



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

SACRE

Wokingham Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Annual Report
September 2013 - July 2014



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Foreword

The academic year 2013-2014 has seen the SACRE support successful events spearheaded by its outstanding R.E. Adviser Jan Lever. In the second year of the Revised Local R.E. Syllabus, the Network Meetings have continued to give opportunities for Primary and Secondary teachers of R.E. for sharing ideas and good practice as well as receive the latest advice on the changes and developments in the curriculum.

The Autumn Term 2013 saw Wokingham teachers enjoying a CPD day visiting places of worship in Reading, including the Mosque and Buddhist Temple. The faith hosts were informative and most welcoming. The visits generated much textual and photographic materials, which have been compiled on a CD-ROM issued to every primary school in the Borough as a resource for quality teaching.

Of particular excellence was the Secondary Schools' R.E. Conference, held on the 28th February 2014, sponsored by the Wokingham and Reading SACREs and hosted by Waingels College, with conference lead Stephen Vegh, the Head of Social Sciences. Stephen Pett, a key advisor from R.E. Today, led the major workshop on literacy, spiritual awareness, raising achievement and S.M.S.C. within R.E. There were sessions in which faith speakers spoke of their contemporary beliefs, including highly fluent students from the college, and in the afternoon a most original presentation by Gavin Tyte, the 'Beat Box Vicar'. In the feedback was the comment: 'This day has been the best C.P.D. I've ever attended'.

With such encouragement, the SACRE will seek to build on its successes in 2014-2015 together with its excellent RE Adviser.

Michael Freeman, Chairman, Wokingham SACRE



Teachers at the synagogue

2013-2014: The context

The Autumn Term 2013 marked the start of the second academic year in the lifespan of the current Pan-Berkshire agreed syllabus for Religious Education. This is a climate of change, with the introduction of the new National Curriculum in primary schools, and a changing landscape relating to assessment and the examination system.

Events on the national and global stage have brought increased attention to religion and its related conflicts, and to religion in schools.

The introduction of the government's British Values agenda has given Religious Education the opportunity to show just how it can contribute significantly to children's and young people's knowledge and understanding of themselves and others, whilst also attempting to help them grapple with the difficult questions that arise from within themselves. The recent government focus on 'character building' also affords schools the opportunity to bring RE to the foreground: this subject develops and nurtures respectful attitudes, critical thinking skills and empathy, amongst many other positive skills and qualities.

This context reinforces the important role of SACREs in supporting schools and teachers to deliver high quality RE. The Wokingham SACRE continues to be committed to developing RE across the Borough, believing this subject to have major significance to children and young people's development, both personal and academic. The SACRE has continued to appreciate the support of Wokingham Borough Council, the funding offered enabling support for schools to continue. The SACRE ensures that its yearly action plan is tailored to meet the needs of schools, and supports the continued development of the teaching of RE. The SACRE has worked hard this year to ensure schools understand their roles and responsibilities and to build strong bridges between itself and the schools it serves in order to better support them.

The SACRE has met once each term to progress this work. Its membership is consistent and it is well-served by a very dedicated Chair and Vice-Chair, as well as by its exceptional clerk and its professional RE adviser working on behalf of the Wokingham Borough Council. The SACRE continues to invite speakers to address it from organisations connected with religious education and to invite its own members to update the council on matters concerning their own faith/belief communities both locally, nationally and globally.



Teachers at the Gurdwara

The work of the SACRE in 2013-14

Awareness Campaign

The Chair of the SACRE and the RE adviser devised a 'roadshow'. This involved a series of presentations for chairs of governors, head teachers and the full Council, in order to raise awareness of the nature and work of the SACRE and to ensure a greater understanding of its relevance and of the importance and statutory nature of Religious Education.

The full support of Wokingham Borough Council enables the SACRE to communicate directly with schools through the regular 'Education News' e-newsletters and to continue to build web pages for teachers to access via the Wokingham Schools Hub.

Teacher Network Meetings

Primary teachers have been afforded a termly network meeting offering them updates on both national and local initiatives in RE such as RE's contribution to British values and the new Ofsted expectations; as well as consideration of the Church of England's latest report on RE in church schools. Meetings also focus on aspects of RE such as Holocaust Memorial Day, assessing learning etc. Secondary teachers also have a termly opportunity to meet together at an after-school meeting run jointly with Reading. In this time of change, these sessions offer the chance to discuss concerns, and share practice. The meetings provide opportunities to feed back to the SACRE on support that teachers feel would be helpful.

This year both primary and secondary network meetings have been well attended, reflecting the ongoing commitment of Wokingham teachers to continue to develop the subject in their schools.

Secondary RE Conference

February 2014 saw the first joint Wokingham/Reading secondary RE conference. Subsidised and supported by both SACREs, and with SACRE members attending as delegates and also as presenters, this was a very well-received day. It included dialogues with members of faith and belief communities and a workshop run by Reverend Gavin Tyte, the beatbox vicar. The SACREs wish to thank the RE Department at Waingels College for organising and hosting the event for colleagues.

Building on this success, the two SACREs plan to subsidise a second conference in February 2015, this time to be held at The Forest School,



The mosque



Synagogue

Wokingham, to focus on Philosophy for Children (P4C) and the teaching of moral issues, and with a keynote speech from the ex-HMI for RE, Alan Brine.

Continued Professional Development (CPD) 'on location'

By popular request, the SACREs in Wokingham and Reading organised and subsidised a teacher training experience 'on location' at places of worship in Reading in November. Teachers were taken to 5 places of worship: a Hindu temple, a Sikh gurdwara, a mosque, a church and a Buddhist Centre. This proved to be an effective way to improve teachers' knowledge about each of these religions, as well as providing them with suggested teaching activities and contacts at the places of worship. The photographs illustrating this report are from this training day. (They reflect the places visited at the request of the teachers, and do not pretend to offer a balanced representation of the principal religions in Wokingham or the religions required to be taught in the agreed syllabus.)

A second 'on location' training day has been requested by teachers for November 2014.

Teaching Resources

The photographs taken during the 'CPD on location' day, were used to produce powerpoint presentations. These were tailored to serve the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus but also give flexibility in how they can be used. These resources were disseminated to all Wokingham schools, whether they attended the development day or not.

Thus the SACRE has been able to provide cost-effective teaching resources, as requested by teachers.

RE Subject Leader Training

Responding to teachers' needs, and also mindful of Ofsted and other national reports on RE which point to a lack of training for subject leaders in RE, October 2013 saw a 2-session course offered to support teachers in Wokingham and Reading who are new to the subject leader role. It covered the roles and responsibilities of the subject leader, expectations, monitoring, curriculum planning, assessing learning etc. It was gratefully received by the teachers attending, raising their confidence to lead this subject across their schools.

The Pan-Berkshire Hub

The 2014 Annual Conference of all 6 Berkshire SACREs, held in June, focused on the possibilities which could be presented should all 6 SACREs be willing to work more closely together.

Potential advantages and concerns were discussed and the unanimous verdict was to take the idea forward, the 6 Chairs agreeing to meet to further discuss plans in the Autumn of 2014.

GCSE Examination Results: Summer 2014

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."

RE GCSE (Validated data from RAISEonline):

	% of Cohort entered	% Achieving 49 points +/Grade A/A	% Achieving 37 points +/Grade C or above	Average Point Score	APS for Other subjects	Difference between APS for RE and for other subjects
Wokingham	68.5	26	71.6	41.8	43.1	- 1.3 points
National	42.7	27.9	70	41.2	41.7	- 0.5 points

This year's examination results from secondary schools in Wokingham identify that 68.5% of the cohort were entered for a Religious Studies GCSE examination, being higher than the 42.7% national picture. Of those Wokingham students entered, 26% achieved an A or A* grade, slightly lower than the national figure of 27.9% of all candidates entered.

The percentage of students in Wokingham gaining a grade C or above was 71.6%, 1.6% higher than the national picture of 70%. The average point score for RE of the Wokingham cohort was 41.8% (41.2% nationally), comparable to the APS for other subjects of 43.1% (41.7% nationally).

In short, the data shows that Wokingham schools achieved results similar to the national results, and accomplished this despite entering a larger percentage of the cohort than is entered nationally.



The Gurdwara