



The Merton Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Annual Report for 2019 – 2020

July 2021



6th Form interfaith dialogue project visit to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Centre 2020

I am pleased to send you Merton SACRE's Annual Report for the academic year 2019-2020. Every SACRE is required to publish a report and make it available to schools and the wider public. The main focus for SACRE over the last year has been:

- Reviewing feedback from schools about visits to places of worship with an emphasis on making these visits as successful as possible.
- Continuation of our efforts to broaden the membership of SACRE to include representatives of the Baha'i and Buddhist faiths. This work is ongoing as to date representatives have not been identified.
- The launch of our innovative inter faith dialogue project for 6th Formers. The project was planned to involve visits to different faith groups within the borough with an opportunity for discussion between the participant. Although the project started well with a launch event in the Council Chamber and two visits to faith groups we had to pause the programme due to the Covid pandemic. It is hoped that we will be able to relaunch the project in the 2021/22 academic year.

Merton is a unique and religiously diverse community to grow up in. Our children need to be helped to navigate this local as well as global world. In our discussions we looked at aspects of the action plan from the Prevent Security Report that apply to SACRE as mentioned in the report below. We will seek to continue to address the challenge of radicalisation and help schools to understand and celebrate the diverse faith presence in Merton.

Cllr M Brunt Chair of Merton SACRE July 2021

SACRE MEETINGS

Cllr Brunt was re-elected chair at the autumn meeting of SACRE. Three meetings were held during the academic year and minutes are available from the Local Authority and on the Council website.

The SACRE group continued to meet in places of worship around the borough. They were hosted at the Wimbledon Synagogue, St Matthew's C of E primary school and online. It was agreed that the July 20 meeting had to be held online due to the pandemic and the requirements for social distancing.

Some of the key issues looked at this year were:

- The Merton SACRE constitution was reviewed based on a request from the Southwark Diocesan Board that all three Church of England representatives should be nominated by the board. This had been custom and practice but was not stated in the constitution. Legal Advice was sought and the SACRE agreed to amend its constitution in this way from July 2020.
- SACRE discussed support for RE teachers, continuing to facilitate sessions for RE teachers at places of worship. SACRE also looked into many ways of assisting teachers who were struggling to find faith speakers to explain to GCSE students the differences between different denominations within each religion, the understanding of which is necessary in accordance with the syllabus. The Ahmadiyya Muslim community organised a process to identify speakers who can be contacted if required and go into schools. Advice was given by the Jewish representatives on how they manage their list of speakers. In addition from the 2018-19 meetings it was agreed that one session would be focused on training in response to Members' scrutiny of Prevent. These sessions were run by Equaliteach for RE leads.
- The Autumn SACRE meeting was held in St Matthew's Church of England primary school and included a presentation on the Christian ethos of the school and how that works through the running of the school as well as the curriculum.
- Efforts throughout the year took place regarding trying to recruit Buddhist, Roman Catholic and Trade Unions reps for SACRE. Unfortunately, this did not end up being successful and these posts remained vacant.
- SACRE set up and ran its first interfaith dialogue project for 6th Formers. The launch was held at the Civic Centre where a group and process was established with 6th Form volunteers from the Ursuline, Wimbledon College, RR6 and St Mark's Academy. The model for each session was a visit to a place of faith in Merton with a question-and-answer session with someone from the faith community. The building then hosted the confidential small group discussions where 6th Form students of different faith exchanged views and experiences of how they grew up or came to a faith; their doubts or reflections of faith, how it affected them in daily life. The second and third sessions were successfully held at Mitcham Parish Church and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mosque in Morden. The next 3 sessions were planned for the Shree Ghanapathy Temple, Wimbledon, the Wimbledon Synagogue and a final review meeting with SACRE members at the Civic Centre. Unfortunately due to Covid -19 restrictions none of these sessions were able to go ahead. The feedback from the young people involved was very positive and the visits and session

ran very well. Young people felt that a greater diversity of young people involved will enhance the project in the future. SACRE discussed running a similar process again when restrictions allow. The full planned programme would have been: 'Background of faiths' at Mitcham Parish Church; 'How faith shapes life' at the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mosque; 'Beliefs and doubts' at the Hindu Temple; 'Faith and contemporary issues' at the Wimbledon Synagogue; Review at the Civic Centre.

- SACRE looked at determinations regarding Collective worship and whether any local process or policy was required beyond the national. It was agreed that no additional local protocol was required.
- SACRE members discussed how it should respond to the international reaction to the tragic death of George Floyd and the subsequent Black Lives Matter movement. It was agreed that these events prompted a reminder that the Locally Agreed Syllabus was due a review, and that we should look at the syllabus afresh to see how well it promotes interfaith and intercultural understanding, and whether it maximises opportunities to enhance understanding of race and identity.
- The Local Area Designated Officer for safeguarding also attended SACRE to explain his role in relation to allegations against adults. This was felt to be helpful by SACRE members who are also community leaders for their faith or belief as they may come into contact with the LADO if allegations are made against any adults in the community.
- The SACRE annual report was agreed and submitted including a review of school Ofsted reports.

SACRE going forward into 2020/2021

- Syllabus Review.

SACRE members would like to thank all hosts for their hospitality. 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 attended the NASACRE conference and have an annual meeting with the Merton Director of Children Services to update on the work of Merton SACRE. <https://www.merton.gov.uk/education-and-learning/schools/standing-advisory-council-onreligious-education>

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

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_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

SMSC, British Values, faith, belief and culture references in school Ofsted reports inspected 19 – 20

Only five inspections were carried out due to the suspension of Ofsted school inspections as a result of the pandemic (in 2018-19, 11 inspections took place). The new letters are less detailed than some previous reports. They look at the curriculum and its impact so RE can be mentioned in principle in these letters, however in this sample of five inspections there is less reference to Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural aspects of a school, no reference to British Values and limited reference to faith, belief and culture in schools. Collectively and of course affected by the pandemic, they reduce SACRE's ability to measure the impact and quality of RE in Merton Schools.

These are direct quotations from the reports:

All Saints - retained good judgement

This is a welcoming and friendly place. Pupils enjoy coming to school because they feel safe and cared for. Pupils respect each other and have a strong sense of moral purpose.

Malmesbury - retained good judgement

Pupils celebrate the diverse nature of the school. They enjoy experiences such as International Day of Languages and visit different places of worship. Many pupils are in the choir. They perform in assemblies, in concerts and at a local old people's home.

Aragon - retained good judgement

Pupils learn about British values, developing knowledge of democracy and the rule of law through participating in the Merton children's parliament. They develop a sense of moral purpose through fundraising for charities.

Haslemere - retained good judgement

No relevant comments in the Ofsted report.

SS Peter and Paul – the letter identified that the school retained good judgement, but standards may have declined and so the school's next inspection will be a Section 5 (full) inspection

No relevant comments in the Ofsted report.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES EXAMINATIONS 2019 – 20

All results are provisional until nationally published

GCSE

In 2020 school examinations did not take place due to Covid restrictions. Pupils were finally awarded grades based on teachers' prior assessment. 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 year's report on the number of children taking RE GCSE or A level nor how well they did.

There is no evidence to assume that there was any reduction in schools entering pupils for RE courses. Equally we noted last year the introduction of Philosophy A level, however we have no information on the number of candidates or 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 three sessions run in the year. Three sessions were planned in 2019-20:

- 9th Oct.– Visit to Mitcham Parish church
- 27th Nov. – Visit to Wimbledon synagogue
- 11th Feb. – Being an RE subject leader, Ofsted and using the syllabus
- 4th March – Equaliteach – RE and British Values.

Sessions were run as after school twilights and published to SACRE members to attend.

Event Title	Date	Number of attendees
Religious Education Coordinator Network Meeting	09/10/2019	9
Religious Education Coordinator Network Meeting	27/11/2019	7
Religious Education Subject Leaders Network Meeting	11/02/2020	11
Religious Education Coordinator Network Meeting	04/03/2020	11

Penny Smith – Orr, Keith Shipman and the training lead meet termly to plan the sessions and try and improve take up and relevance. All sessions are based on delivery of the agreed syllabus. RE teachers were, as in the previous year, consulted as to what they would like to see in future sessions. Their feedback suggested that as in previous years, they would like the sessions to continue to focus on their role as coordinators and to be delivered in Merton places of worship.

COMPLAINTS CONCERNING RE

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

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

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.

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
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 2019 and September 2020****Group A – Christian, Other Faiths & Beliefs**

Buddhism	Vacancy
Free Churches	Vacancy
Hinduism	Ms. G Maheshwaran
Humanism	Ms. Audrey King
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 to February 2020, replaced by Rachel Norman 11.2.20

Group C – Teacher Associations

NAHT/SHA	Vacancy
NASUWT	Vacancy
NUT	Debra Beale

Group D – Local Authority

Conservative Group	Cllr Hayley Ormrod
Labour Group	Cllr Mike Brunt
Labour Group	Cllr L Attawar

Others

Local Authority Adviser	Mr. K Shipman
Clerk	Ms. E Nasse