



**WOKINGHAM  
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

# SACRE

**SACRE Annual Report**  
September 2016 - July 2017

**Wokingham Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education**

## The Chair's Foreword

I continue to be amazed and excited by what Wokingham SACRE produces. I have the pleasure of working with an amazing group of committed individuals from all walks of life, who want the very best RE for all in Berkshire. We have formalised our links with the Pan-Berkshire Hub and are fully committed to the success of the projects and joint working made possible through the Hub.

Our projects are starting to bear fruit: the Crossing The Bridges materials, including the Directory of speakers and host places of worship, are being used by staff within schools across Wokingham and Berkshire. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our hardworking and dedicated teachers and teaching assistants for their relentless efforts in delivering RE across Wokingham. The dedication of our teachers and teaching assistants raises the profile of RE in our schools, carrying the torch in the face of limited resources.

We will continue to support our teachers and teaching assistants in carrying this mantle by investing in the Pan-Berkshire Hub, running termly network meetings for our Primary colleagues and providing funding for Secondary training.

Looking to the future, 2017-2018 will bring exciting times as we review the Pan-Berkshire Agreed Syllabus.

Finally, Wokingham SACRE would not be what it is without the committed members, fully supported by Wokingham Borough Council and the resolute work of our advisor, Jan Lever.

Stephen Vegh, Chair: Wokingham SACRE

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## 2016-2017: The Context

### RE teaching in Wokingham schools

The autumn term 2016 marked the start of the last academic year in the lifespan of the current Pan-Berkshire agreed syllabus for Religious Education, the review beginning in the summer term 2017. The syllabus has continued to be well-received by teachers, who are enjoying the challenge of teaching RE using an enquiry-based approach and are now taking this further by considering how well they can enable pupils' religious literacy to develop through their ability to question and critically evaluate.

Church of England Schools have been offered the opportunity to participate in the Diocesan training for the 'Understanding Christianity' teaching resource, and most primary schools have continued to enjoy using 'Discovery RE' as their chosen scheme of work. This scheme was revised in April 2017 and all schools using it were availed of the downloadable new version (3rd edition) at no charge.

The structure and key questions of the agreed syllabus help teachers order their planning and focus children and young people on the beliefs that underpin practice in the religions and belief systems studied. This focus is given much attention in the agreed syllabus, 'Believing' being the core member of the 3 B's (Believing, Behaving, Belonging).

It is generally recognised in Wokingham schools that, as well as a rigorous academic subject, and one that serves personal development, RE is a key contributor to the anti-radicalisation and community cohesion agenda as well as to British Values and SMSC (spiritual, moral, social and cultural learning).



'On location' training day-March 2017



'On-location' training day - March 2017



Pan-Berkshire SACREs conference September 2016

## The Wokingham SACRE

The Wokingham SACRE considers its role very seriously and works closely with the Borough Council to offer support to schools. The SACRE has met once each term to progress its work and liaises with Wokingham Borough Council, structuring its work each year through an agreed action plan.

The SACRE has continued to appreciate the support of Wokingham Borough Council, the funding offered enabling support for teachers and schools to continue, and the agreed syllabus review to begin in the summer term. The SACRE is indebted to Emily Waddilove, WBC link officer (Teaching and Learning Advisor) for her continued support and overseer role.

The SACRE's membership is consistent and it has welcomed new members this year. The dedicated Chair, Stephen Vegh, an experienced Head of Faculty (Religious Studies and Philosophy) at Waingels College, and equally committed Vice Chair, Councillor Beth Rowland, led the SACRE admirably through the very busy and productive year.

The SACRE is also blessed with an exceptionally dedicated and very able clerk, Anne Coffey, who always goes beyond the call of duty to serve the SACRE and advance its work, even baking superb cakes for SACRE meetings!

The SACRE continues to keep in touch with schools and to support them to fulfil their students' entitlement to high quality RE, mindful of the pressures upon teachers and school timetables. The SACRE listens to teachers through termly network meetings, training events and the teacher representatives on the SACRE, and the support it offers is informed by these conversations. Elected members consider the SACREs work in the light of the bigger Council purpose, and support it whole-heartedly.

Wokingham has continued to be a core member of the Pan-Berkshire SACRE Hub, offering its meeting rooms regularly as a venue for both meetings and training events. Jan Lever, the independent adviser to the SACRE, also manages the Hub and its projects and events. This year has been very significant in continuing to strengthen the links between the six SACREs across Berkshire and the Oxford Diocese, giving rise to another year of exciting and innovative work with both schools and faith/belief communities. SACRE meetings are synchronised across all 6 SACREs, with Hub meetings in-between, allowing six meeting points each year with a flow of information and dialogue between the Hub and the SACREs.

## The work of the SACRE in 2016-17

### The role of Wokingham Borough Council

The support of Wokingham Borough Council enables the SACRE to communicate directly with schools through the regular e-newsletters and channels of correspondence, taking bookings for RE events through its online CPD system. This enables excellent attendance at training events and network meetings. Councillors are pro-active members of the SACRE and we look forward to embedding the SACRE's work into the 'bigger picture' education development plans of the Borough.

The SACRE has continued its awareness-raising campaign. Updating the 'What is the SACRE?' leaflet and disseminating it annually to Councillors, governors, teachers and newly qualified teachers has been a useful way to ensure people know the SACRE is here to support them and to monitor RE and Collective Worship in Wokingham.

'Pupils develop an increasing understanding of the way in which faith influences people's lives. For example, pupils in Year 6 think about the significance of festivals such as the Hajj to Muslims. The school's highly inclusive ethos is rooted in its Christian values.'

- Ofsted report on a Wokingham primary school.



### Represented nationally

The Wokingham SACRE always has representatives at the annual NASACRE (National Association of SACREs) AGM (annual general meeting) and conference. This year its opinions and thoughts were fed into the Commission on RE, the national exploration into RE across England and Wales.

### Teacher network meetings

Primary teachers have again been afforded a termly network meeting offering updates on both national and local initiatives in RE as well as input on aspects of RE e.g. assessing children's learning in RE in a landscape 'beyond levels'. These meetings also give opportunities for teachers to share good practice and to feed back to the SACRE on support that would be helpful. This is how the Hub Project, 'Crossing the Bridges' was born.

The Diocesan adviser is always invited to meetings to ensure that church schools are updated with information pertinent to them.

This year the primary network meetings, hosted in different schools, have continued to be well-attended, with an average of 20 teachers at each one, and 15 schools represented over the course of the year. The summer term meeting was the best attended. 14 schools attended just one network, 10 attended on 2 occasions and 8 came to all 3 meetings. The teachers who attend are enthusiastic and dedicated to improving children's RE learning in their schools. 15 schools represents 27% of Wokingham primary schools. Whilst this is encouraging, the SACRE will continue to work hard on building relationships with schools to improve attendance, and will make additional efforts to invite the 30 schools which have not attended this year to engage.

SACRE members have continued to make every effort to attend these meetings, thus building relationships with schools, gaining insight into their needs and sharing their successes and commitment.

### Primary RE Subject Leader training

Fifteen primary subject leaders new to post attended the training session in October 2016 at Shute End, run in partnership with the Reading SACRE, with very positive feedback.

### Secondary teachers

Network meetings are not considered the best means of support for secondary RE teachers. Teachers instead requested support

to fund their bi-annual training event. Every two years a Wokingham secondary school hosts an RE-specific training event as part of the Secondary Federation common INSET day in February. The SACRE was delighted to support the event in February 2017 at Waingels College, enabling teachers to benefit from high profile national speakers.

### The Pan-Berkshire joint SACRE conference 2016

The joint SACRE conference was held in September 2016 at a venue central to all six SACREs. Every SACRE committed to funding the conference. Wokingham SACRE was delighted that teachers are now being welcomed to the annual SACRE conferences, and funded additional places for them. The event brought together teachers, SACRE members, and members of faith and belief communities and was a thought-provoking and inspiring evening, launching Phase 2 of the Crossing the Bridges Project (funded by the Westhill/NASACRE Award) and looking ahead to the agreed syllabus review process.

The achievements of Phase 1 of the Project were celebrated. Teaching resources developed through the year were shared, and the hosting of school visits by places of worship was highlighted.

One of the joys of the conference was the Big Question Panel. Volunteer panel members from a range of faith and belief communities gave their perspectives on several big questions and a lively and positive dialogue ensued, which was so much enjoyed that the panel dialogue session was requested for the next year's conference.

The panel dialogue epitomised the openness and willingness of the different groups to work together to enhance RE learning. Many of these panel members are also involved in speaking in RE lessons and/or in welcoming school groups to their places of worship.

### The Pan-Berkshire SACRE Hub

The Hub came into being in December 2014 when, at the first meeting of all six Berkshire SACRE Chairs, over coffee at Rabbi Solomons' house, the commitment to share resources and expertise was evident.

A successful bid on behalf of the Hub, to the Culham St Gabriel's Trust, resulted in some funding, allowing the 'Crossing the Bridges' Project to be born. This was the first joint project of the newly formed Hub.

2016-17 saw the SACRE Hub granted funding from Westhill/NASACRE which enabled Phase 2 of the Crossing the Bridges Project to be actioned.

*'Pupils value different cultures and religions, for example, they spoke enthusiastically about a visit to a Hindu temple.'*  
- Ofsted report on a Wokingham primary school.

### 'Crossing the Bridges' Phase 2

Crossing the Bridges between school and religion/belief communities.

Crossing the Bridges between pupils' personal worlds and the worlds of religion and belief.

Crossing the Bridges in both directions.

**Phase 1** of the project resulted in some excellent and useful outcomes: common booking forms, evaluation forms and interactive teaching/learning booklets. All the materials were designed to facilitate school visits to places of worship and make such visits more meaningful in terms of the depth of RE learning achieved from them.

The interactive teaching/learning materials, taking an enquiry approach to visits, are available for teachers across the country to download free of charge from each of the Berkshire SACRE areas on each Council's website, as well as from <http://discoveryschemeofwork.com/crossing-the-bridges/>

The Pan-Berkshire SACRE Hub was eager to build on Phase 1 to create a Directory of host places of worship, with hosts trained to understand the requirements of the agreed syllabus and facilitate RE learning during visits, and schools making good use of the host places of worship and the interactive teaching materials.

**Phase 2** successfully achieved:

- A Phase 2 launch conference for SACREs and teachers (September 2016)
- An on-location training day (March 2017), teachers being taken to a range of Berkshire places of worship to try using the Crossing the Bridges teaching/learning materials (as well as increasing their own knowledge and insight)
- Two training events (November 2016) for hosts from places of worship (30+ people attending)
- The collation of the Directory (45 places of worship are already included)
- The dissemination of sample teaching/learning materials

The Pan-Berkshire SACRE Hub is excited to see the benefits of this project for pupils and teachers alike.

### The Pan-Berkshire Agreed Syllabus Review

The review began in the summer term 2017 with the first round of consultation. A questionnaire was sent to all schools and the responses collated to inform the ongoing review (to be completed Summer 2018).

Overwhelmingly, teachers requested as little change as possible, as the enquiry approach and the big questions, along with the 3Bs (Believing, Behaving, Belonging) structure, are serving them and RE well.

The main issues emerging from the first round of consultation were:

- Considering moving away from a 2-attainment target process
- Offering guidance on assessment in a 'beyond levels' landscape
- Updating the Early Years section in line with the updated national framework
- Exploring the effectiveness of the 'required religions' at each Key Stage structure

## GCSE Examination Results

The SACRE will continue to include teachers in the review and revision process and has 10+ Wokingham teachers willing to be part of a teacher focus-group to help with this process.

The pan-Berkshire Agreed Syllabus for RE requires that "All students must follow an externally accredited course leading to a qualification in 'Religious Studies' approved under Section 96 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000. There is no requirement that students must sit public examinations but following such courses provides as many as possible with an opportunity to have their learning in the statutory curriculum subject of RE accredited."

### Religious Studies GCSE outcomes 2017

	% of cohort entered	% achieving Grade A/A*	% achieving Grade C or above	Average point score
Wokingham	76.1	26.9	71.6	4.8
National	46.9	27.4	70	4.7

(unamended data from NCER Nexus - subject to change)

76.1% of the Year 11 cohort in Wokingham was entered for the Religious Studies GCSE examination in 2017, a significantly higher percentage than the 46.9% entered nationally. Of those Wokingham students entered, 26.9% achieved an A or A\* grade, very slightly lower than the national figure of 27.4%. The percentage of students in Wokingham gaining grade C or above was 71.6%, 1.6% above the national equivalent. The average point score for RS for the Wokingham cohort was 4.8, slightly above the national figure of 4.7, and in line with the Wokingham average point score for Geography and History, which was 4.9 for both subjects. This year's Wokingham results are in line with last year's outcomes for the borough, although there has been a slight dip in terms of average point score, which last year was 5.4.

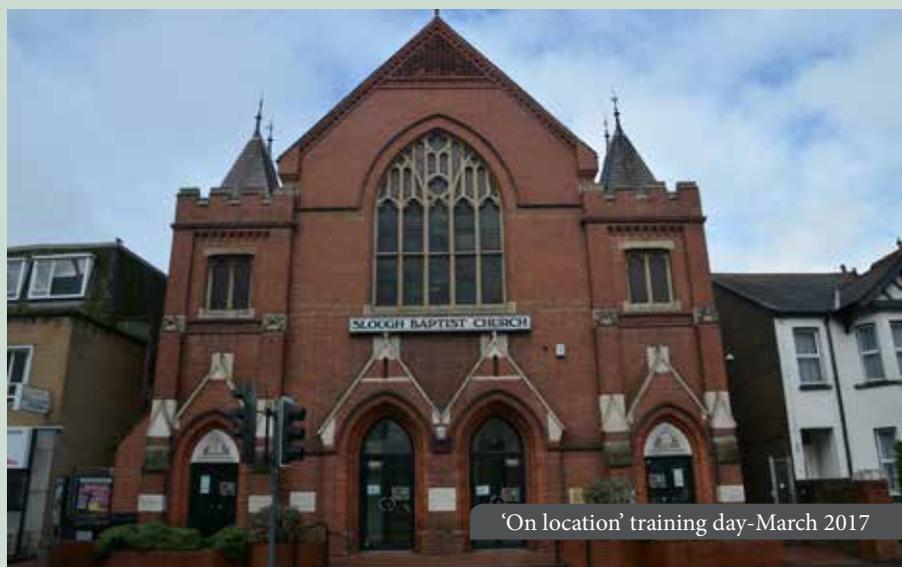
In summary, as in previous years, Wokingham schools achieved results in line with national results, and accomplished this despite entering a larger percentage of the cohort than was entered nationally.

'Pupils speak with pride about how they support each other in school and recall with confidence how they have studied different faiths and cultures.'

- Ofsted report on a Wokingham primary school.



'On location' training day-March 2017



'On location' training day-March 2017