

SACRE agenda item 10 Feb 7th 2024

Standards at GCSE and A levels 2023

Staffordshire SACRE reviews and discusses standards and achievement in RE during meetings as appropriate. Please note there were no external examination results for the summer of 2021 due to the pandemic. These resumed in summer 2022 with some modifications and in 2023 normal exam practice resumed.

Throughout 2022-23 Religious Education network meetings which schools can choose to attend included a discussion on standards across year groups and schools to support schools with the judgements they make against the revised 2023 Agreed Syllabus Age Related Expectations.

a) Public examination entries in Religious Education (RE) and Religious Studies (RS) for 2023

In the 2023 Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education, legal requirements state that RE should be provided as part of the broad and balanced curriculum for all registered pupils from Reception to 6th Form.

Background

At Key Stage (KS) 4 many pupils fulfil their entitlement by following as a basis an accredited specification (from a recognised examination board) in Religious Studies (RS). Schools should provide reasonable time for pupils to complete this and if appropriate, to attain an external qualification.

At KS5, pupils are encouraged to follow the programme of study provided within the Agreed Syllabus or an accredited examination scheme.

Staffordshire SACRE recognises the independence of Academies and Free Schools. However, it commends the Agreed Syllabus to them as a constructive and collaborative way to meet their legal requirements in Religious Education.

Update on summer 2023 external examination results

b) Overall GCSE results and things to note

The GCSE system continues to use the grading of 9-1, with 9 being the exceptional grade. Across the UK, a greater proportion of students achieved good passes in religious studies in 2023 compared to all GCSE subjects. A total of 72.6% of pupils achieved grade 4 or higher in religious studies compared to 68.2% for all subjects.

More girls than boys were entered for the RE GCSE exams in 2023, there has been no change in this for a number of years.

NB Grades were awarded following different process in 2020 and 2021 after public exams were cancelled this led to a large increase in the share of top grades awarded.

2022 saw the start to return to pre pandemic processes but there was still some leeway with regard to marking and awarding the top grades.

In 2023, we saw a return to pre-pandemic processes of 2019.

RS saw the smallest drop in top grades compared to other subjects.

See below for the 2023 results.

c) Religious Studies GCSE 2023

Here are the trends in the latest religious studies GCSE results for summer 2023.

The proportion of grade 9 results achieved by students nationally in 2023, (equivalent to a high A* under the old GCSE system) fell to 7.9 % compared to 9.7 per cent in 2022 more in line with pre pandemic results of and 7.4 per cent in 2019.

Staffordshire information

Overall figures to report for 2023 in comparison to 2022.

	Number of candidates	Grade 9 and above - %	Grade 8 and above - %	Grade 7 and above - %	Grade 6 and above - %	Grade 5 and above - %	Grade 4 and above - %	Grade 3 and above - %	Grade 2 and above - %	Grade 1 and above - %
England 2022	178,890	8.4	23.8	37.7	53.2	65.0	76.7	89.9	95.7	98.9
Staffordshire 2022	3,394	6.5	14	23	55	61	73.4	85.7	95.4	99.2

2023 data

	Number of candidates	Grade 9 and above - %	Grade 8 and above - %	Grade 7 and above - %	Grade 6 and above - %	Grade 5 and above - %	Grade 4 and above - %	Grade 3 and above - %	Grade 2 and above - %	Grade 1 and above - %
England 2023	168,270	8.3	19.4	31.6	48.3	62.2	72.6	86.5	94.0	97.8
Staffordshire 2023	3,703	3.7	11.4	20.5	39.2	54.6	66.1	84.2	93.6	98.3

The number of pupils taking GCSE Religious Studies increased in Staffordshire, but fell in the rest of England.

Key outcomes

Staffordshire % achieving grades 9-4 for the full RS course in 2020 was 76.4% and 2021 was 77.5% with a fall to 73.4% in 2022 and a further fall to 66.1% in 2023. A fall of 7.3%

England % achieving grades 9-4 for the full RS course in 2020 was 80.5% 2021 was 80.2% with a fall to 76.7% in 2022 and a fall to 72.6 in 2023. A fall of 4.1%

Therefore Staffordshire % of students achieving grades 9-4 for the full RS course in 2023 was over 6.5% lower than the England average in 2023.

Historically

2019 National Average 9 to 4 **72.3%**

2019 Staffordshire Average 9 to 4 **65.9%**

2020 National Average 9 to 4 80.5%

2020 Staffordshire Average 9 to 4 76.4%

2021 National Average 9 to 4 80.2%

2021 Staffordshire Average 9 to 4 77.5%

2022 National Average 9 to 4 76.7%

2022 Staffordshire Average 9 to 4 73.4%

2023 National Average 9 to 4 **72.6%**

2023 Staffordshire Average 9 to 4 **66.1%**

Data shows a stabilising of results back to pre-pandemic levels of 2019- see bold above. This is a more realistic comparison.

Schools which had the highest amount of entries and their grades include the following:-

John Taylor High (246)	9 to 4	78%	Higher than National
Thomas Alleyne's High (224)	9 to 4	51.4%	
Painsley Catholic (211)	9 to 4	81%	Higher than National
Wolgarston High (200)	9 to 4	69%	
Alleynes academy (218)	9 to 4	64.7%	
Erasmus Darwin Academy (183)	9 to 4	60.1%	
King Edward VI (192)	9 to 4	62%	
St John Fisher Catholic College (192)	9 to 4	55.2%	
The Rawlett School (176)	9 to 4	59.7%	
Cardinal Griffin Catholic College (171)	9 to 4	57.3%	
The Kings CE Academy (146)	9 to 4	30.1%	
Blessed William Howard (146)	9 to 4	78.8%	Higher than National
Paget High (107)	9 to 4	43.9%	

Here are some additional comments to support...

- Grade 5 plus in 2022 for Staffordshire was 61% compared to the National of 65% and in 2023 was at 54% compared to the national of 62.2%. This is a drop.
- In 2023 John Taylor High School entered the most students with 246 entries (a drop of 10 from 2022) 20% achieved grades 8 and 9 (a drop of 5%) and 78% achieved the Grades 9-4 a drop of 4%.
- Closely followed by Thomas Alleynes High with 224 (a drop of 35 from 2022) entries. 6% achieved grades 8 and 9 (a drop of 4% from 2022) and 51.4% achieved the Grades 9-4 (a drop of 3.9% from 2022).
- Painsley Catholic High school achieved the highest gradings for its 211 entries (a drop of 3 from 2022) entries, with 22.7% achieved grades 8 and 9 (21% in 2022) 81% achieved the Grades 9-4 a slight drop from 82.2% in 2022.
- Alleyne's High School Stone entered 218 students a slight increase from 2022. 11.4% achieved grades 8 and 9 compared to 7% in 2022. 64.7% achieved the Grades 9-4- very similar to 2022.
- Blessed William Howard entered 146 students (an increase of 6 from 2022) and in 2023 28.1% achieving grades 8 and 9 (an increase from 25% in 2022) and at grades 9 to 4, 78.8% which is higher than National and increase on the school's 2022 results of 76.4%.

d) Religious Studies A-level 2023 in comparison to 2022.

	Number of entries	A*-A	A*-C	A*-E	Average Grade
Staffordshire 2022	164	32.6%	88.2%	97.8%	B
National 2022	15, 220	36.2%	87.5%	98.7%	B
	Number of entries	A*-A	A*-C	A*-E	Average Grade
Staffordshire 2023	226	18.0%	77.2%	97.5%	B
National 2023	14, 720	25.5%	78.5%	97.3%	B

At KS5 the information in the table shows the picture for A level results.

25 schools in Staffordshire entered pupils for A levels an increase of 4 from 2022 this represented all types of schools with a total of 226 entries an increase of 62 pupils from 2022.

- The table shows that Staffordshire in comparison with the top grades is nearly 7.5% below the National at A*-A
- This shows that Staffordshire, in comparison is just below the National comparing A*-C grades in 2023. In 2022 we were just above.
- Here are some noteworthy results....
- ✓ John Taylor High School entered the most candidates- 37 entries (an increase of 1 from 2022). 27% achieved A*-A (a decrease from 56% in 2022) and 65.8% achieved the A*-B a decrease from 80.6% in 2022) but 83.7% achieved A*- C compared to the National of 78,5%
- ✓ King Edward VI entered 16 candidates, 18.8% achieved A*-A and 37,6% achieved the A*-B, but 81.4% achieved A*- C compared to the National of 78,5%
- ✓ Blessed William Howard entered 12 candidates. 8.3% achieved A*-A and 41.6% achieved the A*-B, and 66.6% achieved A*- C;
- ✓ Walton High School entered 20 candidates. 25% achieved A*-A an increase of 10% from 2022 and 45% achieved the A*-B, but 55% achieved A*- C
- ✓ Newcastle and Stafford Colleges group entered 26 candidates. 15.4% achieved A*-A and 65.4% achieved the A*-B but 88% achieved A*- C compared to the National of 78,5%
- ✓ Erasmus Darwin entered 15 candidates. 6.7 % achieved A*-A and 20% achieved the A*- B and 80% achieved A*- C compared to the National of 78,5%
- ✓ The remaining schools entered between 1-9 candidates.
- 14 out of 25 schools achieved gradings of A*-A- a drop of 3 from 2022.

The increase in the number of entries suggests that candidates continue to recognise the value of RS A-level for Higher Education entry, graduate employment, and as a valuable life skill.