



**WOKINGHAM  
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

# SACRE

## Annual Report

September 2015 - July 2016

## Wokingham Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

### The Chairman's Foreword

The last year in Wokingham has been an exciting year for us, with much going on, paving the way for some great work. This year we have strengthened our links with the Pan-Berkshire SACRE Hub, which in turn will allow us to develop the provision for RE across the whole of Berkshire. The Wokingham SACRE continues to be strong with wonderful and committed members who have children and RE at the very heart of all they do. Wokingham Borough Council continues to support our work, as does our RE advisor Jan Lever, who is the driving force behind our strong SACRE.

In these turbulent times domestically and internationally, we are by no means complacent and are always looking forward at ways to improve the provision of RE for the children of Wokingham. We continue to work on the Crossing the Bridges Project, developing the Pan-Berkshire Hub, supporting our primary RE colleagues with termly network meetings (which are well attended), providing funding for our secondary RE colleagues for an INSET training day, and in the not too distant future we will begin reviewing the Pan-Berkshire Locally Agreed Syllabus. We look forward with optimism and encouragement, in the knowledge that our hard work in all these projects is bearing fruit.

Stephen Vegh, Chair: Wokingham SACRE

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### 2015-2016: The context

#### RE teaching in Wokingham schools

The Autumn Term 2015 marked the start of the fifth academic year in the lifespan of the Pan-Berkshire agreed syllabus for Religious Education, the final year of implementation before the syllabus review needs to be initiated. 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. The structure and key questions of the agreed syllabus help teachers to 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 at the core of the 3 B's (Believing, Behaving, Belonging). This approach is reflected in recent developments in the national RE world, the Church of England leading the way through encouraging the teaching of 'concepts' and theological literacy through its 'Understanding Christianity' resource, launched in 2016.

In an education landscape under new government leadership and the continuing philosophy of more autonomy for schools, Religious Education, whilst statutory, sometimes struggles to maintain its rightful status and time-allowance on the curriculum. However, it is generally recognised in Wokingham schools, that as well as a rigorous academic subject, and one that serves personal development, RE is key contributor to the anti-radicalisation and community cohesion agenda, as well as to British Values and SMSC (spiritual, moral, social and cultural learning).



Pan-Berkshire SACREs conference



Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Reading



Abu Bakr Masjid and Islamic Centre, Reading

## The Wokingham SACRE

The Wokingham SACRE considers its support role in this 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. Its membership is consistent. In the autumn, the very experienced Chair, Michael Freeman, stepped back from this role whilst remaining a keen member, and the Chair passed to Stephen Vegh, an experienced Head of Faculty (Religious Studies and Philosophy) at Waingels College and keen SACRE member. The SACRE was pleased that Councillor Beth Rowland was willing to continue to serve as Vice Chair.

The SACRE has continued to appreciate the support of Wokingham Borough Council, the funding offered enabling support for teachers and schools to continue, and notes the support of Emily Waddilove (Teaching and Learning Adviser), who strongly advocates for the SACRE within the Borough.

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.

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 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 been becoming a much more culturally diverse community over the last few years, with a range of faiths and beliefs represented across the community. It also benefits from having many diverse places of worship close by in neighbouring Reading, and this year has been pleased to be a leading member of the pan-Berkshire SACRE Hub, working to give children and young people access to living religion and belief through dynamic RE, enabled by working in partnership with the other Berkshire SACREs. The SACRE Hub considers how the rich local resources offered by these places of worship and their communities could be better mobilised and co-ordinated for the benefit of RE learning across Berkshire.

This year has been very significant in strengthening the links between the six SACREs across Berkshire and the Oxford Diocese, giving rise to some very exciting and innovative work.

## The work of the SACRE in 2015-16

### 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. This enables excellent attendance at training events and network meetings. Councillors are pro-active members of the SACRE. We look forward to embedding SACRE's work into the 'bigger picture' education development plans of the Borough.

The SACRE is aware that it needs to continue its awareness-raising campaign. Updating the 'What is the SACRE?' leaflet and disseminating it 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.

### Represented nationally

The Wokingham SACRE always has representatives at the annual NASACRE (National Association of SACREs) AGM (annual general meeting) and conference.

This year it was held in London and delegates were afforded the opportunity to hear keynote presentations from the Rt Hon Baroness Butler-Sloss GBE, who had chaired the recent Commission on Religion



Reading Minster

and Belief in Public Life. She shared the findings relating most specifically to RE and Collective Worship, and the SACRE discussed these at length at its next meeting.

Professor Adam Dinham presented his work on 'A New Settlement' suggesting there might be a nationally agreed framework for RE designed by an expert panel, with local SACREs given a new role in ensuring local relevance.

The SACRE has also been kept informed as to progress with the Church of England's 'Understanding Christianity' Project and will ensure Wokingham schools have the opportunity to participate in the associated training in 2016-17.

#### Keeping up to date.

The SACRE invites people to offer presentations at SACRE meetings in order to keep up to date with developments in education nationally and locally.

Gillian Cole, Wokingham Borough Council School Improvement Officer, shared information about the role of WBC in improving schools and pupil achievement, and explained the Ofsted inspection framework, especially in relation to SMSC and the contribution of RE.

Jan Lever shared a brief presentation on her 4-step enquiry model for teaching primary RE, assisted by Lynsey Johns, RE subject leader from Gorse Ride Infant and Junior School, who showed members how this looks in the classroom by bringing along examples of children's RE work.

#### 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. developing religious literacy and tackling controversial and sensitive issues in RE.

These meetings also give opportunities to share good practice as well as to feed back to the SACRE about support that would be helpful.

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

This year the termly primary network meetings, hosted in different schools, have continued to be well-attended, with an average of 15 teachers at each one, and 24 schools

represented over the course of the year. Six schools were represented at all three meetings. The teachers who attend are enthusiastic and dedicated to improving children's RE learning in their schools. 24 schools represents 44% 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 started to attend these meetings, thus building relationships with schools, gaining insight into their needs and sharing their successes and commitment.

All primary teachers who have attended meetings or training, and all SACRE members, have been given a copy of a national publication commissioned by Oxford University, 'RE: How do I do it?', an 8-step guide to planning and delivering high quality RE in the primary school. This has been well-received and some have downloaded the new app version of the publication.

"Pupils learn about a range of religions and cultures and say that they learn that every religion is important. One pupil described how inclusive and respectful classmates were when she shared her own religious traditions with them" (Ofsted report on a Wokingham Primary School).

#### Primary RE Subject leader training

Several primary subject leaders new to the role attended the training session for them run in partnership with Reading SACRE. Each year there is a considerable turn-over in RE subject leaders in primary schools so this annual training is vital to enable them to understand the responsibilities of the role and be supported to lead the subject well.

The SACRE, in partnership with Discovery RE, provided the RE subject leader in every Wokingham Primary School with the Discovery RE Subject Leaders' Manual on USB sticks. This is an interactive resource to guide teachers through subject leadership, gaining evidence of children's learning, assessment and other aspects of the role.

"Leaders are developing a similar assessment and tracking approach for Computing, RE and Science with the eventual aim of using it for all subjects" (Ofsted report on a Wokingham Primary School).

#### Secondary teachers

Network meetings are not considered the best means of support for secondary RE teachers. Instead, secondary school heads of RE requested support to fund their bi-annual training event held as part of the Wokingham Secondary Federation common INSET day. The next event will take place at Waingels College in February 2017, and the Wokingham SACRE is delighted to be able to offer its support, thus enabling teachers to benefit from high profile national speakers.

#### Website hits for the RE and SACRE pages on the Wokingham Schools Hub website

The SACRE has updated its web pages on the Council website and at teacher meetings has publicised these as useful sources of information for teachers and SACRE members. The SACRE is encouraged by the number of teachers now using the web pages, with 282 visitors to the RE page and 253 to the SACRE page during May 2016, representing a significant increase in use of these pages. See table below.

#### The Pan-Berkshire joint SACRE conference 2016

The joint SACRE conference was held in September 2016 and will be included in next year's report, as this became a launch event for the Crossing the Bridges Project Phase 2. It brought

Page	Number of visits to the page					
	April-May 2013	Sep 2013	Jan 2014	Jun 2014	Nov 2014	May 2016
RE	34	64	87	105	86	282
SACRE	20	6	35	53	51	253
RE teaching materials	15	9	31	30	22	27
Crossing the Bridges	-	-	-	-		119
Places of worship CPD trip materials 2013	-	-	-	-	21	104
Places of worship CPD trip materials 2014	-	-	-	-	45	117
RE Trail	12	4	5	11	8	103

together teachers, SACRE members and members of faith and belief communities and was a thought-provoking and inspiring evening.

### The Pan-Berkshire SACRE Hub

The Hub came into being in December 2014 when, at the first meeting of all 6 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 which allowed the 'Crossing the Bridges' Project to be born. This was the first joint project of the newly formed Hub.

Further to that, the SACREs have succeeded in synchronising their meetings, Hub meetings being during the first half of each school term and SACRE meetings during the second half-term. Whilst this seems obvious and simple, it is not that easy to achieve and now offers 6 points of contact each year, thereby facilitating communication and joint working.

On top of this, the six SACREs, led by Wokingham, decided to pool some resources to fund a Pan-Berkshire SACRE Hub manager (Jan Lever, independent RE consultant) for 9 days a year, to lead and facilitate its work. Jan works closely with the advisers to all six SACREs and the Oxford Diocese and the Hub is rapidly becoming an effective and proactive vehicle for progressing RE and SACRE work.

### 'Crossing the Bridges' Phase 1

In planning the Crossing the Bridges project, the SACRE considered feedback from teachers requesting support with visits and visitors in RE, and data showing the number of schools organising trips to places of worship as either the main or secondary purpose of the out of school work. Before the start of the project, relatively few school trips had an RE focus.

Secondary schools	
Academic year	Number of trips with RE as the main or secondary purpose of the trip
2013-2014	8
2014-2015	13
2015-2016	12
Primary schools	
Academic year	Number of trips with RE as the main or secondary purpose of the trip
2013-2014	18
2014-2015	29
2015 - 2016	38

It is encouraging to see the increase in the number of trips with an RE purpose taking place since the start of the project in 2015.

The project is based on the notions of 'Crossing the Bridges' between school and religion/belief communities and

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

In both cases, the focus is on 'Crossing the Bridges' in both directions.



Pan-Berkshire SACREs conference



Maidenhead Synagogue



Buddha



Carey Baptist Church, Reading



Abu Bakr Masjid and Islamic Centre, Reading

**Phase 1** of the project resulted in some excellent and useful outcomes: common booking forms, evaluation forms and interactive teaching/learning booklets, all designed to a) facilitate school visits to places of worship and b) 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 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 supported to make good use of the host places of worship and the interactive teaching materials.

**Phase 2** has been made possible by the six SACREs agreeing to pool some resources to engage a 'Crossing the Bridges' Project Manager and by the Hub successfully applying for a Westhill/NASACRE Award in June 2016. The funding received from both sources will support:

- A Phase 2 launch conference for SACREs and teachers (September 2016)
- An on-location training day (March 2017), with teachers 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
- The collation of the directory
- 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.

If schools or members of religion/belief communities have information to submit to the directory, Catherine Jinkerson, who is collating the directory, can be contacted at: [catherine@jinkerson.co.uk](mailto:catherine@jinkerson.co.uk)

### GCSE Examination Results: Summer 2016

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."

	% of cohort entered	% achieving 7 points +/- Grade A/A*	% achieving 4.5 points +/- Grade C or above	Average point score
<b>Wokingham</b>	76.5	26.5	73.7	5.4
<b>National</b>	46	27.5	70.3	5.2

(unvalidated data from RAISEonline)

76.5% of the Year 11 cohort were entered for a Religious Studies GCSE examination in 2016, a significantly higher percentage than the 46% entered nationally. Of those Wokingham students entered, 26.5% achieved the equivalent of an A or A\* grade, very slightly lower than the national figure of 27.5%. The percentage of students in Wokingham gaining the equivalent of grade C or above was 73.7%, 3.4% above the national equivalent and a higher percentage than for the Wokingham cohort in the two previous years. The average point score for RE for the Wokingham cohort was 5.4, slightly above the national figure of 5.2, and above the Wokingham average point scores for Geography and History, at 5.2 and 5.1 respectively.

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