

Torbay SACRE Annual Report 2023/4

Foreward

I would like to begin by thanking teachers and school leaders who have worked tirelessly over the last year through a period of great budgetary pressure. In particular, SACRE acknowledges the hard work put in by teachers of RE in primary, secondary and special schools to implement the new Agreed Syllabus.

Over the year SACRE has offered resources and training opportunities to support teachers in their understanding of the new Religion and Worldviews approach to the subject, as set out by the new syllabus. SACRE has supported LTLRE groups, who continue to provide twilight CPD through its networks of experienced RE hub leaders. The LTLRE conference was definitely a high point in the year for teachers.

I would also like to thank members of SACRE for their willingness to embrace the technology necessary to meet in 'hybrid meetings' which have ensured that attendance has been at a good level. We will continue to build on the work through the year to broaden the experience of our membership through recruitment.

My thanks also go to Ed Pawson who has guided SACRE with great professionalism and his usual enthusiasm. His links with local communities and national bodies contributes so much to the effectiveness of SACRE in leading the development of learning in Religion and Worldviews.

Jeremy Roberts (SACRE Chair)

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1 Introduction

1.1 Membership

There have been no new SACRE members during the year 2023/4 SACRE.

Many thanks to Charlotte Caluori and Jonathan Doney who have stepped down.

1.2 Details of Torbay SACRE meetings

October 2023: 14 attendees, plus clerk and adviser, hybrid meeting

February 2024: 15 attendees, plus clerk and adviser, hybrid meeting

June 2024: 14 attendees, plus clerk and adviser, hybrid meeting

All meetings were quorate.

2 SACRE's statutory responsibilities

2.1 Launch of the Local Agreed Syllabus

Following an extensive review, a new Agreed Syllabus for RE (AS) has been launched for Torbay, Devon and Plymouth schools. This will run from 2024-2029. The recommendations

from the Agreed Syllabus Council (ASC) were accepted by SACRE, and the new syllabus was launched at 4 events during summer 2024, for first teaching in September 2024. Nearly 300 teachers attended the launch conferences. These events were led by the RE Today curriculum writers, and feedback has been very positive.

On-going training for teachers will continue to be offered during 2024/2025 via Inset training, the LTLRE conference and local hub meetings. The new syllabus has also been adopted by Devon and Plymouth SACREs, with Cornwall SACRE likely to adopt a similar pattern for 2025.

The new syllabus does not look radically different from the current model in terms of its substantive knowledge component. Where important changes have been made, they are in the adoption of a religion and worldviews approach to RE, in response to developing understandings about the subject at a national level. This recognises a significant shift in the way the subject is being planned and taught, following on from the Commission for RE report (2018). The new syllabus also responds to many of the challenges laid down by the Ofsted Deep and Meaningful report (2024).

Here is a summary of the key changes to the AS:

- Availability of 'lesson-ready' resources
- Teaching units embody more diversity
- Teaching units reflect the local lived experience of people's religious and non-religious worldviews
- Greater emphasis on 'ways of knowing' and pupils' personal knowledge
- More input on Humanism and non-religious worldviews in primary phase
- More detail on assessment
- More input for special schools
- More input on progression in language and vocabulary across the syllabus
- Updated use of terminology and information on demographics
- More materials on how to link learning into local places of interest and places of worship

2.2 Standards and monitoring in RE

2.2.1 Secondary schools

Data from the DfE annual workforce survey points to the fact that a number of secondary schools do not teach enough RE. Schools have been contacted and conversations with headteachers and senior leaders have taken place to explore further and offer input to encourage them to develop the place of RE in the curriculum.

2.2.2 GCSE Religious Studies exam results 2024

The total entry numbers of students for GCSE RS across all Torbay schools was almost identical between 2023 and 2024: 715 students were entered in 2023 and 725 students in 2024. The percentage of students achieving Grades 9-5 is just below the national average: national 60%, SW schools 59%, Torbay 56%.

There is a significant variation of entry practice. In 2024, three Torbay schools entered nearly all of their Y11 cohort for the GCSE RS exam (over 88% of students), while two schools entered under 10% of the year-group.

Evidence shows that, across the region, there are increasing numbers of schools who are not running a GCSE course at all, either because they don't see it as a priority subject, or because the RS option is failing to recruit sufficient numbers to be viable as a course. This is, in part, due to pressures from EBAC subjects. SACRE is keen to give schools advice about

how to run effective and vibrant GCSE exam options classes. It is vital for the subject to continue to be studied at higher levels and therefore help to create the next generation of RE teachers in our schools.

2.2.3 Primary schools

Monitoring of RE in primary schools continues through sampling of websites and scrutiny of recent Ofsted reports. Over 70% of Ofsted reports include a mention of issues relating to SACRE's purpose (eg RE, collective worship or SMSC) and the majority of these comments are positive. National research reveals that only about 3% of inspections involve a deep dive in RE.

Where SACRE has concerns, schools have been contacted to raise issues about standards or profile of the subject. Visits have been made to schools where their Ofsted report has highlighted weaknesses in RE or related areas. Where RE is mentioned positively schools have been contacted to thank them for their strong provision.

Resources have been shared and advice has been given to a number of schools with regard to parental requests for withdrawal from RE (and/or collective worship). In particular, the Torbay and South Devon LTLRE hub leaders have been a massive resource in being available to offer support and guidance where schools make contact for help.

2.2.4 Monitoring RE in Multi-Academy Trusts

Torbay SACRE has been working in partnership with a number of Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) to ensure that RE is given its statutory place in the curriculum. There are an increasing number of MATs who have appointed RE leads across their schools. SACRE, along with NATRE and RE Hubs, is active in drawing these hub leaders together and working with them to develop an understanding of how MATs need to make provision for the subject.

2.2.5 Headteachers' briefing

Following the syllabus launch events in summer 2024 the Adviser is due to attend a Torbay headteachers' updates meeting to brief school leaders on the changes to the syllabus, and to give a report on the latest Ofsted evaluations of the subject.

3 Collective Worship

The current guidance on collective worship and school assemblies from Torbay SACRE is still in date. This guidance supports schools in developing a suitable CW policy and encouraging active pupil participation in assemblies. We want to help schools put in place effective practice, offering opportunities for reflective experiences for their pupils. The guidance document offers an explanation of the legal obligations, including the right to withdrawal, and outlines some of the rich opportunities that assemblies/ collective worship can offer pupils for spiritual, moral, social, cultural and personal development.

There have been no formal complaints about collective worship in schools and no applications for determinations.

4 Links with other bodies

4.1 Strong partnerships

Strong partnerships are a hallmark of the way Torbay SACRE operates. We have good links with a number of organisations, working closely with Torbay Council, the Diocese of Exeter, the Universities of Exeter and St Mark and St John, Devon Faith and Belief Forum and Torbay Faith and Beliefs Forum.

The SACRE Adviser attends the annual conferences for AREIAC (Association of RE Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants) and NASACRE (National Association of SACREs), and sits on the

AREIAC executive. He coordinates the SW AREIAC network of advisers (SWARE), organises the annual SW SACRE conference and acts in the role of RE Hubs lead for the SW. The 2024 SW SACRE conference hosted inputs from a number of regional and national RE figures, offering workshops on a range of important inputs for SACRE member training. During the year, RE Hubs hosted a conversation forum for regional SACRE officers to receive updates and give feedback with NASACRE.

4.2 Devon Faith and Beliefs Forum

SACRE works closely with the Devon Faith and Belief Forum and Torbay Faith and Belief Forum to establish strong links to local faith and belief organisations. This enables schools to draw on visitors to school classrooms and to inform who will be the most suitable faith and belief representatives when member vacancies occur.

Learn, Teach, Lead RE

Torbay SACRE is pleased to continue to partner and give funding support to the Learn, Teach, Lead RE programme (LTLRE). The Torbay and South Devon LTLRE hub is working well to support teachers of RE, offering termly twilight meetings and networking opportunities. A professional community has now been set up via SWIFT (teaching school) which offers termly CPD for both primary and secondary teachers of RE.

The 2023 conference was well attended, with over 90 teachers attending from across the region. Both conference and hub meeting evaluations show how valuable teachers are finding these networking and CPD offers.

Hub leaders continue to be a valuable resource to teachers of RE in their locality, and termly training days enable hub leaders to keep up to date with current RE issues and initiatives.

5 SACRE: local involvement

5.1 RE Newsletter

The half termly RE newsletter gives schools in depth support, information and networking links. It signposts current CPD, hub groups and conferences. Through this newsletter SACRE signposts guidance to schools about significant events, eg religious festivals such as Easter, Ramadan and Diwali, Interfaith Week etc

5.2 Holocaust Memorial Day

SACRE officers organise Holocaust Memorial Day events in Exeter for schools every year, attended by some Torbay schools. On Holocaust Memorial Day in January 2024 a service was held at Exeter Cathedral where schools participated in remembrance and reflection. The theme, The Fragility of Freedom, provided a poignant opportunity for pupils to reflect on issues of conflict in today's society.

Over 200 school pupils were involved in the Exeter events from eight schools across the County. Presentations were given on Kindertransport, the Gypsy Holocaust and Holocaust history. The closing ceremony was hosted by the Jewish community.

HMD resources and links were shared with schools.

5.3 Advice to Schools in Times of Conflict

In the aftermath of the unrest between Israel and Gaza, in October 2023, SACRE circulated a document to schools to enable them to navigate contentious cultural, religious and political community issues.

6 SACRE: regional and national involvement

6.1 Standing up for the importance of RE

SACRE is grateful Belinda Twigg for raising the crucial issues of recruitment and retention with Anthony Mangnall MP, highlighting the shortage of trained RE teachers in secondary schools.

6.2 RE Hubs

SACRE continues to be supportive of the RE Hubs initiative, which is providing teachers with a 'one-stop-shop' website, offering links to school speakers, places of interest, CPD events, local network groups, blogs and resources etc.

6.3 National Content Standard

SACRE has been kept fully informed of the publication of the REC's National Content Standard. The NCS provides a benchmark for excellence in religion and worldviews in schools or across a MATs in England.

6.4 Religion and Worldviews Handbook

SACRE members have been introduced to the REC's Religion and Worldviews Handbook. This is a tool kit for RE syllabus writers, to enable them to translate the core vision of religion and worldviews approach into a curriculum. RWs syllabus frameworks from three school based teams have also been published as part of the document.

7 SACRE organisation

7.1 SACRE leadership and organisation

Torbay SACRE is well served through its clerk (Louise Willmott), LA lead (Rachael Williams), and adviser (Ed Pawson). Torbay Council is responsive to SACRE's needs and supportive in its administration and organisation. It is well supported financially.

SACRE membership is vibrant and well-engaged, although there are still a few significant vacancies. The 2022 SACRE constitution stipulates that SACRE members will serve a 4 year period, followed by a further 4 year period, if invited to continue. After this (8 years) most SACRE members will come off SACRE, to allow others to join and gain the valuable experience of being on this body.

As a result of this change there has been some transfer of representative roles on SACRE, opening up opportunities for new members.

All meetings in the year 2022/3 have been quorate.

A number of SACRE members have taken advantage of useful training opportunities over the last year, both through attendance at the SW SACRE conference and national online NASACRE training events.

8 Appendices

Appendix 1

GCSE Religious Studies exam data 2024

Number of pupils	% grade 9-5	% Y11 cohort
Torquay Academy	29	89
Paignton College	53	15
Torquay Girls Grammar School	93	37
Churston Grammar School	88	51
The Spires	67	7
Brixham College	29	9
St Cuthbert Mayne	39	91
Torquay Boys Grammar School	82	99
National average	61	

Appendix 2

Membership of Torbay SACRE August 2024

A Christian and other Religions other than Church of England	Christian denominations and other religions and religious denominations ¹	Roman Catholic	Helen Brown
		Pentecostal	Carly Watson
		Quaker	Bill Becher
		Muslim	Yousif Al-Nassar
		Jewish	Sheila Gewolb
		Pagan	Maia Miller
		Humanist	Lisa Robillard Webb
		Hindu	Vacancy
		Buddhist	Vacancy
B The Church of England	The Church of England	URC / Methodist / Baptist	Vacancy
			Lyndsay Thomas
			Angela Sumner
			Katy Burns
			Vacancy
C Associations representing teachers	Such associations representing teachers as, in the opinion of the authority, ought to be represented, having regard to the circumstances of the area	Teaching Unions	Belinda Twiggs
			Corrine Guntrip
			Vacancy
		NATFHE	Nikki Boone
		NATRE/LTLRE	Laura Twamley
		Higher Education	Vacancy
		SHA	Jeremy Roberts
		NAHT	Vacancy
D The Local Education Authority	The Local Authority	NATRE	Claire Bird
		Special school	Vacancy
			Cllr Nick Bye
			Cllr Christine Carter
Coopted members	SACRE itself may appoint co-opted members		Cllr Martin Brook
			Sivita Harrison, Kim Moore-Cullen

SACRE Officers

Clerk: Louise Willmott

Adviser: Ed Pawson

LA lead: Rachael Williamson

