

**The Merton**

**Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education**

**Annual Report for 2020 – 2021**

**June 2022**

I am pleased to send you Merton SACRE’s Annual Report for the academic year 2020-2021. Every SACRE is required to publish a report and make it available to schools and the wider public.

**Introduction and Summary**

There was no formal Chair for 2020 – 21 school year.

The Covid pandemic affected SACRE and RE teaching as it did all aspects of life. The meetings went on line and fewer members were able to attend. We struggled to recruit new members as people were wrestling with the extra burdens of the pandemic. Across the year we saw some innovation in assemblies and virtual visits to places of worship. Debate around the future direction of RE continued and Merton SACRE kept themselves aware of these debates.

# SACRE MEETINGS

Merton SACRE met three times in the school year 20-21 in November, February and July.

* Cllr Brunt was re-elected chair at the autumn meeting of SACRE however took up the role of Mayor so left SACRE. The next meeting was inquorate and in the subsequent meeting there were no nominations for chair so it was agreed that one member of each committee would agreed the agenda and minutes and a “chair for the meeting” would be agreed at each meeting. Three meetings were held during the academic year and minutes are available from the Local Authority and on the Council website.
* All meetings in 2020-21 were held on line due to social distancing rules. Attendance levels were lower for Autumn and Spring meetings at 9 and 7 (meeting was in a lockdown) However the July meeting was better attended (11 members attended).

Some of the key issues looked at this year were:

* **Membership issues.** Merton SACRE started the year with no Catholic or Buddhist representatives and no nominations from Headteacher unions. This has continued for 2 years despite efforts to recruit. The necessity of moving the meetings online had also meant that some members who struggled to access online couldn’t participate. Members were unable to attend due to illness. Merton SACRE was contacted by other SACRE re our diversity of faith and belief groups, and we gave feedback on our membership. It was agreed in the summer meeting that autumn 2021 would be an in person socially distanced meeting.
* **The impact of Covid** was discussed in all meetings with an update about effects on schools in general and RE. Bubbling of classes meant that no specialist RE teaching was possible in schools and no visitors or visits. This limited curriculum access in the autumn term. Collective worship in the traditional sense was possible with all pupils in a hall – but schools innovated with online assemblies on zoom or teams leading to class discussions. In 2021 there was a second lockdown: this affected access to the curriculum for many children. Online learning was more developed in this second lockdown but for many young primary children this was inevitably very limited. Members discussed schools’ concerns re GCSE and A level and the lack of information about what would be expected for pupils when taking exams in 2021 and how once again this was very difficult for teachers and children.
* **Faith groups innovated** to provide access to visits online. The Hindu temple was offering virtual access to discussions about Hinduism. The Synagogue developed a virtual visit film – this was shown to SACRE members and RE leads. It was seen as the gold standard of virtual offer.
* Members discussed the learning from the **Black Lives Matter** movement for RE and Meron SACRE. RE should be at the forefront of understanding difference and inclusivity, however members were concerned that there might be a lack of diversity in images and understanding of faith or belief groups. A proposal was made to go out to local teachers to see if there was interest in reviewing the syllabus for opportunities for diversity to be shown. Across the year this was raised with Headteachers and RE leads but no one came forward to lead this work unfortunately. An option for this work to be undertaken by RE today was considered and rejected by SACRE as not bespoke enough and too expensive.
* The **SACRE report** for 19-20 was received and agreed and the success of the interfaith and belief 6th form discussion project was highlighted as a great success to be repeated at some point in the future even though its impact was curtailed by lockdowns. It was agreed at a pilot of primary school interfaith discussion would be tried in one school and then SACRE would seek feedback.
* **RE coordinators** meetings were discussed – it was noted that attendance online during lockdowns had been very limited. A proposal for deep dive days at Roehampton University on curriculum areas was discussed and welcomed.
* The **Ofsted research report** on RE was discussed. It was welcomed but had the challenge of an additional aspect to RE which helps to show progression in the study of religions or belief groups. It was noted that the Agreed Syllabus didn’t cover this aspect of RE well. The group agreed that when the syllabus is reviewed this will need to be a factor.
* The national data on **SACRE funding** and support was considered. Merton SACRE seemed suitably supported and funded with a paid clerk, funding for training of teachers and LA officers in attendance. It was also noted that national only 38% of children take RE GCSE. In Merton that is 75%.

# SACRE going forward into 2021/22

* Diversity review of syllabus
* Interfaith dialogue in primary schools
* Improving support for RE leads
* Syllabus Review – outstanding from 2019/20

SACRE members intend to return to meeting in schools and faith settings. The aim of holding meetings in different education and faith or belief venues is to evidence the inter faith agreement of the SACRE: to support children of all faiths and beliefs or none to be educated about all the main local religions and belief groups. The chair and vice chair attend the NASCRE conference and have an annual meeting the Merton Director of Children Services to update on the work of Merton SACRE. <https://www.merton.gov.uk/education-and-learning/schools/services-for-schools/sacre>

**WORKING GROUPS OR SUBGROUPS**

There were no working groups or subgroup established in 2020-21

# RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AGREE SYLLABUS

**The Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education in Merton Schools – Hard Copies are available from Merton Civic Centre**

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/assets/Documents/sacre_agreed_syllabus_2017.pdf>

SACRE members noted that the syllabus is still the core of RE in Merton as most schools are not academies. Academies have been previously approached and schools have commented that they take consideration of the syllabus. No survey of use was undertaken in 2020-21.

**MERTON SACRE ADDITIONAL PUBLICATIONS**

**Directory of places of worship 2017 - Hard Copies are available from Merton Civic Centre**

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/assets/Documents/re_directory_of_places_of_worship.pdf>

# Talking about difficult things in RE

[https://www.merton.gov.uk/assets/Documents/sacre\_guidance\_talking\_about\_difficult\_things\_in\_r e.doc](https://www.merton.gov.uk/assets/Documents/sacre_guidance_talking_about_difficult_things_in_re.doc)

**Meeting the needs of Muslim Pupils in Merton schools**

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/assets/Documents/NeedsMuslimPupilsMerton.pdf>

# SACRE constitution

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/assets/Documents/merton_sacre_constitution_june_2016.doc>

**STANDARDS OF RE AND COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

There were no Ofsted inspection and no reviews of the quality of RE in 2020-21. This was a consequence of the pandemic which suspended Ofsted inspections and School Improvement colleagues were focused on supporting school through the pandemic.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES EXAMINATIONS 2020 – 21

Standards in RE

SACRE annually reviews all examinations undertaken in RE.

**GCSE and A level**

In 2021 school examinations did not take place in the same way due to Covid restrictions. The Government has published overall GCSE and A level percentages but this is not broken down by individual subjects. Therefore there is no publishable data for this years report on the number of children taking RE GCSE or A level nor how well they did.

.

# CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD) FOR TEACHERS

Penny Smith-Orr has been commissioned by the Local Authority to provide sessions for RE subject leads. Training workshops were run for RE subject leads, with two sessions run on line. Attendance was reduced in both sessions

RE subject leaders – 7/10/20 - 7

RE subject leaders – 03/02/21 – 15

These sessions were aimed at new or inexperienced leads. Teachers requested specialist content to support their confidence in teaching. The sessions focused on teaching Hinduism and Judaism including using the virtual synagogue visit from Wimbledon Synagogue. The role of the coordinator was also discussed.

# COMPLAINTS CONCERNING RE

No complaints were received under Section 23 of the Education Reform Act 1988 regarding Religious Education in Merton schools.

# COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Feedback on Collective worship was received from officers and innovation was noted in response to the pandemic.

**Determinations**

There are no determinations in Merton**.**

# GENERAL

**Links with other agencies**

Merton SACRE is a member of NASACRE and a representative attends national meetings. Full reports are given at the SACRE meetings so that all members are aware of current topics and issues. Members of SACRE are also representatives on the Merton Faith and Belief Forum and this facilitates communication between the two committees. A member of SACRE attended the NASACRE AGM meeting in Birmingham and reported back to SACRE.

**List of organisations to which the SACRE report is sent**

A copy of this report will be placed on the SACRE section of the Merton LA website and relevant officers will be informed [www.merton.gov.uk/learning/schools/standing-advisory-council-on-religious-education.htm](http://www.merton.gov.uk/learning/schools/standing-advisory-council-on-religious-education.htm)  The National Association of SACREs) NASACRE will also receive a copy.

**Contacts**

If you have any issues that you would like to raise with the Merton SACRE, please contact the Merton LA Advisor to the SACRE keith.shipman@merton.gov.uk.

**Appendix 1: SACRE Membership**

**STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)**

**MEMBERSHIP – between September 2020 and September 2021**

**Group A – Christian, Other Faiths & Beliefs**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Buddhism  | Kamontip Evans  |
| Free Churches  | *Vacancy*  |
| Hinduism  | Ms. G Maheshwaran  |
| Humanism  | John Carter  |
| Islam  | Mr. S Sheikh (Deputy Mr. M Khan)  |
| Judaism  | Mr. M Freedman  |
| Roman Catholic Church  | *Vacancy*  |
| Sikhism  | Mr. A Singh Bahra  |
| Ahmadiyya Muslim Association  | Mr. Waleed Ahmad  |

**Group B – Church of England**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| C of E  | Jane Savill  |
| C of E  | Andrew Williams  |
| C of E  | Mr. Marcus Cooper  |

**Group C – Teacher Associations**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| NAHT/SHA  | Ro Maybury |
| NASUWT  | *Vacancy*  |
| NUT  | Debra Beale  |

**Group D – Local Authority**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Conservative Group  | Cllr H Ormrod  |
| Labour Group  | Cllr M Brunt / Cllr S Kenny |
| Labour Group  | Cllr L Attawar  |

**Others**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Local Authority Adviser  | Mr. K Shipman  |
| Clerk  | Ms E Nassé  |