

Bexley Standing Advisory Council
on Religious Education (SACRE)

Annual Report for the academic year 2012-2013



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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1.1 CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

I am pleased to be able to introduce the Bexley SACRE Annual Report for the academic year 2012 / 2013.

With the limited resources available to us, and ever aware of the demands we sometimes place on some of our members who give their time and expertise voluntarily, a decision was taken to reduce the number of meetings each year from four to three. That said, the SACRE managed to meet on just two occasions during the year, in November 2012 and March 2013. I took the decision to cancel our meeting scheduled for July 2013 because in the preceding months a number of our members had been heavily engaged in the work of the Agreed Syllabus Conference, which is proving to be a significant and important project.

In the year in question the SACRE noted with interest the Religious Education Council of England and Wales national subject review of RE, and submitted a response to their public consultation. We were delighted to be able to review some more excellent GCSE, AS and A level results achieved by Bexley students in 2012. Whilst noting some significant changes in exam entries for the GCSE Short and GCSE Full Courses, it was in some respect pleasing to see entry numbers across the two remaining consistent. The SACRE considered that any "E. Bacc. effect" on exam entries reported by some, if not evident in Bexley in 2012, may emerge when data for the 2013 cohort was available. I am pleased to report that there appears to be no such effect, but I anticipate that more data is required before any trend can be identified.

In this report you will see that in 2013 Bexley's students continue to achieve excellent results at GCSE, AS and A Level. Every year it pleases me, on behalf of the SACRE, to be able congratulate our students on their results, and this year is no different. The Borough's RE Heads of Department and their teaching staff also merit a thank you for the excellent results they have achieved in what continues to be an uncertain time for their subject, although some recent reviews and announcements suggest stability may be forthcoming for the subject and those that teach it.

As reported previously, the Bexley Agreed Syllabus Conference is reviewing the Agreed Syllabus for RE, and in the past 12 months the work has been progressing well. I am most grateful for the expertise and wise counsel offered by all Conference members in this important project, and my thanks must go to Virginia Corbyn for her guidance in this respect.

I should also mark the sad passing of our adviser, Terry O'Dea, who did much of the work to establish and guide the Conference in its early days: Terry was a very knowledgeable and well respected colleague who will be greatly missed.

We continued with our self evaluation when time permitted, and it emerged that during consideration of the Collective Worship key area of the NASACRE Tool, the SACRE would benefit from establishing a Determination Framework. We subsequently agreed a Framework, and now consider ourselves to be “Established” in both key aspects that we have reviewed.

In a personal capacity I responded to the All Party Parliamentary Group for Religious Education call for evidence, as I remain concerned that Ofsted reports do not provide sufficient information for SACREs to assess provision of RE, in the rare event that an RE inspection will take place. The SACRE has followed this Group’s work and will discuss their first inquiry report later in 2013.

As part of our wish to keep abreast of developments, we considered the updated and re-issued Ofsted guidance and grade descriptors criteria for RE, and discussed an inspection report where the teaching of RE was assessed as Outstanding. This material was distributed to the Borough’s schools.

We were pleased to receive a number of invitations to visit and participate in a broad range of local and national events and Forums. And we welcomed a member of the team establishing the Borough’s first Free School which, we were pleased to hear, would have a religious character of Christianity, but open to people of all faiths and of no faith.

Looking ahead we will continue to monitor and, where necessary, correspond on and debate any relevant RE matters, be they of local or national relevance, and expect to be in a position to participate in the launch of a new Agreed Syllabus for Bexley, currently scheduled for Autumn 2014.

In conclusion, I extend my thanks to the SACRE members who have departed, and extend a warm welcome to our new members. I am always conscious that the SACRE could not function without the dedication and input of our members, who give their time voluntarily.



Cllr. Richard Gillespie
Chairman of Bexley SACRE

1.2 OVERVIEW

Bexley SACRE met at the Civic Offices, Bexleyheath on two occasions during the past year:

20 November 2012

14 March 2013

We are part way through a self assessment process, from which evolved a development plan to guide our work. We continue to work to that plan. We remain grateful for the work of the Agreed Syllabus Conference which is requiring some significant input and dedication from a number of our members. We established a Determination Framework, welcomed the Borough's first Free School and kept ourselves up to speed with Ofsted assessments and judgements on RE, and on other national commentaries on RE.

We were delighted once again to be able to welcome the excellent GCSE, GCE A and AS level results achieved by students in Bexley in 2012.

We continued to maintain a watching brief on developments with the English Baccalaureate and any impact thereof, and noted with interest the January and February 2013 announcements about the reform of qualifications at the end of Key Stage 4, particularly the inclusion of GCSE Religious Studies as one of the three additional subjects in the "Performance Eight" measure for schools.

An increasing concern is once again our ability to retain and maintain a stable membership, and numbers are beginning to show signs of falling once more. This places even more expectation on those that remain and who, we must not forget, give their time voluntarily. The excellent work of the Agreed Syllabus Conference is proving to be a significant drain on these voluntary resources, and is why the SACRE met on just two occasions in the period of this report.

This annual report has been signed off by the SACRE membership. It will be made available to Head Teachers, the RE department heads and RE co-ordinators in all the Borough's schools.

The report has also been added to the SACRE page on the London Borough of Bexley's website: <http://www.bexley.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=4889>

Bexley SACRE is a member of the National Association of SACRES



SECTION 2: RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND THE LOCALLY AGREED SYLLABUS

2.1 The locally Agreed Syllabus

The Bexley Agreed Syllabus is fully embedded into the local curriculum and we have no reason to believe that schools are not finding it to be a useful framework for the teaching of Religious Education in the Borough. Feedback from teachers on the SACRE indicates that the Syllabus is well known in their schools and that teachers have well established plans in schools that enable the Syllabus to be taught.

As reported last year, mindful of our statutory duty to ensure that the Syllabus is reviewed every five years, and after consulting our members, an Agreed Syllabus Conference was convened in 2012. Comprising representatives of the SACRE, the local authority and teachers who are not SACRE members, the Conference has made great strides in developing a new Syllabus.

Despite the assurance reported in the previous paragraph, as the Conference reviewed each aspect of the current Syllabus, it became clear that the document required some quite fundamental and significant revisions. This has led to a more in depth and complex project than was first envisaged. To this end, the Conference has met on five occasions in the period of this report, and four sub-groups established to review and revise individual aspects of the Syllabus have met on a number of other occasions in addition. More meetings are scheduled.

On current plans, the intention is for the statutory element of the new Syllabus to be available in hard copy and as an online resource, with the non-statutory elements predominantly web based and available via a number of media, such as Bexley Fronter etc. This approach will enable quick and efficient response to feedback and the addition of new and / or updated non-statutory material.

It is the intention that the new Syllabus is implemented in all the Borough's schools from September 2014.

2.2 Standards in RE

The SACRE's role is to monitor the quality of RE in Bexley schools and the implementation of the Bexley Agreed Syllabus.

The number of Academies in the Borough continues to grow, and as a consequence their relationship with the education authority changes. All Bexley's secondary schools are now Academies. The SACRE notes the Department for Education advice that, in accordance with their funding agreement, where an Academy has not been designated with a religious character the Academy must ensure that religious education is given to all pupils in accordance with the requirements for locally Agreed Syllabuses. The

SACRE has appropriate Academy representation to enable us to maintain good relationships.

We noted with interest the January and February 2013 announcements about the reform of qualifications at the end of Key Stage 4, particularly the inclusion of GCSE Religious Studies as one of the three additional subjects in the “Performance Eight” measure for schools.

No adverse impacts attributable to the E. Bacc. are apparent in Bexley to date, but if any arise we will investigate: we have excellent teaching of RE in the Borough and do not wish to see this marginalised and undermined. We will review the 2013 examination results later in the year but, as is mentioned later in this report, the results locally continue to be excellent.

We noted with interest the Religious Education Council of England and Wales national subject review of RE, and submitted a response to their public consultation. The SACRE will consider the review findings later in 2013.

In a personal capacity our Chairman responded to the All Party Parliamentary Group for Religious Education call for evidence, expressing a concern also held by several SACRE members, that Ofsted reports do not provide sufficient information for SACREs to assess provision of RE, in the rare event that an RE inspection will take place. The SACRE will continue to monitor this Group’s work, and will discuss their first inquiry report later in 2013.

As part of our wish to keep abreast of developments, we considered the updated and re-issued Ofsted guidance and grade descriptors criteria for RE, and discussed an inspection report where the teaching of RE was assessed as Outstanding. This material was distributed to the Borough’s schools.

2.3 Teacher training and teaching materials

We reported last year that our Making Faith Visible DVD and additional guidance on spiritual development and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development had been distributed to all Bexley’s schools, and we hope these new resources are proving valuable in the local teaching of RE.

The local authority provided a training session on the teaching of RE for newly qualified teachers in the Borough, and introduced them to the Agreed Syllabus.

2.4 RE and the English Baccalaureate

Thankfully, our own concerns, and those of others nationally, that the E. Bacc. is marginalising RE have not been borne out in Bexley. Across all four GCSE courses the overall total of candidate entry numbers remains static, although there is an emerging trend of some significant fluctuation between candidate numbers for the GCSE Full and Short Courses: the Full Course entries are now almost double those of five years ago, whilst the Short Course candidate numbers have fallen by around 50%.

We noted last year that a number of commentators had suggested that it is the Short Course that will suffer as RE becomes marginalised by the E. Bacc., but higher Full Course entries in Bexley do not suggest to us that there is cause for concern locally.

We continued to maintain a watching brief on the various campaigns and debates on this important matter. We will await with interest further developments from the All Party Parliamentary Group that has been established to focus on safeguarding the provision of RE in our schools. We look forward to considering the Religious Education Council's review of RE that is running in parallel to the review of the National Curriculum in England, and we also noted with interest the January and February 2013 announcements about the reform of qualifications at the end of Key Stage 4, particularly the inclusion of GCSE Religious Studies as one of the three additional subjects in the "Performance Eight" measure for schools.

As mentioned earlier, we have excellent teaching of RE in the Borough and do not wish to see this undermined by the E. Bacc. or by other developments in the curriculum.

2.5 Examination results

The 2013 Religious Studies examination results for Bexley, with comparison data for the previous year, are summarised in paragraph 2.5.2 below. We will discuss these in our meeting at the end of 2013.

There is a report in the next paragraph on the discussions the SACRE membership had about the 2012 results.

2.5.1 Bexley Religious Studies GCSE, AS and A Level results 2012

As we do every year, the SACRE discussed the 2012 Religious Studies GCSE, AS and A Level examination results for Bexley and England.

Noting that the 2012 data was provisional, we were delighted to be able to welcome another good year for Bexley students, and discussed some of the data for individual examinations and schools. In particular we noted another significant fluctuation in GCSE Short Course entries in Bexley, and we were pleased to see another increase in Full Course GCSE entries.

Members discussed the comments of some national organisations that the impact of the introduction of the English Baccalaureate (E. Bacc.) on GCSE entries was not yet evident, and it was clear that in Bexley there was no trend away from Religious Studies GCSE in 2012. It was suggested that any impact arising from the E. Bacc. was not likely to be evident until the 2013 data became available, as this would be representative of the first cohort for whom the E. Bacc. was an option as an alternative to the Religious Studies GCSE. The 2013 data is reviewed in the next paragraph. Members were of the opinion that significant and consistent falls in GCSE Short Course

candidates, probably with no commensurate increase in Full Course entries, would be the main effect of the E. Bacc. in the Borough. We agreed to maintain a watching brief to try and gain an early understanding of a potential effect in 2013 and beyond.

2.5.2 Bexley Religious Studies GCSE, AS and A Level results 2013¹

5,053 students in Bexley sat a Religious Studies examination in 2013. This is 412 less (i.e. 8%) than the number of candidates for 2012.

3,476 students sat the GCSE Full Course and a further 1,322 sat the Short Course GCSE. 162 students sat the AS Level exam and there were 83 entries at A Level.

There was an increase in candidates for the Full Course (up 155, or 4.7%). However, Bexley saw a significant decrease in Short Course entries, down 599 (almost one third) on 2012.

AS level entries in Bexley increased slightly by 10 to 162. Bexley's A level entries significantly increased by 36% on 2012 (although this is just 22 more candidates).

In the 2013 Full Course GCSE 98.5% of all candidates gained a pass, the same as in the previous year. 73.6% gained a pass at grade A* to C, mirroring the national pass rate.

The Short Course GCSE entry numbers continue to fluctuate year on year, although pass rates remain relatively consistent at around 60%. There is evidence to suggest that the Borough's schools might be moving from the Short Course to the Full Course. This may be welcome move, but the reasons for this apparent trend are unclear.

At AS Level the number of entries increased, and just over 85% achieved a pass: consistent with previous years, but 5% below the national pass rate.

Bexley A Level entries increased by 22 (or 36%) on 2012. The pass rate improved to 97.6%, with 59% of the candidates achieving A* to B marks.

It is worth noting that with the Bexley AS and A Level cohort being quite small, any difference in the data from one year to the next can sometimes represent a large percentage change.

Summary tables of the results for Bexley for the years 2012 and 2013 are set out below.

It is most pleasing that Bexley's students continue to achieve excellent results at GCSE, AS and A Level: our students, Heads of RE and subject teachers

¹ 2013 data is provisional

work very hard to maintain these high levels of achievement, and the SACRE is extremely grateful for this hard work and dedication.

Religious Studies examination results: Bexley, 2012 and 2013

(2013 data is provisional)

GCSE Full course					
	Entries	Passes A* - C	% passes A* - C	All passes A* - G	% all passes A* - G
2013	3476	2557	73.6	3424	98.5
2012	3321	2349	70.7	3272	98.5

GCSE Short course					
	Entries	Passes A* - C	% passes A* - C	All passes A* - G	% all passes A* - G
2013	1332	776	58.3	1275	95.7
2012	1931	1116	57.8	1862	96.4

AS Level					
	Entries	Passes A - B	% passes A - B	All passes A - E	% all passes A - E
2013	162	55	34.0	138	85.2
2012	152	57	37.5	128	84.2

A Level					
	Entries	Passes A* - B	% passes A* - B	All passes A* - E	% all passes A* - E
2013	83	49	59.0	81	97.6
2012	61	31	50.8	59	96.7

Religious Studies examination results 2013: Comparison with National* results

(2013 data is provisional)

(* England)

GCSE Full Course	Entries	% passes A* - C	% all passes A* - G
Bexley	3476	73.6	98.5
National	337700	73.6	98.5

GCSE Short Course	Entries	% passes A* - C	% all passes A* - G
Bexley	1332	58.3	95.7
National	279000	52.5	95.1

AS Level	Entries	% passes A - B	% all passes A* - E
Bexley	162	34.0	85.2
National	24311	38.1	90.1

A Level	Entries	% passes A* - B	% all passes A* - E
Bexley	83	59.0	97.6
National	13260	51.6	99.8

2.6 Complaints

No complaints about RE were received by the SACRE this year.

SECTION 3: COLLECTIVE WORSHIP AND PROVISION FOR PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Monitoring

The SACRE's role is to monitor the quality of Collective Worship in local schools.

As reported last year, and following an extensive review, the SACRE concluded that Collective Worship appeared to be inclusive, varied and of benefit to students, and that no further work was required to promote it. That view did not change in the current reporting period.

3.2 Training and advice

The local authority provided a training session on collective worship for the Borough's schools.

3.3 Determinations and complaints

No determinations were applied for, and the SACRE received no formal complaints about collective worship.

Whilst self assessing Collective Worship the SACRE agreed that it would be good practice to develop a Determination Framework. The purpose being to establish a procedure for Head Teachers to be clear on the SACRE's requirements for considering a determination request, and to also enable the SACRE to react quickly and efficiently to any such request.

It was agreed that the existence of a Framework would also ensure the SACRE was "Established" in respect of the Collective Worship key aspect of the NASACRE self assessment process.

A Determination Framework was duly agreed and implemented in March 2013.

SECTION 4: BEXLEY SACRE: WORKING ARRANGEMENTS AND LINKS WITH OTHER AGENCIES

4.1 Professional and administrative support

The SACRE was advised by local authority officer Terry O’Dea, and it is with great sadness that the SACRE learned that he had passed away in 2012 following an illness. Terry also initiated and led the work of the Agreed Syllabus Conference for a short while. He was an intelligent and greatly respected colleague whose knowledge, expertise and leadership will be greatly missed. The condolences of the SACRE and Conference were passed to his family.

Meetings of the SACRE are attended by a senior officer from the local authority’s Directorate of Education and Social Care and an officer of the Committee Services and Scrutiny team of the local authority clerks the SACRE meetings and acts as the point of contact for individual members. There is no longer a formal designated advisor to the SACRE.

The local authority has appointed to the Agreed Syllabus Conference a Consultant Adviser to lead the work on a new Syllabus.

4.2 Development of the SACRE

4.2.1 SACRE self-assessment

As reported last time the SACRE has aspirations to achieve “Advanced” in all five dimensions of the NASACRE Reporting and Evaluation Toolkit, and has now assessed itself as “Established” in two of the five dimensions.

We have a Development Plan intended to help achieve our aspirations, and will review this in 2014.

We will self-assess the remaining three sections of the Toolkit after the new Agreed Syllabus is launched in Autumn 2014 and when our meeting agendas allow.

4.2.2 SACRE training

Despite financial constraints, SACRE members are encouraged to attend national and regional events and to report back to subsequent SACRE meetings. SACRE members also discuss any available annual analysis of the previous year’s SACRE reports, and compare the national picture with the local context.

4.3 Finance

The SACRE receives no independent funding, although we are grateful to have access to a small allocation from the local authority’s curriculum

development budget should the need arise for a limited number of conference delegate fees, for example, and our NASACRE membership fee.

4.4 Membership and Constitution

It is a concern that our membership is weaker than it has been in recent years. Despite actively pursuing to fill vacancies, it is becoming increasingly difficult to do so, with a number of local and national organisations either unable to offer a nominee, or appearing unwilling to do so.

Fewer members means there is even more expectation on those that remain and who, we must not forget, give their time voluntarily. The excellent work of the Agreed Syllabus Conference is proving to be a significant drain on these voluntary resources, and is why the SACRE met on just two occasions in the period of this report.

The terms of office for all Bexley SACRE members in Groups A to C inclusive will end in May 2014, although some may be subject to renewal thereafter. Work to review membership will commence early in 2014, and the outcome will have implications for the Bexley Agreed Syllabus Conference.

The SACRE Constitution was reviewed three years ago, and there was no reason to review it again in the period of this report.

4.5 National

Bexley SACRE is a member of the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE).

The SACRE received a number of invitations to national conferences and seminars in the period of this report.

4.6 Local

Bexley SACRE works in collaboration with the local Diocesan Boards.

The CRIBS group (Christian Resources in Bexley Schools) is represented on both the SACRE and the Agreed Syllabus Conference.

The SACRE received a number of invitations to events organised by the Crayford Mosque and the Bexley Bangladeshi Women's Association. At the kind invitation of the Crayford Mosque, a SACRE meeting is scheduled to take place there later in 2013.

One meeting of the Agreed Syllabus Conference will have been hosted by a local primary school, and further meetings will take place at the school in 2013.

4.7 Community activities

The SACRE is always keen to hear about community activities and received a presentation in March 2013 from the Project Manager for Hope Community School, the Borough's first Free School scheduled to open in September 2013.

The SACRE was pleased to be advised that the school's vision is to achieve excellent outcomes for children and the local community and, as the heartbeat of the community, it will reach out to local families to increase children's aspirations. The SACRE heard that this will be achieved through underpinning the Christian values of generosity and hospitality to create community entrepreneurs. We were delighted to hear too that the school wanted children to leave with a passion for helping others, strong values and with entrepreneurial minds, and of the proposals for Community Readers to visit the family home of each prospective pupil in order to raise the level of literacy of children prior to joining the school.

APPENDIX A

THE COMPOSITION OF THE BEXLEY SACRE

The composition of the SACRE for the 2012 / 2013 academic year was as follows:

GROUP A (CHRISTIAN AND OTHER FAITHS)

Pastor Sina Akinseye	Black African Churches
Miss Tina Crowley*	Buddhism
Miss Carole Farley	Baptist Church
Miss Máire Quinn	Roman Catholic Church
Mrs Faozia Rashid	Islam
Mrs Di Sprowles	Methodist Church
Ms Sandra Teacher	Judaism (interim appointment)
Mr Paul Weston	Free Church
Mr Rathuge Wimalasekera*	Buddhism
Vacancy	Hinduism
Vacancy	Sikhism
Vacancy	

* these two members serve on a job share basis

GROUP B (CHURCH OF ENGLAND)

Mrs Catherine Kennedy
Mrs Dorothy Jones (Vice Chairman)
Mr Alex Tear
Mrs Jeannie Watts

GROUP C (TEACHERS IN THE AUTHORITY)

Ms Elysa Alton	
Ms Amy Ashford	
Ms Frances Thapen	
Mrs Marianne Chambers	until March 2013
Miss Hayley Gibbs	until August 2013
Vacancy	
Vacancy	
Vacancy	

GROUP D (THE AUTHORITY)

Councillor Ross Downing		
Councillor Richard Gillespie (Chairman)		
Councillor David Hurt		
Mr Tim Rice	Bexley School Governors (Primary)	
Councillor Harry Persaud		
Councillor Michael Tarrant		
Councillor Simon Windle		
Councillor Sandra Bauer		until May 2013
Councillor Brian Beckwith		until May 2013
Councillor Ray Sams		until May 2013

CO-OPTED MEMBERS

Mr Jay Allnutt	Humanism	
Mr Brian Rodmell	Quaker	until May 2013

SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (other than Councillor substitutes)

Dr Fazlur Rashid	Group A (Islam)
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Attendance by members during the 2012/2013 academic year was as follows:

	Possible	Actual
Pastor Sina Akinseye	2	0
Miss Tina Crowley *	2	0
Miss Carole Farley	2	1
Miss Máire Quinn	2	0
Mrs Faozia Rashid	2	1
Mrs Di Sprowles	2	1
Ms Sandra Teacher (interim appointment)	2	0
Mr Paul Weston	2	0
Mr Rathuge Wimalasekera *	2	1
* these two members serve on a job share basis		
Dr Fazlur Rashid (as substitute)	1	1
Mrs Dorothy Jones	2	2
Mrs Catherine Kennedy (maternity leave)	2	0
Mr Alex Tear	2	0
Mrs Jeannie Watts	2	1
Ms Elysa Alton	2	0
Ms Amy Ashford	2	0
Mrs Marianne Chambers	1	1
Miss Hayley Gibbs	2	0
Ms Frances Thapen	2	2
Councillor Sandra Bauer	2	2
Councillor Brian Beckwith	2	1
Councillor Ross Downing	0	0
Councillor Richard Gillespie	2	2
Councillor David Hurt	2	2
Councillor Harry Persaud	0	0
Mr Tim Rice	2	1
Councillor Michael Tarrant	0	0
Councillor Ray Sams	2	2
Councillor Simon Windle	2	2
Mr Jay Allnutt	2	0
Mr Brian Rodmell	2	1



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