

Message from the Chair

It is a pleasure for me to be able to introduce this annual report of the Bedford Borough Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) for 2020-21. The aim of this report is to update readers about the work of the members of SACRE. Our function is to advise the Local Authority (LA) on matters relating to collective worship in community schools and on religious education delivered in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus.

As last year, the Covid 19 virus has continued to cause severe disruption in our schools with examinations again cancelled and schools having to face absences of staff and students as well as coping with mass testing and the introduction of additional protective measures including masks and ventilation procedures. This meant that, as last year, we have not been able to send SACRE members into our schools to talk to Heads of RE and monitor the delivery of RE and Collective Worship in our schools. Nevertheless, Bedford SACRE have remained active in continuing to promote RE and Collective Worship in our schools and organising and hosting training sessions for school teachers based around the teachings of a number of prominent religions.

We continue to meet on a termly basis, albeit again virtually this year, and have enjoyed lively and useful discussions around the way that RE and Collective Worship can best be delivered to the children in our schools. During this year we should have met on 17th June '20 but it was cancelled due to Covid restrictions, however, we did manage to meet on the 4th November '20 but, as only 9 people attended, we were not quorate, and then met again on 9th Feb '21 with 11 members present. Discussions centred on our new Development Plan (see below).

A lot of information and suggestions for agenda items come from the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE). The organisation produces very helpful briefing papers which enable us to become aware of relevant nationally commissioned reports. Ryan Parker and myself attended this year's National Association virtual conference on 24th May. Despite the technological glitches, this was a very useful day with guest speakers, promotional stands and workshops to attend. In addition, this year we have started a termly newsletter for schools to share good practice and keep them informed of training opportunities and useful resources.

We were pleased to welcome Councillor Tim Hill to his first SACRE meeting in November 2021.

I am pleased to commend this report to you.

Councillor Jane Walker

(Chair of the Bedford SACRE)

Bedford Borough RE Examination Results in 2020

Religious Studies: Exam: GCSE

Religious Studies: Exam: A Level (A2)

Due to the Covid19 situation, there were no examinations this year at either of these levels.

Cllr Jane Walker (Chair of SACRE)

SACRE Development Plan 2021- 22

A new Development Plan has been agreed by SACRE which includes work on reviewing the agreed Syllabus 2018-2023. REToday re-launched the new syllabus at the end of March 2021 with a training session to local schools. Attendance was impressive with 44 attendees over the 3 sessions. In addition, we also were able to put on some training in February which gave an overview of teaching the syllabus and preparing for Ofsted. This session was run by Ryan Parker, RE and Christian Ethos Adviser for the Diocese of St Albans and was well attended by local RE teachers.

Training for Teachers

SACRE has also arranged, in partnership with RE Today, an extensive and on-going teacher training programme on the basis of surveys undertaken with all teachers. Training courses on various religions are offered each term, currently as virtual sessions, and an RE Local Group meets virtually each term, hosted by Ryan Parker.

Queens Park Faith Tour

Bedford Borough SACRE promote and fund the uplift costs of Queens Park Faith Tours for Bedford Borough Schools.

Each year, as part of the SACRE Development Plan, we agree to subsidise by £50 each Bedford Borough community school's visit to the Queens Park Faith Tour.

We are very fortunate to have such a well-established faith tour in the town, which promotes racial harmony, develops understanding between faiths and builds excellent community cohesion. The Queens

Park Faith Tour has been recognised as a centre of excellence, attracting a wide variety of schools from Bedford and across the Herts/Bucks/Cambs/Northants areas, where many children come from a mono-cultural area and do not have the wonderful multi faith educational facility that is on offer in Queens Park.

A tour for up to 60 children includes visits of one hour each to the Gurdwara, the Mosque and a church. The payments are divided four ways, between the 3 places of worship, and Faith in Queens Park, the overarching charity which runs Faith Tours. The cost of a tour is normally £150 but Borough Maintained schools, being subsidised by SACRE, pay just £100.

Again, due to the Covid situation, the Queen's Park Faith Tour was put on hold for schools in the Borough.

Support for Schools

Members of SACRE normally carry out school visits and hope to re-start these in 2022, Covid restrictions permitting. SACRE also promote and fund up to 5 Borough schools for 50% of the costs of RE Quality Mark accreditation

Collective Worship

In April 2021, SACRE undertook a survey in our schools to find out about the delivery of Collective Worship. Fourteen schools sent in replies to the survey and the findings show that there are differing approaches across our schools. Only one school had any requests to withdraw children from CW and none had considered applying for a Determination.

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 Jeremy Welch from Members' Services and Ian Lindsay from the School Improvement Team.

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

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Clerk to Bedford Borough SACRE

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Bedford Borough SACRE Membership as of January 2021

Group (A) representing Christian and other Major Faiths

- Rev. Chris Damp, Free Churches
- Becky Lovesey, Roman Catholic Church
- Susanne Combe, Judaism
- Virendra Soni, Hinduism
- Tirath Singh Bhavra, Sikhism
- Rubina Shaikh, Islam
- Venerable Akurula Samitha, Buddhism

Group (B) representing the Church of England

- Ryan Parker
 - David Dyson
 - Reverend Stephen Holroyd
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Group (C) representing Teachers' Associations

- Victoria Morrall, Head teachers
- Ruth Wilkes, Secondary Schools
- Rachel Francis, Special School

Group (D) representing the Local Authority (LA)

- Borough Councillor Kay Burley
- Borough Councillor Tim Hill
- Borough Councillor Jane Walker

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

- The Rev. Cassandra Howes, Co-opted
(Higher Education & Bedford Council
of Faiths)
- Dr. Graham McFarlane, Co-opted
- Rachel Gleeson, Co-opted
(Independent Schools),
- Charles Baily, Co-opted
(Bedfordshire Humanists)



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