

Somerset SACRE

Diocesan report Summer term 2024

Introduction

Our support continues for individual maintained and academy church and community schools in Somerset, through responses to requests for advice, school visits, staff meetings and our CPD offer. Increasingly we are working with Trusts and encouraging a coherent, shared approach to RE (and collective worship) in their schools.

SIAMS inspections

Most of the Somerset church schools on the current SIAMS list have had their inspection this academic year. All have been judged to be living out their foundation as church schools (known informally as Judgment 1 or J1, which is great news. Since the introduction of the 2023 SIAMS Framework in September, there have been no grades awarded. (Excellent, good, RI or Inadequate). This has been a welcome development and has made the process more discursive and less stressful for school leaders than other school inspection regimes might be.

We now have the list of school schools to be inspected under SIAMS Section 48, in the 2024/25 academic year and this has been communicated to schools and Trusts. 15 of these schools are in Somerset local authority area.

We will be offering training to schools and Trusts representatives in preparation for SIAMS, from September 2024.

Here are a couple of examples of comments concerning RE from SIAMS reports published since the previous report to SACRE :

‘Pupils are taught key Christian concepts in Key Stage 1 and these are revisited further up the school to create a cyclical curriculum. World religions like Judaism, Hinduism and Islam are also taught alongside Humanism as a non-religious worldview. All class teachers teach RE and along with standalone books, the school continues to raise the profile. The subject is not only knowledge based, but promotes curiosity, challenges misconceptions and inspires pupils to be outward looking’

‘They (pupils) know the effect that religion might have on peoples' lives. As a result, they appreciate why RE is important. They are able to reflect on religious stories and teachings and the implications they might have for the world. They also understand the effect of religion on moral issues.’

CPD for RE teachers

A wonderful event was held at Flourish House in Wells on 22nd April, a day conference led by Adam Robertson, RE leader and resource writer for the Oak Academy . 60 teachers from across the diocese attended the conference entitled 'Seeing your syllabus in a new way: exploring Jewish, Muslim and Hindu worldviews.'

Details of RE, collective worship and spirituality training for teachers, subject leaders and MAT representatives will soon be circulated for the next academic year.

A personal note

I am retiring at the end of this academic year and would like to thank members of SACRE, well-established and recent, for your professional engagement, friendship and wisdom. Louise Jenkins will be taking my place on behalf of the diocese and I am sure Louise and our Diocesan Director will ensure the strength of the Church of England group on SACRE and I look forward to hearing about the new Somerset RE syllabus, in due course.

Best wishes

Pauline Dodds