



Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Date Thursday 7 November 2024

Time 1.30 pm

Venue Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham

Business

Part A

**Items during which the Press and Public are welcome to attend.
Members of the Public can ask questions with the Chair's
agreement.**

1. Introductions, Welcome and Apologies
2. Minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2023 (Pages 3 - 8)
3. Declarations of interest, if any
4. Matters Arising
5. Chairs Comments
6. Election of Vice Chair
7. Evaluation of the Durham Agreed Syllabus (Pages 9 - 14)
8. Establishment of an Agreed Syllabus Conference (Pages 15 - 16)
9. Education Durham Report to SACRE (Pages 17 - 20)
10. SACRE Membership Review
11. Date of the next meeting
12. Any other business
13. Any resolution relating to the exclusion of the public during the discussion of items containing exempt information

Helen Bradley

Director of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall
Durham
30 October 2024

To: **The Members of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education**

1. Church of England

Canon L Burton, N Dodd, K Passmore, H Tait and C Weir

2. Other Religious Denominations and Faiths

S Baker	- Roman Catholic
L Cozens	- Salvation Army
F Johnson	- Methodist Church
Bhakti Rasa Dasa	- Hinduism
Pastor D Russon	- Assemblies of God
C Singh	- Sikhism
C Spencer	- Bahá'í Faith
M Turner	- Islam
D Van der Velde	- Judaism
S Walker	- Humanist
S Webb	- Quakers

3. Teachers Associations

P Bray	- RE Curriculum Group
E Downing	- NEU
A Hartley	- NASUWT
V Mitchell	- NEU
P Welch	- NEU

4. County Council Representatives

Councillors D Haney, S Townsend, M Walton and M Wilson

5. Co-opted Member

M Dixon

Local Authority Education Advisor

S Blakeman

Contact: Paula Nicholson

Tel: 03000 269710

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) held in Committee Room 1A , County Hall, Durham on Thursday 9 November 2023 at 3.00 pm

Present:

P Welch (Chair) In the Chair

Church of England

Canon L Burton, N Dodd, K Passmore and C Weir

Other Religious Denominations and Faiths

S Baker	- Roman Catholic
F Johnson	- Methodist Church
C Spencer	- Bahá'í Faith
M Turner	- Islam
D Van der Velde	- Judaism
S Walker	- Humanist

County Council Representatives

Councillors D Haney, M Walton and M Wilson

Local Authority Education Advisor

S Blakeman

1 Introductions, Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked Members to introduce themselves.

Apologies for absence were received from V Bain, B Dunn, M Dixon, W Gray, A Hartley, S Lupton, and H Tait.

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to minute No. 7, paragraph 4, the word 'meet' replaced with 'meeting'.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations on interest.

4 Matters Arising

C Spencer asked that teachers be advised to contact SACRE Members if they required a speaker from a particular faith group.

In response to a question from F Johnson, the Senior Professional Learning Advisor indicated that there were no scheduled launches of the Agreed Syllabus planned but there would be a re-launch of the next Agreed Syllabus in 2025 which Members of SACRE would be invited to attend.

D Van der Velde advised Members that she used Microsoft Teams or Zoom to deliver talks on Judaism. She continued by referring to a short video that had been produced by International Durham, Durham County Council that could be accessed on YouTube and was entitled 'Judaism in the North East England' that was produced for Durham Schools.

Members were advised that videos had also been produced for Diwali and Islam.

Members asked for the links to the videos to be circulated to SACRE Members so that they could be shared with school hubs and networks.

In response to a question from Canon L Burton the Senior Professional Learning Advisor indicated that there would be a presentation from a secondary school on how the Agreed Syllabus was brought to life in a secondary classroom at the next SACRE meeting.

5 Chairs Comments

The Chair indicated that the school where he worked were expecting an Ofsted inspection and he had heard that Religious Education could be one of the subjects to be inspected for a Deep Dive. He commented that preparing for the inspection had created a lot of work and was keeping him busy.

He then wished to convey his thanks to Phil Hodgson, Education Durham, who had recently provided professional support to SACRE but retired from the authority at the end of August 2023.

He continued by referring to SACRE Membership and indicated that he had received the resignation of V Bain who was representing the NEU and he had also received correspondence from the RE Curriculum Group representatives expressing their desire to resign. He had asked both colleagues to rethink their resignation and indicated that if they still wished to resign then they would look to appoint new representatives to the RE Curriculum Group. He commented that this may be linked to the timing of the SACRE meetings, and this may need to be reviewed at a later date.

He then read out the summary of an article in the Daily Telegraph on 17 September 2023, around pupils receiving a tokenistic Religious Education, warn cross-party MPs and peers.

He continued by raising his concerns about the lack of trainees coming through to Religious Education and provided examples of what was happening in the SCITT linked to the Academy Trust, where he worked, in particular that they received no applications for Religious Education vacancies for a number of years and stated that SACRE should be concerned.

The Chair then referred to the RE Hub and asked K Passmore for an update who provided Members with an update and indicated that the Hub launched in August 2023, and they already had 120 local groups registered. She indicated that she was creating a presentation for teacher networks, and she was happy to share this with Durham SACRE for circulation.

Members discussed the Hub and the issues around the lack of trainees for Religious Education, in particular for secondary schools.

6 Revised SACRE Constitution

SACRE considered the report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services that provided a new constitution which reflected the amended membership of Committee A (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

An alteration to the SACRE constitution can only be approved by Cabinet. At the meeting held on 14 December 2022 Cabinet approved a request made by the Director of Children and Young People on behalf of SACRE to alter their constitution to enable Humanist representation.

K Clayton, Legal Manager was in attendance to present the report and answer any questions from Members.

Resolved: The Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education noted the amended Constitution which included a representative of the Humanist non-religious worldview as a full member, alongside denominations and religions currently forming Committee A.

7 SACRE Medium and Long-Term Planning

The Chair referred to the completion of the NASACRE evaluation process which SACRE has been engaged with over previous meetings including a SWOT analysis.

Following a discussion on the medium and longer term planning the Chair agreed to carry out some further work on the analysis and pull together potential priorities for SACRE to be presented at the next meeting.

8 Education Durham Report to SACRE

The Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education considered a report of S Blakeman, Senior Advisor for Education Durham that provided a summary of the professional development and networking opportunities available to RE leaders and teachers, observations from Ofsted inspections and training opportunities that had been shared with the advisory team. The report also provided details of the Farmington Scholarship for leaders and teachers (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

S Blakeman, Senior Advisor for Education Durham was in attendance to present the report and answer any questions from Members.

Members advised that C Robson had been Head of RE at Framwellgate Comprehensive School and not Durham Johnston Comprehensive School as indicated in the report.

Canon L Burton raised concerns around the attendance at RE subject leader network meetings and the future of these networks.

The Senior Advisor for Education Durham indicated that low attendance at secondary network meetings were across all subjects and understood Members concerns and wanted to continue offering the opportunities to attend networks.

The Chair indicated that Academies have their own networks and commented that it was difficult for colleagues to get time out from teaching.

Members discussed the network meetings that were held across other authorities, in particular how often they were held and if they were held in person or virtually and the topics covered.

Resolved: That the contents of the report be noted.

9 Working Group Report on Religion and Worldviews

The Chair asked for volunteers to lead the Working Group on Religion and Worldviews.

Members discussed the Working Group and agreed to pause this work and pick it up at a later date.

10 Community Cohesion

C Spencer advised Members of a County Durham Faith Network taking place on Monday 13 November 2023 at 6.00 pm at the Oriental Museum. She asked Members to contact her if they wished to attend the event.

11 Date of the next meeting

The next meeting of SACRE was scheduled to be held on 7 March 2024 at 3.00 pm.

12 Any other business

The Local Authority Education Advisor provided Members with details of the new Regional Advisor for Jigsaw RE in the North East.

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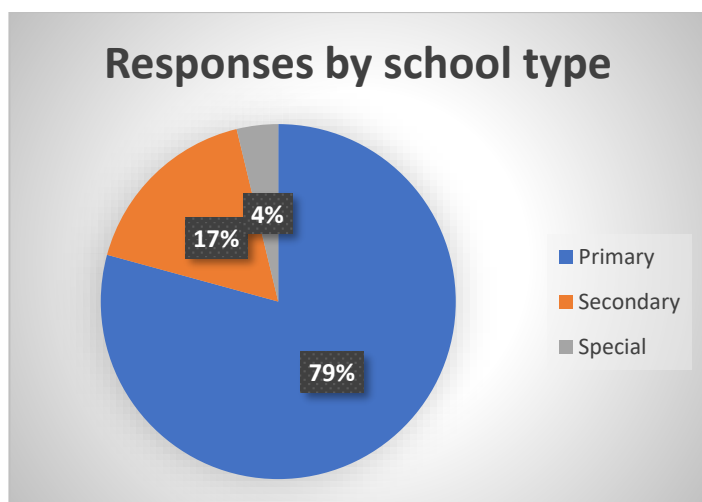
RE Agreed Syllabus review 2024

In the summer term 2024, we surveyed RE subject leaders in primary, secondary and special schools to establish their views on the Agreed Syllabus. The purpose of this was to build a picture around the current impact of the syllabus as we approach the review period.

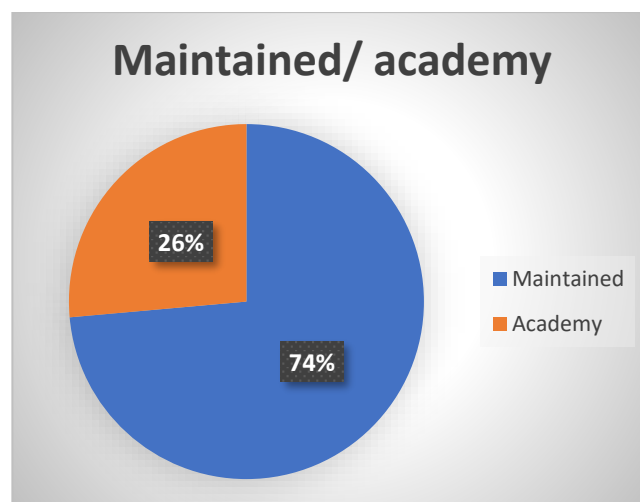
The survey was made available electronically and was shared in network meetings and via our Schools Portal, which is accessible to every school in County Durham. It was also shared with trust leaders for distribution across their schools.

The following pages outline the qualitative and quantitative responses received from the 53 leaders that shared their views.

Statistical overview of respondents



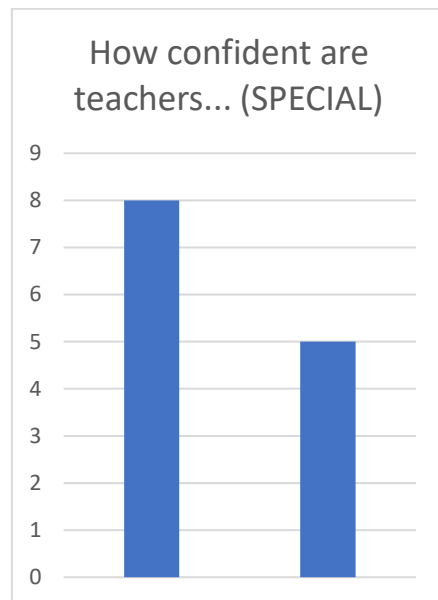
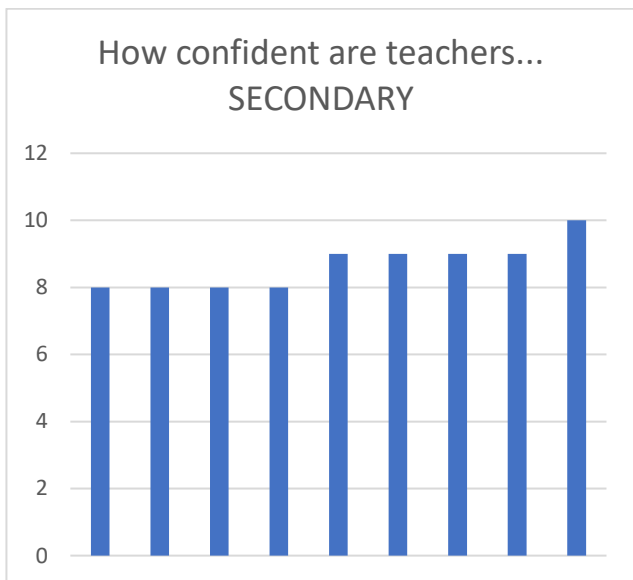
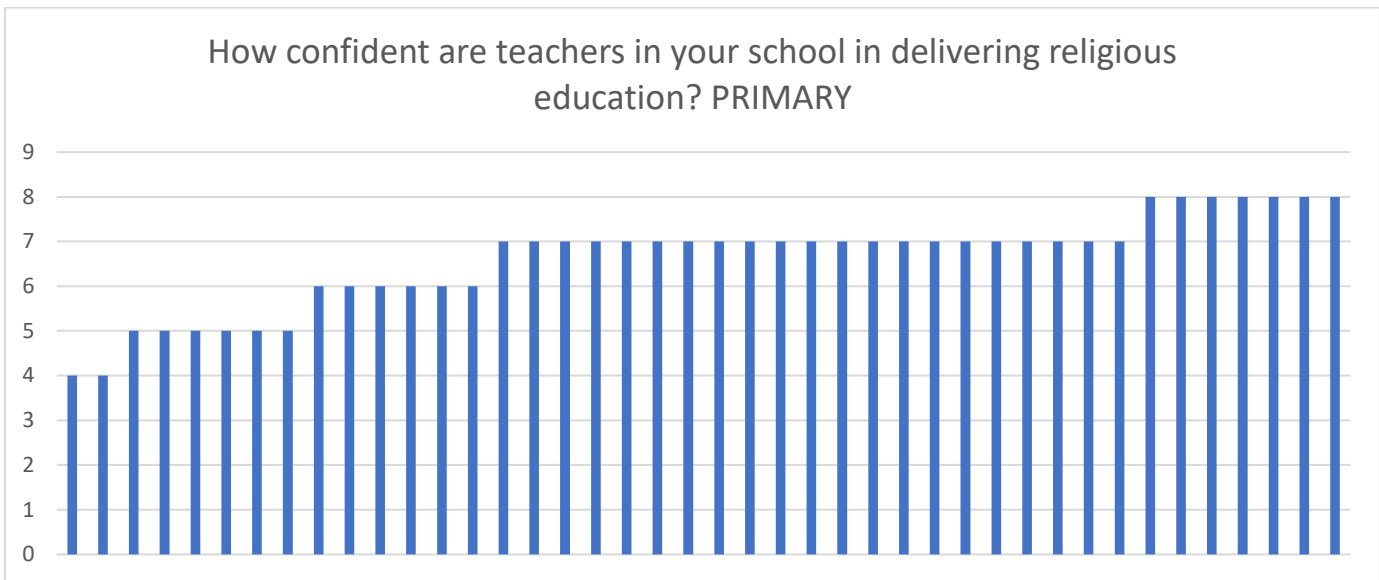
The majority of responses came from primary schools and the least from special schools, which is reflective of the breakdown of primary, secondary and special schools across the county.



The largest proportion of responses came from maintained schools as opposed to academies. Of the academies responding, 5 are primaries and 9 secondaries. Both special schools are maintained.

Confidence ratings

We asked leaders how confident they feel the teachers in their schools are in delivering RE, on a scale of 1-10 with 1 being very unconfident and 10 being very confident. Primary responses ranged from 4 to 9, with an average response of 6.9. Secondary responses ranged from 5 to 10, with an average response of 8. There were only two special school responses so we need to be cautious about drawing conclusions from this data, but the two responses were 5 and 8, with an average of 7.



Leaders had the opportunity to share their reasons for their confidence ratings. Looking at the lowest and the highest (4-5 and 9-10), comments are outlined below..

Lower confidence rating (4 or 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of resources if we can't attend CPD/ not enough CPD x2 Staff changes Moving to Kapow to support teaching Lack of subject knowledge x2 Lack of curriculum time x2 No subject specialist (secondary)
High confidence rating (9-10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CPD x3 Length of time leading the subject Experience Subject knowledge x2 Two specialists in the team Previous experience supporting the writing of the current syllabus

Staffing, subject knowledge and access to CPD feature in both lists, suggesting these significantly impact upon the confidence levels of leaders

What is working well?

We asked leaders to share what they feel is working well with the Agreed Syllabus. There were a range of responses as outlined below, with some clear commonalities around exemplar plans, unit questions and progression.

- Exemplar plans x18
- Suggested questions x15
- Progression/ coverage x11
- Diversity unit x6
- Core religions x4
- Christmas and Easter units/ progression/ thematic approach of these x5

Respondents also commented on the references to assessment, the programmes of study helping to develop core knowledge, critical thinking, personal reflection, knowledge and understanding, flexibility to adapt plans around the needs of each school and the benefit of having networks to share ideas.

What could be included to improve the syllabus?

KS1: Five people suggested including Islam in KS1 (1 suggested moving Buddhism up to KS2); 2 mentioned a “wider range of religions” in KS1 and making it more ‘age appropriate’.

KS2: Two commented that Y4 could include more diversity of religions as it is “very Christian-based”. Background knowledge for Y4 – “the curriculum assumes teachers have a strong underpinning knowledge of all of the branches and practices within Christianity.” 3 respondents commented on wanting to better understand denominations.

‘We find diversity in the local area a little difficult’

“The Y6 bridging unit is challenging for the children: they don’t have the thinking skills to access it properly” / “Year 6 units don’t engage or oldest pupils in the same way that others do.”

The unit on Bede is very difficult to resource.

KS3: Support with assessment (assessment mentioned 9 times across all responses)

“Would like more depth around non-religious world-views”

KS4: “Strengthening of the KS4 core offer, tightening up on new terminology, different types of disciplinary knowledge in RE.”

Planning and resourcing

Plans for topics where MTPs are not available – mentioned 8x

“Need the unit planning for Judaism and Islam to support all staff” x3

More resources available; lessons to pick up and go were mentioned 3x

“More detail for how to teach each unit question / there are gaps in the unit plans which my teachers have struggled with starting a unit from scratch.”

“Lesson titles for schemes of work to aid planning and preparation”

“More power points and video clips”

“Example activities, task design examples to highlight ways to ensure critical thinking and personal reflection”

Miscellaneous

- A focus on SEND/ differentiation
- More multi-faith learning and comparisons/ Room within the ‘6 questions’ for each topic to make links/ comparisons between religions
- Some of the units have a lot to cover

Core religions

Considering varying school contexts across the region, we asked leaders to share which core religions should be included in each key stage.

In the Early Years and Primary schools, leaders were keen to continue with coverage of Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism. 25 mentioned also looking at Islam, 12 of which felt this is important for children in KS1. Focusing on KS1, two respondents felt that Buddhism is quite tricky for this age group of children and wondered if it might be best approached as a thematic unit, building on Early Years and leading into a Buddhism topic in KS2. One respondent felt it would be helpful to focus more on the different denominations of Christianity, commenting that they have had a large intake of Nigerian children to their school, who attend a Pentecostal church.

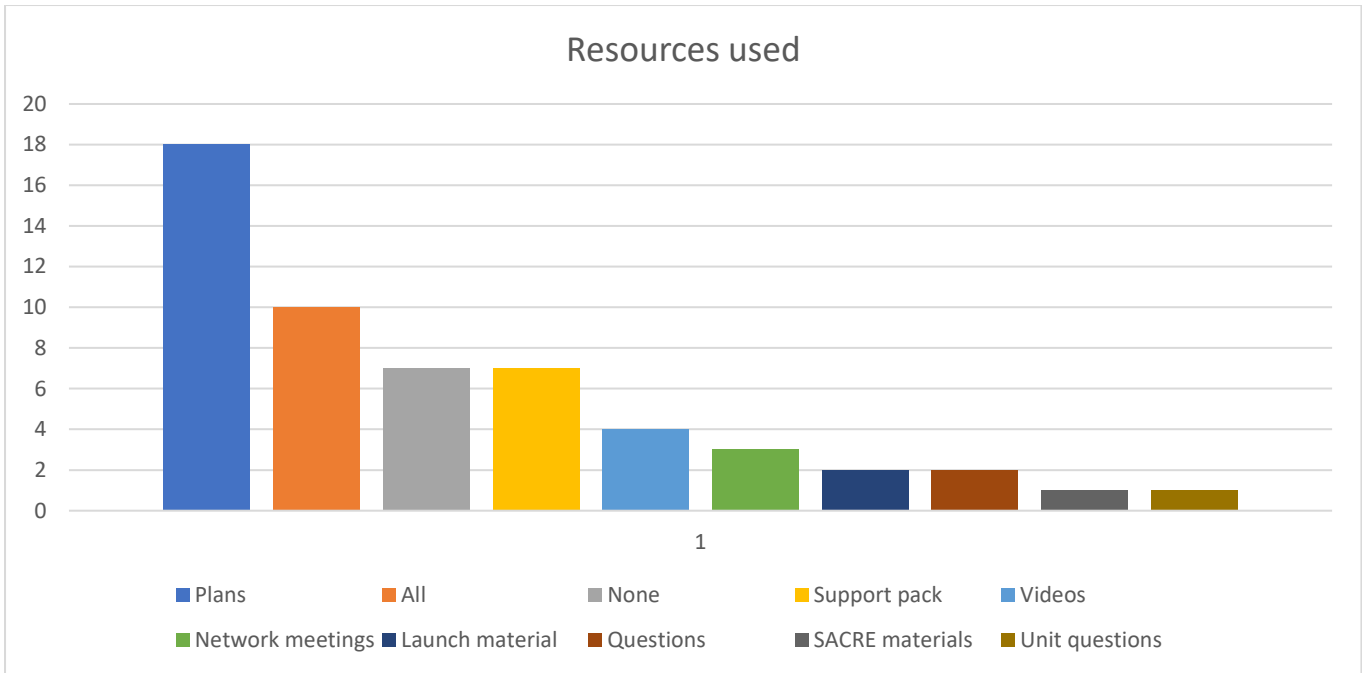
Responses at KS3/4 generally reflected the current Agreed Syllabus, with all bar 1 respondent mentioning Christianity, Islam and Sikhism. Two respondents mentioned wanting to cover Judaism and one also mentioned Buddhism and Hinduism. One school made the suggestion that Christianity and Islam should be core religions with schools being free to select a third religion.

The two special school respondents mentioned covering Islam (including one that suggested Islam should be covered in KS1). Judaism was also mentioned.

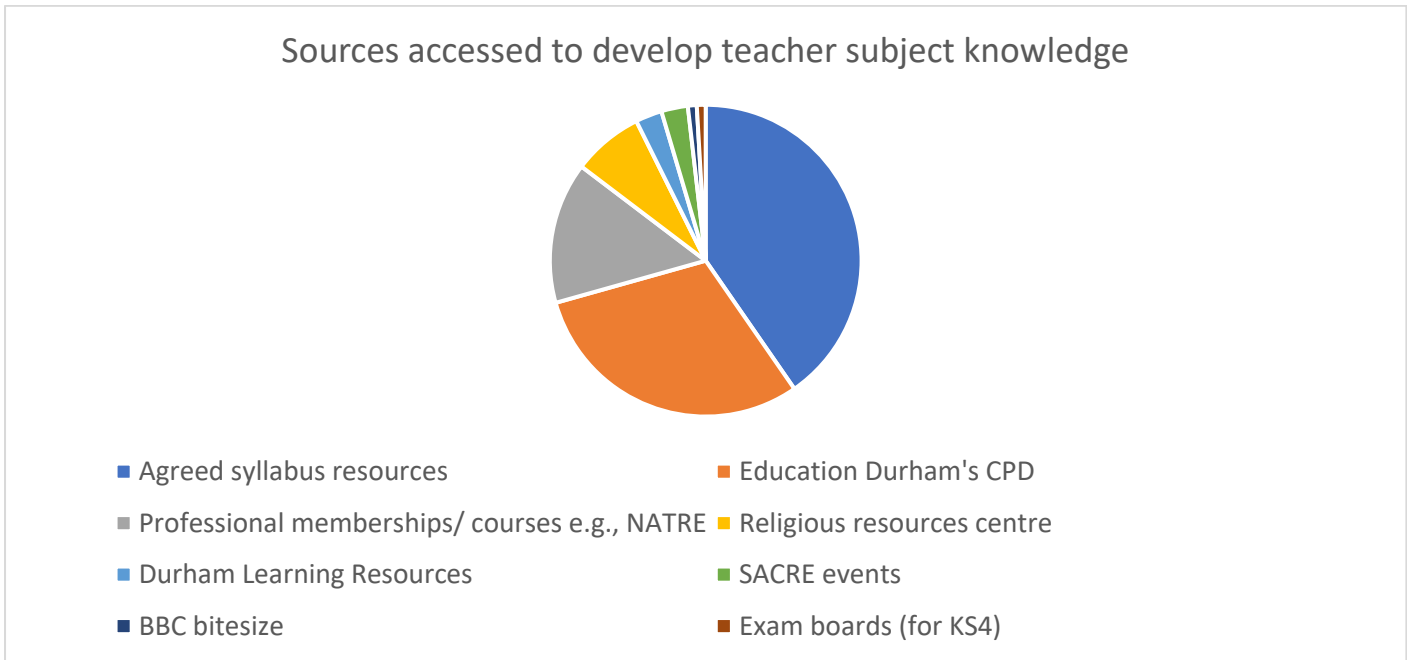
7 respondents shared that they are happy with the current religions, as set out in the Agreed Syllabus 2020.

Which of the support materials accompanying the syllabus have you used?

We asked leaders which of the support materials they have used. Please see overleaf. Plans were the most popular response, followed by ‘all’. As some leaders wouldn’t have been in post when the Syllabus was last reviewed, I feel we would need to ask a supplementary question to establish what leaders and teachers would find most useful and to be able to easily distinguish between resources embedded *within* the syllabus and those provided as a supplement.



We asked leaders which sources their schools access to ensure that teacher subject knowledge is sound. The largest % said Agreed Syllabus resources (83%) followed by Education Durham’s CPD (62%). There is, perhaps, some work we could do to signpost leaders to other high-quality resources, such as those found in the Religious Resources Centre and Durham Learning Resources, to supplement and enhance curriculum provision. Similarly, we might want to consider what we offer as a SACRE to support our leaders and teachers beyond the Agreed Syllabus.



Summary and next steps

This survey has highlighted some useful information that can be used as a discussion point to inform the review of the Agreed Syllabus 2025. We need to be mindful of the number of schools that *haven't* taken part and ensure that we don't arrive at conclusions that we assume are characteristic of all schools on this basis. However, with 53 responses from a range of phases, it is fair to draw the conclusion, from the range of qualitative and quantitative feedback we now have, that the Agreed Syllabus 2020 is still largely fit for purpose but that it would be prudent to revisit the content and coverage of religions in KS1, to consider our guidance around assessment and decide on our approach to resourcing requests.

**Standing Advisory Council on Religious
Education (SACRE)**

7 November 2024



**Establishment of an Agreed Syllabus
Conference**

Report of Director of Legal and Democratic Services

Purpose of the Report

1. The Council is asked to consider the following **recommendation** in relation to the Revision of the Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education:-

That a Standing Agreed Syllabus Conference for the Review of the Agreed Syllabus should be convened with the intention to hold meetings in March 2025, June 2025 and November 2025 after SACRE meetings and for a further meeting in January 2026, and for other meetings to be convened if necessary.

Recommendations

2. In order to expedite the business of the review process SACRE members are asked to stand as Agreed Syllabus Conference members.

Contact: Paula Nicholson

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Education Durham's report to SACRE

Prepared by Sarah Blakeman, Senior Professional Learning Advisor

November 2024

Introductory comments

This report introduces our new in-school advisors joining SACRE this term, a summary of the professional development and networking opportunities available to RE leaders and teachers, contracted support delivered and summaries from Ofsted deep dives into RE in County Durham.

New in-school advisors joining SACRE

We are delighted that Paul Bray (Durham Johnston Comprehensive School), Emma Downing (Wingate Primary School) and Victoria Mitchell (Yohden Primary School) are joining SACRE as in-school advisors. Paul, Emma and Victoria all lead on RE in their respective schools and their experience stands them in good stead to be able to share school perspectives on the planning, delivery and impact of RE in schools today. All three have supported with school-to-school contract work and their expertise is highly valued.

Course and network offer 2024-2025

Please find a summary of the courses and networks Education Durham is offering to schools this academic year below.

Autumn 2024

- Primary RE network
- Secondary RE network
- New to leading primary RE course

Spring 2025

- Primary RE network
- Secondary RE network
- Hinduism course/ ensuring progression in RE course

Summer 2025

- Primary RE network
- Secondary RE network
- Disciplinary literacy in RE course
- Knowing the impact of your RE curriculum course

We continue to offer termly networks for primary and secondary RE leaders across County Durham. Primary networks remain well-attended. Secondary networks recruit minimally which is something we are reviewing as part of a broader conversation. This term we received 2 secondary bookings compared to 61 primary bookings.

'New to leading primary RE' was one of a series of foundation subject courses offered earlier this term and received 14 bookings. It received positive feedback, exemplified by the comment below:

"A real co-ordinator sharing good practice in an authentic and helpful way. She was passionate about her subject, focussed on the key messages and had a breadth of knowledge. The course was well-paced, motivating and comprehensive."

A course around Hinduism was requested by schools and, on looking at course feedback, we felt that schools needed more support around ensuring progression in RE. This has been scheduled for the spring term with both parts taking place over one full day to make it easier for schools to plan cover arrangements.

'Disciplinary literacy' and 'knowing the impact' courses are part of a series of courses we are offering across foundation subjects. They will be led by members of our team with Ofsted experience and our leadership advisors who support on a strategic level across schools.

Contracted support

Since the summer term 2024, we have received 21 hours of contract requests for support with religious education. These have come from four schools:

- Seaham High School
- Bowes Hutchinson CE Aided Primary School
- Copeland Road Primary School
- Durham Gilesgate Primary School

Requests vary in nature and support provided is bespoke to each school. Themes have included:

- a review of RE provision with recommendations around next steps
- guidance on high-quality teaching and learning in RE plus checking for sufficient multi-faith coverage
- support for a new subject leader including an audit of resources
- advice around mixed age planning and assessment in RE

Ofsted deep dives

Over the last year, there were only four 'deep dives' into Religious Education: all were in primary schools. Until this year, deep dives were carried out in both section 5 (long) and section 8 (short) inspections. Deep dive subjects do not receive a judgement in isolation: the findings from these are triangulated with other evidence to establish a verdict around the quality of education being offered by a school. Since September 2024, Section 8 (ungraded) inspections do not include a subject deep dive.

Dean Bank Primary	22 nd and 23 rd May 2024	Requires improvement
"In other subjects such as religious education... pupils can remember little of what they have been taught".		

Fencehouses Woodlea Primary	30 th April and 1 st May 2024	Section 8 short inspection
In religious education there has been careful thought into planning visits to places of worship so that pupils have a good understanding of the world they live in and different world faiths."		

Stanley Crook Primary	16 th April 2024	Section 8 short inspection
<i>No mention in the report</i>		

Sugar Hill Primary	4 th October 2023	Section 8 short inspection
<i>No mention in the report</i>		

The Spring report to SACRE will include information relating to examination results for the summer 2024 series.

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