



### Message from the Chair

How we educate all our children and young people in the acceptance of others and foster tolerance remains a high priority nationally and for us locally in our Bedford Borough schools. In the past year news reports continue to provide harrowing accounts of young adults leaving the UK to go abroad who are prepared to die for their beliefs. In Bedford Borough we embrace the richness of our multi-cultural society, and it is in R.E lessons that children are taught about other people's beliefs and to respect views that differ from their own. In every RE class we have the opportunity to teach the values of tolerance and inclusion. Understanding what other faiths believe and why, their history and taking time to think about what is important to people that hold these beliefs.

Recently Bedford Borough SACRE board member Judy Ruff attended the NASACRE AGM (the UK education board that oversees all SACRE boards) entitled 'Rising to the Challenge' Judy heard from Stephen Lloyd, MP for Eastbourne who is the Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Religious Education. Stephen Lloyd MP spoke on the following issues;

- RE has been unintentionally under attack during the last few years. However, adversity can make you stronger.
- The APPG is a cross party group of MPs who profoundly believe that it is important to get RE teaching right in schools.
- The issue is that over the last few years many RE teachers have not felt valued by their own school or by the Government.
- Stephen believes that RE is the most important subject of all. It contributes to not only our understanding of history, but has important links to SMSC.

- It offers the chance for our children to be free to think and understand the facts about the different world faiths.
- With another year to a General Election, now is the time to focus on what is needed to improve the quality and recognition of RE in schools and to lobby the political parties.
- NASACRE and individual SACREs should know that their views are important to the members of the APPG and great note is taken of these.
- Stephen believes that it is of great importance that our children get a decent grounding in the different religions to ensure that community cohesion and the way in which we treat each other improves.
- However, inaccurate knowledge of religions such as are frequently portrayed in the press and on the internet can be a trigger for violence.

The quality of teaching of RE nationally was questioned by the All Party Parliamentary Group; they raised concerns that unqualified members of staff were teaching many of the RE lessons in schools. The result of the lobbying by NASACRE, the APPG and other groups is the Government is to re-focus on the standard of RE teaching and the importance placed on assessing the quality of teaching of RE during OFSTED inspections. Yet when I visited a middle school in Bedford this year I found the Head Teacher had designated two qualified teachers to deliver RE across the school, it was a heartening story of a Head Teacher recognising the opportunity for quality learning within RE and allocating specialists to the teaching of the subject. RE presents a wonderful opportunity to learn

about faith and how to connect to a higher power beyond ourselves. In RE lessons students learn about geography, history, art and many other subjects, high quality teaching remains at the heart of the best learning experience to form thoughtful and balanced students.

This is my final year as the Chair of Bedford Borough SACRE and I have enjoyed working with the members of the Bedford Borough SACRE board, all the individuals on the board volunteer their time to represent many different faiths and schools for the benefit of all the children in our community. The goodwill, warmth and willingness to work together that exists between all board members has been a joy to work with. The board has agreed that Judy Ruff be appointed as the next Chair of SACRE. Judy has expertise in school improvement and RE and will be a great asset to the SACRE board, I wish her every success.

On behalf of the SACRE board I would like to thank all the dedicated teachers and Heads who have invested in teaching high quality RE lessons, may your legacy be a tolerant and safer society for years to come.



**Kristy Adams**  
*(Chair of the Bedford SACRE, November 2014)*

## Standards in Religious Education

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Between September 2013 and July 2014, a total of thirteen Bedford Borough Schools were inspected under the Section 5 Ofsted framework. Of these thirteen were lower schools, three were middle schools, three were upper/secondary schools and two were primary schools.

Evidence of SMSC was used to contribute to overall judgements in the four key areas on some but not all occasions:

- Leadership and management – 8 times.
- Behaviour and safety of pupils – 2 times.

This analysis is worked out on 14 comments made in 13 Bedford Borough School inspections. One school received SMSC comments in two areas and two schools received no SMSC comments at all.

## Bedford Borough RE Examination Results in 2014

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### Religious Studies: Exam: GCSE Short Course

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We are no longer able to report on the numbers of students and outcomes of short course Religious Education due to changes in the collection and reporting of Government data.

### Religious Studies: Exam: GCSE Full Course

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Five of the seven Borough's upper schools entered students for this examination. 677 students were entered across the Borough. Sharnbrook entered considerably more students than the other four (426). The next closest was Wootton Upper School (300 students). 73.1% of students gained grades A\* - C with 99.1% gained A\* - G. Again, White British students represented the largest group entered (515). Any Other White Background students were the second largest group entered (35). The cohort was made up of 343 girls and 373 boys. Girls outperformed the boys at grades A\* - C (79.3% - 66.8%).

### Comparison to 2013

118 less students were entered for this examination than 2013. This is the first year following a three year increase at entries for full GCSE RE in Bedford Borough has fallen. The percentage of students gaining an A\* - C rose slightly on 2013.

0.8% but the percentage of students achieving A\*-G fell slightly by 0.4%. In 2013, girls also outperformed the boys at grade A\* - C however for the first time since 2011, girls attainment at A\*-C has risen by 2.8%.

## End of Key Stage 5 outcomes

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The data shown reflects those students leaving school in Year 13 and does not include the Year 12 results for the current year. These will be reported when the students are at the end of Key Stage 5.

### Religious Studies: Exam: GCE AS Level

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37 students completed Key Stage 5 from 4 different upper schools with an AS in RE. 16.2% gained a grade between A – B. Of the 37 students entered, 19 were White British. The cohort was made up of 26 girls and 11 boys. Boys outperformed girls at grade A – B (18.2% to 15.4%).

### Comparison with 2013

The numbers of entries rose for the second year running in 2014 with 4 more students being entered for this examination when compared to 2013. For the second year running, outcomes at grades A-B declined; results fell by 2% in 2014.

### Religious Studies: Exam: GCE A Level

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76 students were entered across 4 upper schools. Of these 2.6% gained an A\* in their examination. 9.2% gained between A\* - A, 43.4% between A\* - B and 100% between A\* - E. White British students represented the majority ethnic grouping at 45 students with the 8 Any Other White students forming the second largest group. The cohort was made up of 54 girls and 22 boys. Girl outperformed boys at grades A\* - B (48.1% - 31.8%).

### Comparison with 2013

Entries were up in 2014, 12 additional students. The percentage of students attaining at either a grade A\* or A fell in 2014 by 11.1% and the percentage of students obtaining grade A\* - B dropped by 9.7%. For the first time since 2011, girls outperformed boys at grades A\* - B, the gap in 2013 was 6.8% in favour of boys attainment is now 16.3 in favour of girls.

## SACRE School Visits

Between September 2013 and June 2014, five schools across Bedford Borough invited SACRE members into their schools in order to watch teaching, meet with the RE leaders and meet the departments. These visits were a valuable opportunity for SACRE members to gain first hand current experience of RE in schools. Members were delighted to see high quality learning opportunities delivered by enthusiastic teachers as well as engaged and positive pupils. SACRE will be able to use these experiences to better shape the support they offer to local schools and will be contacting schools to organise future visits.

Many thanks to:

- Lakeview Lower School
- Beauchamp Middle School
- Cotton End Primary School
- Hastingsbury Business and Enterprise College
- Bedford Road Lower School

## In school support

Three schools have received support for RE. This consisted of supporting policy writing, supporting a new subject leader and sharing good practice with an existing RE leader.

## Advice and Support for Schools

Many schools use the support and resources provided by Jane Chipperton, Religious Education Adviser for the Diocese of St Albans, who oversees a resource base at St Mark's Church Centre, Brickhill. The resource collection and beds-re website ([www.beds-re-resources.org.uk/](http://www.beds-re-resources.org.uk/)), support the multi faith approach of the Agreed Syllabus, which is available throughout the day and in school holidays.

SACRE members wish to express their thanks to the Diocese of St Albans, St. Mark's Brickhill and Jane Chipperton for providing this service.

The RE Society for Bedfordshire has been active in publicising courses running in the area, organising visits to places of worship for different faiths and providing after-school workshops for teachers. SACRE receives copies of the RE Society's informative newsletter which the LA sends to all schools.

## RE Quality Mark

The RE Quality Mark has been developed to celebrate high quality religious education and provides community schools, faith schools and academies with a framework to capture good practice. It encourages the development and celebration of school wide commitment to excellent teaching and learning in religious education.

Bedford Borough SACRE offered schools the opportunity to receive part funding in order to apply for this award, in recognition of their hard work. Three schools applied for this funding and were successful in achieving the REQM Award.

- Beauchamp Middle School – Bronze
- Hastingsbury Business and Enterprise College – Bronze
- St Lawrence VA School – Bronze

Well done to all schools who applied for this award.

Funding is still available support applications. For information, please contact SACRE directly.

## Support for SACRE

SACRE wishes to express its appreciation for the support given by Bedford Borough in terms of funding for SACRE's work and for enabling the Council to benefit from the services of Greg Jeffrey from Members' Services.

**Your comments on any aspects of SACRE's work and areas of interest are welcomed. Please contact:**

**Greg Jeffrey**  
**Clerk to Bedford Borough SACRE**

 **01234 228903**

 **greg.jeffrey@bedford.gov.uk**

## Bedford Borough SACRE Members 2013-2014

### Group (A) representing Christian and other Major Faiths

- Mary O’Sullivan, Roman Catholic
- Sister Aidan Richards, Roman Catholic
- William Speed, Free Churches
- Marion Roberts, Free Churches (part of year, resigned)
- Chris Damp, Free Churches (part year, replaced Marion Roberts)
- Susanne Combe, Judaism
- Anjani Singhal, Hinduism
- Tirath Singh Bhavra, Sikhism
- Rubina Shaikh, Islam (part year, replaced Munwar Hussain)
- Venerable Akurula Samitha, Buddhism

### Group (B) representing the Church of England

- Chris Chipperton
- Rev. Richard Howlett
- Petra Yates

### Group (C) representing Teachers’ Associations

- Ann Parish, Head teachers
- Gilly Donald, Lower Schools
- Robin Rice, Upper Schools
- Rachel Francis, Special School

### Group (D) representing the Local Authority (LA)

- Deputy Mayor Borough Councillor Charles Royden
- Borough Councillor Kristy Adams
- Borough Councillor Pat Olney
- Borough Councillor Mohammad Masud

### Group (E) Others on SACRE (No voting powers)

- The Rev. Cassandra Howes, Co-opted (Higher Education)
- Dr. Graham McFarlane, Co-opted
- Jonathan Hooper, Co-opted (Independent Schools)
- Judy Ruff, Chair of Bedfordshire RE Society
- Carrie Traill, LA Adviser
- Greg Jeffrey, Clerk to SACRE



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