



**The Merton  
Standing Advisory Council  
on  
Religious Education**

**Annual Report  
for 2022 - 2023**

**July 2024**

I am pleased to send you Merton SACRE's Annual Report for the academic year 2022-2023. 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 to increase the direction dialogue between teachers and SACRE members in the quality of RE in schools. This was very successful. It was also for SCARE to be a catalyst of activity to improve dialogue and understanding through project work in schools. Our Syllabus is popular and well used and we have been discussing in depth if it is still fit for purpose. This discussion has continued to be influenced by national debates on worldviews and local feedback from members and schools.

Our previous chair Cllr Brunt returned as he was no longer Mayor to lead us through these discussions however sadly had to stand down in the summer term.

The mayor also led a lovely goodbye to one of our longest serving SACRE members Saleem Sheik who has worked with the council and SACRE since 1971. He has represented Islam on the committee and had been vice chair. This happened in November 2023 which is outside the scope of this report but we wanted to mark his leaving with thanks in this report.

We help our meetings in places of worship to highlight the opportunities to visit as part of the curriculum but also to broaden members knowledge of the faith and belief make up of Merton. We have also visited schools to hear about the excellent work that schools are doing to inform members in our role to support quality RE advise Merton Borough.

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. This year we have continued to see the challenges of global terrorism and parallel risk in stereotyping that RE as a subject, and RE teachers in particular, do so much to challenge. We have participated in the national conversation about the role of RE that has been ongoing for the last few years. We will seek to continue to help schools to understand and celebrate the diverse faith presence in Merton.

*Ms Geetha Maheshwaran*

**Chair of Merton SACRE  
July 2024**



## SACRE MEETINGS

Cllr Brunt was re-elected chair at the autumn meeting of SACRE however had to stand down in the summer term and Geetha Maheshwaran (Hindu Representative) was elected chair and John Carter (Humanism Representative) was elected vice chair . Three meetings were held during the academic year and minutes are available from the LA and on the council website.

The SACRE group continued to meet in places of worship around the borough. They were hosted at the Buddhapadipa Buddhist Temple, the Baitful Futuh Ahmadiyya Mosque and the Wimbledon Synagogue,

The key issues debated were:

- Interfaith Dialogue between pupils and feedback to SACRE members and a wider audience. Building on the 6<sup>th</sup> form interfaith dialogue project from 2019-20 SACRE initiated a new group project bringing together 19 year 12 students from across 6 school sixth forms (St Marks Academy, Raynes Park, Rutlish, Ricards Lodge, Ursuline and Wimbledon College). The group offers the students an opportunity to visit a range of places of worship in Merton and to meet leaders of faith and belief at each. Then at each venue to students meet in small groups to discuss a theme from their belief perspective with others who may come from different faith or belief perspectives. The students visited a Church of England Church, an Ahmadiyya Mosque, a Synagogue, a Hindu Temple and a Buddhist Temple. SACRE members wanted to get direct feedback from the students themselves so the March meeting was held to coincide with the student session so that the end of the student workshop at the Ahmadiyya Mosque was the start of the SACRE meeting and members were able to discuss in depth the students feedback on their experiences so far. This led to an extremely rich discussion with the students and across SACRE members when the students had left for the tour of the Mosque. All members were extremely positive about how they had wanted to support secondary school RE more and they felt that this project which was well supported by SACRE members offering their places of worship and time to meet students was of great benefit. Feedback was taken at the end of the year to develop the program. Based in student feedback Buddhism was added to this year's sessions. Feedback was universally positive from students although timing of sessions was difficult with work experience, exams and course work demands. The students requested that Humanism be added in 2023-24.



Sacre Members hearing directly from 6<sup>th</sup> form interfaith dialogue group at the Ahmadiyya Mosque, Morden





6<sup>th</sup> Form interfaith dialogue groups at the Buddhist Temple, Ahmadiyya Mosque, Wimbledon Synagogue, Hindu Temple and St Peter and Paul Church.

Abbotsbury Primary school inspired by the work of the 6<sup>th</sup> form project and a conference on pupil voice set up a year 6 project on Faith Ambassadors. These pupils from a wide variety of faiths have decided collectively on their roll and lead assemblies and displays across the school so that all children from all faiths feel included in their school. The LA lead for SACRE met the pupils who were confident and passionate about their roles. SACRE members wanted others schools to be aware of this excellent project so the pupil group were interviewed by the LA lead live on line as part the whole borough Black Lives Matter and Racial Equality Schools forum. This presentation was very well received.

- SACRE members continued their focus on the quality of RE in Merton schools. They looked at: the hours of RE per secondary schools; they heard feedback from schools on how for interfaith week all adults in a school including catering staff were involved; they discussed which academies were using the Merton Agree syllabus and were interested at different schools in the same Academy chain may make different decisions. They also heard feedback on the attendance at and input around the RE leads sessions run by the local authority.
- SACRE also discussed the Agreed Syllabus at each session. The Syllabus should be renewed or refreshed as it is out of time. The national discussion on how to incorporate or completely re write the syllabus using worldviews was debated. It was noted that Merton Syllabus is more and in-depth scheme of work than other syllabi elsewhere. This was a deliberate decision by previous SACRE as so few Primary schools have trained and qualified RE teachers and members wanted to support local teachers with a detailed syllabus but also one that they felt represented accurately the faith and belief traditions locally. A survey was devised to hear local teacher views on the syllabus and any changes that they felt were needed. The RE leads session was used to seek feedback from schools and an online survey form was sent out to all schools. 14 schools completed it out of 54. SACRE members agreed that the survey had raised awareness of the syllabus with headteachers as it had been launched in two all headteacher meetings. Findings from the review were discussed in depth however decisions on next steps were left to the Autumn 2023 meeting to allow members time to consider detailed the contents of the survey feedback. The discussion was informed by members attendance at NASCRE conference and feedback to members on key points from the discussions.

A word cloud of the key word feedback on the Merton Agreed Syllabus



- SACRE members are also committed to their own learning about faith and belief as an example to the RE community. To that end as part of SACRE meetings members had a guided tour of the Buddhist Temple and a fascinating discussion on Buddhist traditions. They also organized for a teacher session on Judaism and timed their own meeting so

that the national speaker who is the Education officer from the Jewish Board of Deputies could attend a SACRE meeting and lead an in depth discussion on diversity within Judaism. This session was held at the Wimbledon Synagogue and was very well received.

### **SACRE going forward into 2023/24**

- Responding to the schools survey and next steps with the syllabus
- Developing the 6<sup>th</sup> form interfaith group
- Seeking feedback from schools on the quality of RE by visiting a secondary school and hearing feedback from the RE department.

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 NASCRE conference and have an annual meeting the Merton Director of Children Services to update on the work of Merton SACRE.

[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)

## **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](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](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](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](https://www.merton.gov.uk/assets/Documents/merton_sacre_constitution_june_2016.doc)



## **STANDARDS**

### **SMSC, British Values, faith and culture references in school Ofsted reports inspected 22 – 23**

These are direct quotations from the school Ofsted reports.

Wimbledon Park Primary School

Outstanding

Staff encourage pupils to understand their responsibilities as productive citizens of the world. Through weekly assemblies and in lessons, pupils are taught about different cultures and communities. They learn about and celebrate the differences in all people.

Park Primary School

Outstanding

Pupils regularly visit museums, galleries, theatres and places of worship

Hatfeild Primary School

Requires Improvement

Pupils are helped to understand how families can be different in modern Britain. They are especially proud of how inclusive their school is. Pupils are welcoming and friendly. They celebrate each other's differences.

Harris Academy Wimbledon

Outstanding

Pupils celebrate the diversity of their school. They told inspectors that everyone is treated fairly and equally.

The Priory CE Primary School

Good

The curriculum helps pupils to understand the importance of topics such as equality and diversity.

Dundonald Primary School

Good

Pupils respect and celebrate diversity in school. They also learn about these ideas through the curriculum.

Gorringe Park Primary School

Good

Pupils enjoy learning about people who are different from them. Promoting equality and celebrating diversity are threads that run through day-to-day school life.

### Hillcross Primary School

Ensuring that everyone feels valued and respected is taken very seriously here. Leaders are ambitious for all pupils to enjoy high levels of success. Pupils who need additional help are supported with kindness and understanding by adults and their peers alike. Pupils are considerate and treat their peers with sensitivity. Pupils cooperate exceptionally well together.

### SS Peter & Paul RC Primary School

Good

### St Mark's Academy

Good

Pupils' learning is supported by a wide range of outings and extra-curricular activities aimed at building their confidence, teamwork skills and positive attitudes. Leaders organise educational visits for all pupils, including to Southwark Cathedral,

### Cricket Green Special School

Outstanding

### Abbotsbury Primary School

Good

Leaders provide many opportunities for pupils' wider personal development. They offer a wide range of activities to enrich pupils' education. These include visits to various places of worship, such as a local mosque and synagogue. Pupils are taught about different religions, traditions, and festivals.

### Wimbledon College

Good

### St Matthew's Primary School

Good

Pupils discuss topical and moral issues regularly.

### Sacred Heart RC Primary School

Good

Leaders promote pupils' spiritual development very well. Staff teach pupils about the importance of caring about everyone. For instance, pupils are taught about different cultural celebrations, festivals and religions.

### Stanford Primary School

Requires Improvement

### St John Fisher RC Primary School

Good

St Thomas of Canterbury RC School

Good

Pupils are taught about the importance of treating everyone equally and with respect.

Liberty Primary School

Good

Pupils recognise and celebrate their rich and diverse community within an exceptionally strong culture of acceptance and respect. There are ample opportunities for pupils to develop their character, for example by taking on leadership responsibilities and raising money for charity. They regularly participate in community projects that bring pupils and their families together, such as the summer fair, and cultural and religious celebrations.

The Sherwood School

Good

Leaders foster a supportive and an inclusive school culture by setting up pupil leadership teams. For example, pupil ambassadors work together to educate others about their rights. This creates an environment that values and promotes respect for each pupil.

## RELIGIOUS STUDIES EXAMINATIONS 2022 - 23

### GCSE

In 2023 there were 1205 entries for RE GCSE in Merton, a rise in 28 from the previous year. 70% of year 11 pupils took at a GCSE in RE in Merton Secondary Schools this is a fall from 87% in 2021-22. It should be noted that in most Merton secondary schools are entering nearly all their pupils, not just those who have opted for RE.

The GCSE are graded 9-1 and Merton was above the national average for all higher grades 9-6. Top grades of 8 and 9 fell in Merton and nationally.

Merton's A level results for Philosophy and RE results are small in number so percentages are harder to compare in some grades we are higher but at E grade in both we are above which is not as strong. A level entries have risen however from 25 to 31.

### GCSE

Religious Education	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	U
Number of Candidates	98	155	173	231	154	112	147	90	38	7
Merton %	8.1%	12.9%	14.4%	19.2%	12.8%	9.3%	12.2%	7.5%	3.2%	0.6%
National %	7.7%	10.7%	12.1%	16.7%	14.0%	10.9%	13.8%	8.0%	4.4%	1.6%

### A Level

Logic/Philosophy	*	A	B	C	D	E
Number of Candidates	0	2	5	3	3	3
Merton %	0.0%	12.5%	31.3%	18.8%	18.8%	18.8%

National %	4.2%	13.5%	27.8%	24.8%	16.3%	9.6%
<b>Religious Education</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>
Number of Candidates	1	4	5	2	1	2
Merton %	6.7%	26.7%	33.3%	13.3%	6.7%	13.3%
National %	4.3%	16.8%	29.3%	25.7%	14.9%	6.7%

## 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. Three sessions were run in the year. These covered elements of the syllabus and the role of lead for RE in school. The feedback on the sessions was very positive but numbers in attendance were quite low at two sessions 14, 5 and 7 respectively. More staff booked on but were unable to attend on the day.

## COMPLAINTS CONCERNING RE

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

## FUNDING FOR MERTON SACRE

Merton SACRE meeting is supported by a paid Clerk and a local authority officer whose time is given in kind.

NASCRE conference fees are also paid for and transport if needed.

Annually the LA contribution is £2000

In addition the LA has led the 6<sup>th</sup> form interfaith project. SACRE members contribute by volunteering to run each session and teachers attend. The LA preparation and funding in kind equates to £1080.

LA funds teacher sessions for RE leads cost £600

Total spend £3680.

This figure has been constant for the last few years.

## 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. 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](mailto:keith.shipman@merton.gov.uk).

**Appendix 1: SACRE Membership****STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)****MEMBERSHIP – between September 2022 and September 2023****Group A – Christian, Other Faiths & Beliefs**

Buddhism	Kamontip Evans
Free Churches	<i>Vacancy</i>
Hinduism	Ms. G Maheshwaran
Humanism	John Carter
Islam	Mr. S Sheikh
Judaism	Mr. M Freedman
Roman Catholic Church	<i>Vacancy</i>
Sikhism	Mr. A Singh Bahra
Ahmadiyya Muslim Association	Mr. Waleed Ahmad

**Group B – Church of England**

C of E	Mrs Jane Savill
C of E	Rev Andrew Williams
C of E	Ms Rachael Norman

**Group C – Teacher Associations**

NAHT/SHA	Ro Maybury
NASUWT	<i>Vacancy</i>
NEU	Debra Beale

**Group D – Local Authority**

Liberal Democrat Group	Cllr K Dresselaers
Labour Group	Cllr Usaama Kaweesa
Labour Group	Cllr L Attawar

**Others**

Co-opted member	Mr. D Kechagias
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Local Authority Adviser	Mr. K Shipman
Clerk	Ms A Oliver