the national attainment but are in line with national attainment for other grades. It is difficult to know whether this is because there are fewer highest attaining students opting for RS A Level or whether there is some other issue, which schools could collaborate on to provide mutual support and CPD.

GCSE full course specifications also changed and again, this cohort is the first to have sat these new examinations, so comparisons with previous years are not possible in relation to attainment. Entries seem to have remained the same as last year, which is pleasing, but still amounts to fewer than four in ten students across the county. This does raise the question about what schools are providing for the remaining 60% for their statutory RE in KS4. Attainment in relation to the national figures is significantly lower. Whilst we must not read too much into this, because it is a new style of examination, we do need to ensure that teachers are trained and confident to teach the more challenging specifications. Again collaboration and mutual support could be a good way forward.

The outcomes from examination RS do not give a full picture of the quality of RE across all schools and Key Stages, but they do raise certain questions. These are raised below in a top-down format, but actually in terms of ensuring children and young people develop into informed and thoughtful adults, we need to balance any approach with a bottom-up model as well.

- Why is there a decline in entries at A Level?
- How do we stretch and engage the most able students in KS4 and KS5?
- What is the impact of the EBacc and how can we address this?
- What priority is RE given in schools?
- What is the provision of RE like in KS3 across different schools and why?
- How effective is transition across primary to secondary RE?
- What priority is given to RE in primary schools?
- What is the quality of RE in primary schools?
- How well trained and prepared are teachers to provide quality of RE appropriate to the stage and needs of their pupils?
- How effective is the agreed syllabus in supporting good quality RE?
- How can SACRE support schools in working collaboratively to provide quality RE?

We cannot assume anything specific from the exam results, nor presume anything in relation to possible answers to these questions. However, the evidence does suggest that we need to act urgently to explore the issues, find out what the situation is and act to provide any support needed.

We welcome questions and suggestions from schools and other academic institutions as to how SACRE can support learning and teaching to ensure children and young people get the best religious education they can. We wish to learn from your own experience and situation to help improve RE in all our schools.

Details of individual schools' results can be found in Annex 4. If there are



Examination results 2018

GCSE 2018	% entry			% A*-A		%A*-C		%A*-G		%9-7	%9-5	%9-1
	2016	2017	2018	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2018	2018	2018
Oxfordshire	55.7	38.7	39%	21.5	25.2	65.8	68.6	97.8	98	21	53.3	98.3
Nat	-	-		29.8	30	71.6	72	97.8	97.9	30	60	98

A Level 2018	% entries			% A*-A			% A*-C			% A*-E		
	2016	2017	2018	2016	2017	2018	2016	2017	2018	2016	2017	2018
A2 Level												
Oxfordshire	5.9	5.5	5.0	16.3	24.9	17	69.7	80.9	71	84.1	99.5	98
National				24.3	24.3	23	80.4	80.9	70	98.9	98.7	98
AS level												
Oxfordshire	9.9	8.8	2	21.1	20.7	16	64.6	69.4	60	89.1	93.1	91
National				19.4	19.1	18	65.8	63.2	61	91.7	90.7	91

2. Managing the SACRE and Partnership with the LA and Other Key Stakeholders

Meetings

SACRE meetings are public meetings and take place in County Hall. Agendas and minutes are published on the CC website.



The meeting planned for November was replaced by the presentation from the RE Commissioner, Dr Joyce Miller on 6th November 2017. Please see the notes of this in Annex 3.

Discussion and actions from the meetings on 5th March and 11th June included:

- The Commission on RE
- The strategic development of SACRE
- SACRE membership
- REFocus newsletter
- Planning an open meeting/network for teachers
- Website information
- The Constitution
- Communications with schools and a letter to headteachers

SACRE funding has been reduced from £7,500 to £6,000 and this reduces the support available from the adviser to SACRE, Bill Moore, and also the work SACRE is able to carry out.

Again, we did not have the funding to send anyone to the NSACRE conference.

Links with the LA

Cllr Hilary Hibbert-Biles attended two meetings and was keen to support SACRE in linking with schools. At the end of the year, we had a most useful meeting set up by Cllr Hibbert-Biles with Jo Moxon, an interim school improvement officer, at which a more stable and regular meeting schedule was established with senior officers within School Improvement.

The partnership with the remains LA vital for SACRE to function effectively. We recognise that these are challenging times for LAs and that there is much for them to do with dwindling resources. However, properly resourced and funded, and with good officer support, communication with schools and members, SACRE can provide good value-for-money in terms of education, community cohesion and promoting Fundamental British Values through Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development in schools. Teachers need CPD and networking and, for RE, SACRE can act as a hub to promote effective school-to-school support, co-ordinating

and facilitating the process. We have been ably supported by Cathine Hayward. The days allocated to our subject specialist adviser have again been reduced.

SACRE Budget

This year there has again been no designated budget for SACRE. Support from a specialist adviser and for clerking has been bought in by the LA and costs of refreshments at meetings have been met on an ad-hoc basis.

Farewell

At our last meeting on 11th June, we bade farewell to Lyn Moore, who was a long-standing teacher representative. Councillor Mathew presented her with flowers and thanked her for her dedicated service and commitment to SACRE and for her informed and helpful contributions from the perspective of the classroom.

3. The effectiveness of the agreed syllabus

We await the outcome of the Commission on RE report to be published in September 2018 to see what impact this may have on planning the future RE Syllabus for Oxfordshire.

4. Collective Worship

Determinations

SACRE has not received any requests for determinations with regard to Collective Worship.

Complaints

There have been no formal complaints under the statutory complaints relating to Collective Worship or RE.

Annex 1 SACRE membership 2017 - 18

Representation	Member	Standing Deputy
Committee A:		
Methodist	Martin Wellings (from June 2017)	Jean King
United Reformed	Dick Wolff	-
Orthodox churches	-	-
Oxon Community Churches	Steve Beegoo	Claire Wren
Baptist	Nicholas Wood	-
Roman Catholic	Fraser Long	-
Religious Society of Friends	-	-
Judaism	Ruth Cohen	-
Islam	Dr Ramzy	Mohammed Niaz Abbasi
Sikhism	Kamalpreet Kaur	Surinder Dhesi
Hinduism	Chandra Vadivale	Sathya Vadivale
Committee B:		
	Christine Price-Smith	
	Susan Grenfell	
	Carol Worthington	
	Julia Watson (to June 2017)	
	Helen Norman (from June 2017)	
Committee C:		
	Lyn Moore	
	Emily Hoyland	
	Alex Lionakis	
Committee D:		
	Charles Mathew	
	Jamila Azad	
	Bob Johnston	
Co-opted members		
Baha'is	Helina Taghavi	Stephen Vickers
Zoroastrians	Shahin Bekhradnia	Darayus Motivala
Humanists	Margaret Godden	John Webster (from June 2017)
	Nigel Fancourt	
Secondary Heads	-	
Primary Heads	-	
OCC Directors office?	-	
OCC		
	Catherine Hayward (School Imp. Lead) from June 2017	

Annex 2. SACRE Attendance 2017 - 18

Member's name/group represented	6 November 2017 CoRE presentation	5 March 2018	11 June 2018
Martin Wellings (Methodist)	✓	apology	apology
Rev Dick Wolff (United Reformed)	✓	absent	apology
Rev Nicholas Wood (Baptist)	apology	absent	absent
Orthodox	<i>vacancy</i>		
Steve Beegoo (Oxfordshire Community Churches)	✓	✓	✓
Religious Society of Friends	<i>vacancy</i>		
Fraser Long (Roman Catholic)	apology	absent	apology
Ruth Cohen (Judaism)	✓	✓	✓
Sheikh Ramzy (Islam)	apology	✓	✓
Buddhism	<i>vacancy</i>		
Chandra Vadivale/Sathya Vadivale (Hinduism)	✓	✓	absent
Surinder Dhesi/Kamalpreet Kaur (Sikhism)	apology	absent	absent
Susan Grenfell (Church of England)	apology	apology	✓
Helen Norman “	✓	✓	✓
Christine Price-Smith “	✓	✓	apology
Carol Worthington “	apology	✓	✓
Lyn Moore (Teacher)	✓	apology	✓
Charles Mathew (Local Authority)	✓	✓	✓
Glynis Phillips	apology	✓	absent
Bob Johnstone “	apology	✓	apology
Co-opted members			
Helina Taghavi/Stephen Vickers (Baha'is)	✓	✓	✓
Shahin Bekhradnia (Zoroastrianism)	apology	✓	apology
Margaret Godden/John Webster (Humanists)	✓	✓	✓
Nigel Fancourt (University of Oxford)	✓	✓	apology
Oxon Secondary School Headteachers' Association	<i>vacancy</i>		
Oxon Primary School Headteachers' Association	<i>vacancy</i>		
Officers in attendance			
Catherine Hayward(LA)	apology	apology	absent
Bill Moore (SACRE Advisor, RE Specialist)	✓	✓	✓
Helen Batten (Clerk to SACRE)	✓	✓	✓

Annex 3

Meeting with the RE Commissioner (Dr Joyce Miller), Monday 6th November 2017

Notes of discussion following presentation

The meeting broke into groups to consider the information presented by the RE Commissioner, and provided feedback for further discussion:

- **What is the Commission's view of the usefulness of SACRES?** Joyce Miller explained that local conditions vary and all evidence will be examined when making the final analysis of the interim report. She also drew attention to the Goldsmiths' College study, 'RE for Real' which recognises that the notion of religion extends beyond the RE curriculum. The Commission is conscious that headteachers often struggle to differentiate between religion and culture. There is not enough capacity within local authorities to support schools on these aspects and there is therefore a clear continuing role for SACRES.
- **Isn't it the case that with better support and training for RE teachers, the profession would be providing the necessary support?** JM responded that these challenges tend to be more common in primary schools, where responsibility for RE often falls to a single staff member. However good support across all stages is vital, and this aspect needs to be included in teachers' training.
- **Will the Commission also be looking at how academies support RE teaching?** JM replied that academy organisation is complex and there are many different approaches to RE which means it is difficult to obtain reliable data. There is also no single academies body that the Commission can work with. Discontinuation of Ofsted subject reports has also meant the loss of another valuable way of gathering information. SACRES will not be able to monitor an increasingly fragmented situation.
- **Is it logical to continue to have SACRES which are now so clearly out of step with the current situation?** Bill Moore explained that there are some good examples of SACRES engaging successfully with academies and we should look at these to help define the best way forward. It is also crucial that schools provide support for their local SACRE.
- **Which current problems are unique to RE as a subject, and which are due to the situation we are now in where different branches of education don't communicate effectively with each other?** JM suggested that the government needs to decide if education should be a national or local service before any real progress can be made to resolve many problems. Church schools also complicate the picture. Ideally academy funding agreements should include something about RE and collective worship.
- **What should high quality RE look like?** JM considers that high quality RE could be

delivered in many different ways to meet the national entitlement set out in the interim report. The RE Quality Mark is also helpful and many schools have used the criteria to assess their provision without necessarily applying for the award. A SACRE member suggested that the list in the report is helpful although there are some gaps. It should also include looking at how modern Britain has been shaped by religious and non-religious thought.

- ***What is the difference between a national entitlement and the current situation where RE must be taught?*** JM explained that work is in hand to add further detail to this framework, recognising that there can be a variety of successful approaches. The Commission is not content with a general compliance approach to RE provision and the finished recommendations will go beyond that, but without listing exactly what should be taught. Professional development is also an important consideration, and teachers should have opportunities for reflection and review.
- It was pointed out that people who consider they have no religion may include many who would call themselves spiritual but do not practice a recognised religion, as well as atheists. Some references will therefore need to be suitably nuanced to include those who may never have considered whether they are religious or not.
- It was also suggested that we should not seek to lay claim to spirituality in RE teaching because this is a whole school responsibility.
- None of us has enough experience or knowledge to answer all questions so it is essential to maintain breadth and depth of support. Teachers also need to feel confident to say when they don't know the answer to something, and this can be valuable if it leads into another conversation.
- A secondary teacher observed that students often shy away from RE at GCSE and A level and it suffers from not being included in the government's progress measures. Their school is taking an approach based on critical thought so that RE goes beyond factual learning.

- ***Is it a concern that the right to withdraw diminishes the status of RE as an academic subject?*** JM confirmed that this concern is recognised, however the right to withdraw serves to protect schools from litigation if parents object to RE teaching.

- Good quality RE needs to be on the school curriculum so that children and young people can gain genuine understanding and make informed choices. ***Has there been any research into religion as a cause of problems in society?*** JM explained that the term 'religious literacy' has deliberately been left out of the report because it means different things to different people. RE must go further than understanding the beliefs of different religions, and really look at both positive and negative influences. There is a trend for RE teachers to try to sanitise everything but they need to feel confident to address the impact of some very negative implementation of religion. We know that children want to talk about these concerns, and RE teachers often find themselves leading a school's response to national or international events.

Annex 4: KS4 2018 GCSE Full Course Religious Studies Results **- Oxfordshire**

Source - DfE Performance Tables Data (note: GCSE Short courses no longer included in SPT data)

NE = No entries SUPP = less than 6 pupils

URN	School Name	School Type	Number of pupils at the end of KS4	GCSE Full Course			
				% KS4 pupils entered for Full GCSE RS	% 9-7	% 9-5	% 9-1
138499	Wykham Park Academy	AC	89	NE	NE	NE	NE
137919	Bartholomew School	ACC	185	8%	29%	64%	100%
141146	Blessed George Napier Catholic School	ACC	129	84%	26%	63%	99%
138289	Burford School	ACC	177	NE	NE	NE	NE
123236	Carterton Community College	CY	99	51%	12%	56%	100%
139146	Cheney School	ACC	218	NE	NE	NE	NE
123245	Chiltern Edge Community School	CY	92	11%	90%	100%	100%
137936	Chipping Norton School	ACC	147	94%	16%	49%	97%
138490	Didcot Girls' School	ACC	190	4%	75%	100%	100%
137993	Faringdon Community College	ACC	186	80%	28%	67%	100%
123257	Fitzharrys School	CY	78	NE	NE	NE	NE
137921	Gillotts School	ACC	146	99%	17%	53%	100%
138897	Gosford Hill School	ACC	159	53%	28%	71%	100%
143984	Icknield Community College	ACC	97	NE	NE	NE	NE
140580	John Mason School	ACC	159	NE	NE	NE	NE
137140	King Alfred's	ACC	281	NE	NE	NE	NE
137976	Langtree School	ACC	141	91%	27%	55%	96%
143890	Larkmead School	ACC	118	14%	24%	59%	100%
138667	Lord Williams's School	ACC	316	NE	NE	NE	NE
142104	Matthew Arnold School	ACC	181	98%	25%	62%	99%
135365	North Oxfordshire Academy	AC	141	18%	38%	77%	100%
123346	Northfield School	CYS	14	NE	NE	NE	NE
136261	Oxford Spires Academy	AC	112	88%	10%	47%	93%
138762	St Birinus School	ACC	137	69%	28%	64%	100%
139528	St Gregory the Great Catholic School	ACC	184	91%	8%	23%	92%
123331	Swalcliffe Park School Trust	NMSS	3	NE	NE	NE	NE
142024	The Bicester School	AC	108	6%	50%	100%	100%
137970	The Cherwell School	ACC	268	16%	36%	74%	100%
141069	The Cooper School	ACC	215	95%	18%	42%	100%
138210	The Henry Box School	ACC	161	91%	12%	39%	100%
138817	The Marlborough Church of England School	ACC	168	79%	30%	62%	98%
135675	The Oxford Academy	AC	130	14%	11%	56%	100%
142218	The Warriner School	ACC	218	91%	12%	44%	99%
141111	UTC Oxfordshire	FUTC	89	NE	NE	NE	NE
137357	Wallingford School	ACC	189	12%	45%	73%	100%
140875	Wheatley Park School	ACC	159	10%	38%	81%	100%
144008	Wood Green School	ACC	161	NE	NE	NE	NE
123329	Woodeaton Manor School	FDS	13	NE	NE	NE	NE
Oxfordshire Maintained and Academy Schools			5658	39%	21.0	53.3	98.3

These tables are accurate according to DfE validated data. Please contact Bill Moore (bjvmoore@aol.com) if there are any inaccuracies.

KS5 2018 Rel+A1:L26igious Studies Results - Oxfordshire

(excluding Independent schools and Colleges)

Source - DfE Performance Tables Data

NE = No entries, SUPP = less than 6 pupils

URN	School Name	School Type	Number of students at end KS5	A LEVEL				AS LEVEL				% A/AS Level
				% Entries	% A*-A	% A*-C	% A*-E	% Entries	% A*-A	% A*-C	% A*-E	
138499	Wykham Park Academy	AC	24	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp
137919	Bartholomew School	ACC	119	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE
141146	Blessed George Napier Catholic School and Sports College	ACC	86	17%	33%	67%	87%	NE	NE	NE	NE	17%
138289	Burford School	ACC	109	11%	17%	83%	92%	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	11%
123236	Carterton Community College	CY	35	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp
139146	Cheney School	ACC	125	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	NE	NE	NE	NE	Supp
137936	Chipping Norton School	ACC	89	7%	0%	83%	100%	10%	0%	11%	100%	17%
138490	Didcot Girls' School	ACC	97	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	NE	NE	NE	NE	Supp
137993	Faringdon Community College	ACC	82	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp
123257	Fitzharrys School	CY	39	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp
138897	Gosford Hill School	ACC	73	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	NE	NE	NE	NE	Supp
140580	John Mason School	ACC	55	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp
137140	King Alfred's	ACC	151	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp
143890	Larkmead School	CY	48	25%	25%	67%	100%	33%	13%	56%	94%	58%
138667	Lord Williams's School	ACC	280	8%	23%	77%	100%	11%	28%	84%	97%	19%
142104	Matthew Arnold School	ACC	103	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE
135365	North Oxfordshire Academy	AC	62	11%	0%	0%	100%	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	11%
136261	Oxford Spires Academy	AC	81	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp
138762	St Birinus School	ACC	56	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE
139528	St Gregory the Great Catholic School	ACC	95	11%	0%	50%	90%	15%	0%	43%	79%	25%
142024	The Bicester School	AC	89	8%	0%	57%	100%	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	8%
137970	The Cherwell School	ACC	270	14%	18%	79%	100%	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	14%
141069	The Cooper School	ACC	104	13%	8%	77%	100%	NE	NE	NE	NE	13%
138210	The Henry Box School	ACC	103	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	6%	17%	50%	67%	6%
138817	The Marlborough Church of England School	ACC	90	NE	NE	NE	NE	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp
135675	The Oxford Academy	AC	533	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE
142218	The Warriner School	ACC	101	7%	0%	57%	100%	NE	NE	NE	NE	7%
141111	UTC Oxfordshire	FUTC	29	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE
137357	Wallingford School	ACC	127	8%	40%	80%	100%	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	8%
140875	Wheatley Park School	ACC	92	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE
144008	Wood Green School	ACC	73	10%	29%	86%	100%	Supp	Supp	Supp	Supp	10%

These tables are accurate according to DfE validated data. Please contact Bill Moore (bjvmoore@aol.com) if there are any inaccuracies.