

Thurrock - An ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

The meeting will be held at **6.30 pm** on **18 January 2023**

This meeting will take place via Microsoft Teams

Membership:

Committee A:

Miss R Saul, Diocese of Brentwood, Roman Catholic Member
Mr J Hussein, Muslim Member
Ms H Kaur Takhtar, Sikh Member
Mr T Ojetola, Pentecostal Member
Mr A Kariyawasam, Buddhist Member
Mr L Trup, Jewish Member
Vacancy, Hindu Member
Vacancy, Free Church Christian Member

Committee B:

Mr P Anderson, Church of England Member
Mrs L Fry, Church of England Member
Ms L Olajide, Church of England Member
Mrs R Everett, Church of England Member

Committee C:

Ms J Culloty, Teachers' Associations
Ms A Thompson, Teachers' Associations
Mrs C Pumfrey, Teachers' Associations
Ms R Shina, Teachers' Associations
X2 Vacancies

Committee D:

Councillor Qaisar Abbas
Councillors Daniel Chukwu
Councillors James Thandi

Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education meeting held on 8 June 2022 and 2 November 2022.

3 Items of Urgent Business

To receive additional items that the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency, in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972.

4 Declarations of Interest

5	Collective Worship	15 - 38
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Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:

Please contact Kenna Victoria Healey, Senior Democratic Services Officer by sending an email to Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk

Agenda published on: **10 January 2023**

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DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Breaching those parts identified as a pecuniary interest is potentially a criminal offence

Helpful Reminders for Members

- *Is your register of interests up to date?*
- *In particular have you declared to the Monitoring Officer all disclosable pecuniary interests?*
- *Have you checked the register to ensure that they have been recorded correctly?*

When should you declare an interest *at a meeting*?

- **What matters are being discussed at the meeting?** (including Council, Cabinet, Committees, Subs, Joint Committees and Joint Subs); or
- If you are a Cabinet Member making decisions other than in Cabinet **what matter is before you for single member decision?**



Does the business to be transacted at the meeting

- relate to; or
- likely to affect

any of your registered interests and in particular any of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests?

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests shall include your interests or those of:

- your spouse or civil partner's
- a person you are living with as husband/ wife
- a person you are living with as if you were civil partners

where you are aware that this other person has the interest.

A detailed description of a disclosable pecuniary interest is included in the Members Code of Conduct at Chapter 7 of the Constitution. **Please seek advice from the Monitoring Officer about disclosable pecuniary interests.**

What is a Non-Pecuniary interest? – this is an interest which is not pecuniary (as defined) but is nonetheless so significant that a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard to be so significant that it would materially impact upon your judgement of the public interest.

Pecuniary

If the interest is not already in the register you must (unless the interest has been agreed by the Monitoring Officer to be sensitive) disclose the existence and nature of the interest to the meeting

If the Interest is not entered in the register and is not the subject of a pending notification you must within 28 days notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest for inclusion in the register

Unless you have received dispensation upon previous application from the Monitoring Officer, you must:

- Not participate or participate further in any discussion of the matter at a meeting;
- Not participate in any vote or further vote taken at the meeting; and
- leave the room while the item is being considered/voted upon

If you are a Cabinet Member you may make arrangements for the matter to be dealt with by a third person but take no further steps

Non- pecuniary

Declare the nature and extent of your interest including enough detail to allow a member of the public to understand its nature



You may participate and vote in the usual way but you should seek advice on Predetermination and Bias from the Monitoring Officer.

Our Vision and Priorities for Thurrock

An ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future.

1. **People** – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay
 - High quality, consistent and accessible public services which are right first time
 - Build on our partnerships with statutory, community, voluntary and faith groups to work together to improve health and wellbeing
 - Communities are empowered to make choices and be safer and stronger together

2. **Place** – a heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future
 - Roads, houses and public spaces that connect people and places
 - Clean environments that everyone has reason to take pride in
 - Fewer public buildings with better services

3. **Prosperity** – a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations
 - Attractive opportunities for businesses and investors to enhance the local economy
 - Vocational and academic education, skills and job opportunities for all
 - Commercial, entrepreneurial and connected public services

Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education held on 8 June 2022 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Committee A: Miss R Saul (at 18.40) and Mr L Trup

Committee B: Mr P Anderson and Mrs Everrett

Committee C: Ms Culloty

Committee D: Councillors Qaisar Abbas, Daniel Chukwu and James Thandi

Apologies: Mrs Fry, Mr A Kariyawasam, Mr T Ojetola, Mrs Pumfrey, Ms H Kaur

In attendance: Deborah Weston, Associate Advisor for Religious Education
Andrea Winstone, Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness and SEND
Alicia Thompson, Teacher Observer
Kenna-Victoria Healey, Senior Democratic Services Officer

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 January 2022 were approved as a true and correct record, subject to typos being corrected.

2. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chairs

Nominations were invited for the appointment of Chair of the Committee. Mr Anderson commented he was happy to remain as Chair, unless someone else wish to, it was seconded by Councillor Abbas, that Mr Anderson be appointed and remain as Chair of the Committee.

Nominations were invited for the appointment of Vice Chair of Committees A, B, C and D.

RESOLVED that:

1. **That Mr P Anderson be appointed as Chair of Thurrock SACRE.**
2. **The following members be elected as Vice Chairs:**

Committee A: Mr T Ojetola
Committee B: Mr P Anderson
Committee C: Ms J Culloty
Committee D: Councillor Thandi

5. Collective Worship

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education presented the report and through doing so, it was noted that one of the appendices were absent from the agenda.

It was suggested that the item be deferred to the next meeting to enable SACRE Members to have a full discussion.

RESOLVED:

That the report be deferred to the next meeting of SACRE.

6. Agreed Syllabus Support Material Updates

The Chair of SACRE addressed members explaining at the June 2021 meeting it was agreed that SACRE would also be the Agreed Syllabus Conference. He sought if members were happy to convert to the Agreed Syllabus Conference. This was agreed by all present.

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education advised SACRE at the last meeting, it was agreed in principle to readopt the syllabus from RE today as Thurrock's agreed syllabus. She continued by stating the majority of the syllabus had already been agreed.

It was heard how there were two parts of the agreed syllabus. One part was the statutory agreed syllabus that the schools were required to follow and the second was additional material, which was not statutory, but was offered by SACRE as guidance.

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education then talked members through a presentation of changes made to the syllabus.

The Chair of SACRE thanked the Associate Advisor for Religious Education for the presentation and enquired if there were any questions, comments or

observations from members of the committee. He pointed out it was important to note that a number of the Academies also followed the agreed syllabus, even though it was no compulsory for them to do so.

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education advised members the Harris Academy Chafford Hundred had offered to host the launch of the revised document. Members heard the event was to be held on Monday 19th September and SACRE members were to be invited.

During discussions members of SACRE welcomed the agreed syllabus, With those present being teachers explaining it was exciting to be receiving a slightly updated syllabus and the guidance included would greatly assist teachers.

RESOLVED that SACRE:

1.1 Reconvened an Agreed Syllabus Conference (first meeting June 2021)

1.2 Reviewed the additional materials

1.3 Approved the amended titles as follows:

- **From U2.9 What can be done to reduce racism? Can religion help?
To U2.9 What can be done to reduce racism? What can we learn from religious and non-religious worldviews?**
- **From U2.10 Green religion? How and why should religious communities do more to care for the Earth?**
- **To U2.10 Green religion? What do religious and non-religious worldviews teach about caring for the earth?**

7. Verbal Update on the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education queries about RE provision in Thurrock Academies

The Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness and SEND explained she had been tasked with seeking the RE provision within the Thurrock Academies, and so as part of annual conversations with the secondary schools, she sought how they were teaching RE and how they reported this back through the census.

She continued to advise when the census workforce was returned, it asked how many hours there were devoted to the teaching of RE and in each year group, and in some year groups it looked like it wasn't any.

It was heard when the schools were asked the questions which were proposed by SACRE, it was clear that some schools called RE different things, and therefore they're their census return didn't look accurate.

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education advised this was a national problem when it came to religious education, and this was what had happened is a number of Thurrock schools due to all sorts of complex reasons. However, she continued by advising that RE was getting combined with PSHE and citizenship into a single lesson in some schools and in these circumstances, provision would be unlikely to be judged, 'similar in breadth and ambition' to provision in an LA maintained school – i.e. governed by the Agreed Syllabus.

Ms Thompson advised that in her school they are trying to change their reporting to take account of where citizenship and religious education are taught together. She stated in years 7 to 9 received 60 minutes a week for RE. Year 10s received an hour and a half every week which was covered in the mornings registration and year 11 an hour per week covering RE and Citizenship.

The Chair thanked all for their work on this item and was pleased to say that the feedback had validated assumptions that RE was not being taught within schools when in some cases, simply the wrong box on a form had been ticked.

RESOLVED that:

SACRE note the verbal update on the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education queries about RE provision in Thurrock Academies.

8. Any Other Business

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education mentioned a questionnaire had been circulated to SACRE members seeking how they would prefer to meet for forthcoming meetings be that in person, virtual or a mixture.

Members heard how before the pandemic 70% attended all meetings, it was mentioned how during the pandemic 80% of SACRE attended all meetings.

When asked how members would prefer to meet, 10% of responses said one meeting online and two face to face, two meetings per year virtual one face to face received 40% and all meetings held online received 50%.

During the discussion it was suggested that's that be a mixture of in person and virtual meetings, with the possibility of holding hybrid meetings be available should anyone not be able to attend in person. It was agreed that the next meeting be held in person.

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education stated she had managed to obtain free places for primary teachers on the program called Excellent RE offered by NATRE. She continued by advising places had already been taken up by schools including Herringham Academy, Graham James Primary Academy and Purfleet Primary School, and teachers from the schools had

been invited to observe the next meeting with the hope of them joining SACRE in the future.

The meeting finished at 8.10 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
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Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education held on 2 November 2022 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Committee A: Miss R Saul (at 7.00pm), Mr L Trup, Mr A Kariyawasam and Mr T Ojetola

Committee B: Mr P Anderson and Mrs Fry (at 6.39pm)

Committee C: Mrs Pumfrey and Ms Thompson

Committee D: Councillor James Thandi

Apologies: Ms Culloty, Mrs Everett and Councillor Abbas

In attendance: Deborah Weston, Associate Advisor for Religious Education
Andrea Winstone, Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness and SEND
Raj Shina, Committee C Observer
Kenna-Victoria Healey, Senior Democratic Services Officer

9. Minutes

The Minutes of the last meeting were missing from the agenda. The Chair asked that the minutes be added to the agenda for the January meeting.

10. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

11. Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared.

12. Collective Worship

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education presented the report and in doing so, explained the report was on the agenda at the previous meeting where Members had asked if it was possible to obtain additional copies of collective worship policies in schools to enable them to undertake a monitoring activity.

It was clarified there were very few schools with a collective worship policy and so it was asked that the topic be presented to primary headteachers to seek their views. SACRE Members heard that teachers at the Primary Headteachers Association had had an open discussion at a recent meeting, explaining how difficult it was for them to fulfil this legislative requirement.

Members thanked the Associate Advisor for Religious Education for her report stating they felt it was useful to understand what schools were doing. It was suggested for those schools who didn't have a policy, if it would be worthwhile providing a template policy for them which could be adapted to each school.

During discussions it was commented that schools might welcome some guidance and advice around how collective worship could happen, with ideas and advice around best practice principles. Members spoke about how if there was a model policy that also incorporated some ideas and best practice examples, this would be welcomed by headteachers and schools.

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education commented she had access to model policies and had previously written a guidance document for one of the other SACRE's that she looked after with the examples on having assemblies and acts of worship including year group assemblies.

It was agreed that the Associate Advisor for Religious Education would speak with the schools regarding their collective worship policies.

RESOLVED:

- 1. Consider a sample of policies from Thurrock schools to determine how Collective Worship is offered in local schools in the light of the legal requirements set out in section 3 below.**
- 2. Consider the advice sent to schools previously (Appendix 1) and whether or not any amendments need to be made to the advice in the light of any new evidence**

13. Monitoring Provision for RE in Thurrock Schools

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education introduced the report explaining this was known as the school workforce stage. It was commented that over the years there had been some frustration as sometimes although the data was accurate, the subject was taught under a different title and so often brought up issues when reporting.

It was further explained the hardest part was that it was not the person who was delivering the lessons who inputted the data, instead it was the head of department who input the data into the system and the data was often submitted into the system in a way which didn't pick up Religious Education. And when schools were visited and this was queried, it was found that some of the schools, showing a 0 hour in RE, indeed did teach Religious Education.

SACRE Members were asked to look at the school workforce data within the agenda, which schools submitted to the Department for Education as part of the Annual School Census in November.

Members were advised that both Thames Park and Orsett Health did not as yet have GCSE classes as Year 9 was the top year group.

The Chair observed that it was interesting to see the data within the agenda did not reflect the work being undertaken in schools and commented on the importance of SACRE looking at such data and advising the schools accordingly.

RESOLVED that SACRE:

- 1. Consider the national and local school workforce data for 2022 in Appendix 1**
- 2. Request that the associate adviser invite participants at the syllabus launch event to complete a brief survey – see Appendix 2**
- 3. Ask the LA officer to include the following information in conversations with schools:**
 - **where good practice is identified**
 - **where there is no evidence that the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus are met**
 - **where there looks to be limited or no provision.**

14. Update on National Developments and Opportunities

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education presented the report explaining the document was for information, not only for SACRE but also for Teachers and so the document would be circulated to all schools.

She continued by mentioning a topic she wanted to raise with SACRE Member was the spirited arts competition. It was explained that during Covid it was a difficult to complete however was well received within schools and was encouraging to see students be involved.

It was stated during discussions that the competition could be a great way to assist KS3 and KS4 students with their revision for exams.

RESOLVED that SACRE:

- 1.1 Review the information collected (Appendix 1)**
- 1.2 Evaluate the relevance of each section for RE in Thurrock**
- 1.3 Share the attached update with schools and their governing boards**

15. Work Plan Review and Update for 2022-2023

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education introduced the report which presented an updated work plan.

RESOLVED:

That SACRE review the workplan for 2021-2022 and considered the recommendations for work in 2022-23

16. Any Other Business

Members discussed attendance at future meetings and how these should be held, either face to face, virtual or hybrid.

RESOLVED:

That the next meeting of SACRE be held virtually with the summer meeting being held face to face.

The meeting finished at 7.45pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk

18 January 2023	ITEM: 5
Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education	
Collective Worship	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key
Report of: Deborah Weston, Associate Adviser for Religious Education	
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director Learning Inclusion and Skills	
Accountable Director: Shelia Murphy, Corporate Director of Children’s Services	
This report is: Public	

Executive Summary

One of the duties of SACRE is to monitor the provision of Acts of Collective Worship in schools in the local authority. In the past, the information that enabled a SACRE to fulfil this duty might have been provided by a specialist local adviser who worked full time in an area. Cuts in the budgets of local authorities mean that only a small number employ such an adviser. Thurrock SACRE is fortunate that the Council do fund a specialist adviser for a fixed number of days to support their work. Likewise, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) used to report on Acts of Worship but shorter inspections and a change in their focus means that inspectors do not systematically report on Acts of Collective Worship.

Thurrock SACRE reviewed the policies of a number of schools in the summer term meeting 2019 and summer term 2020 and reported to schools on their findings. This report proposes that SACRE review a thurd sample of policies on Acts of Collective Worship that appear of school websites to determine if anything has changed in the last year and to identify good practice. As with the 2019 and 2020 exercises, the aim of the exercise will be monitoring of provision and also for SACRE to become more informed about practice in local schools.

1. Recommendation(s) that SACRE:

- 1.1. consider a sample of policies from Thurrock schools to determine how Collective Worship is offered in local schools in the light of the legal requirements set out in section 3 below.

1.2 Consider the advice sent to schools previously (appendix A) and whether or not any amendments need to be made to the advice in the light of any new evidence

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Acts of collective worship – traditionally called ‘assemblies’ by teachers and pupils alike – have long been a feature of British school life. The 1944 Education Act simply stated that each school day should begin with an act of collective worship on the part of all pupils in attendance at the school. The daily requirement was restated in the 1988 Education Act which also set out a series of new legislative requirements concerning the organisation and character of collective worship.
- 2.2 The government introduced guidance for schools in relation to the law of Religious Education and Collective Worship in the form of Circular 1/94. The Religious Education element of this document was updated by the publication of ‘Religious Education in English Schools’ in 2010 but no update was provided in relation to Acts of Collective Worship leaving schools with guidance that is more than 20 years old.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 What does the legislation require?

The legal requirements can be summarised as follows:

- 3.1.1. All registered pupils in state-funded schools should take part in a daily act of collective worship unless wholly or partly withdrawn by parents. The term ‘registered pupils’ includes students up to and including the age of eighteen years in a school sixth form or at a sixth form college but not pupils in nursery schools or classes. Students over the age of 18 are entitled to withdraw themselves from the Act of worship. Collective worship for special school pupils should be provided so far as practicable.
- 3.1.2 There can be a single whole school act of collective worship or separate acts for pupils in different age of school activity groupings.
- 3.1.3. Acts of collective worship can take place at any time of the school day and, with certain exceptions, should take place on the school premises.
- 3.1.4 In a community, academy or foundation schools (ie other than at voluntary-aided schools), most acts of collective worship each term should be ‘wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character’, that is, ‘reflecting’ the ‘broad traditions of Christian belief’ without being denominationally biased. But acts of collective worship should also be appropriate, having regard to pupils’ ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds.
- 3.1.5 If a community, academy or foundation school believes that the Christian character clause (4 above) is inappropriate for the whole school or certain

pupils within it, application can be made for a determination to have that clause lifted or modified. In the case of Academy schools, that application should be made to the Educational Funding Agency. In the case of community or foundation school, to the local Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) Unless the school requests otherwise, a determination will be reviewed by the local SACRE after five years. A determination does not lift the requirement for daily collective worship. Such worship must not be denominational but may be distinctive of a particular faith.

- 3.1.6 Teachers – including head teachers – have the right to withdraw from collective worship (though, in voluntary schools, these conditions may vary) and cannot be discriminated against for so doing. Attending ‘assemblies’, on the other hand, is part of a teacher’s contractual duty.
- 3.1.7 In a community or foundation school, it is the responsibility of a head teacher, in consultation with the governors, to see that these arrangements are carried out. In a voluntary-aided school, it is the responsibility of the governors, in consultation with the head teacher.
- 3.2.1 The legislation on Collective Worship requires schools to offer a daily act of collective worship that is ‘wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character’. At first reading, this language may appear to disadvantage children who come from families that do not practice a religious faith or who come from a faith other than Christianity.
- 3.2.2 The legislation does however, permit schools to apply to SACRE for a determination to vary the character of Acts of Worship if they see fit. Alternatively, they may use flexibility present in the language i.e. wholly or mainly may be interpreted to mean 50% or more. Similarly, ‘broadly Christian’ is different from ‘distinctively Christian’ and a worship theme such as the importance of forgiveness, that is broadly Christian might also be broadly Jewish, Muslim, Sikh etc.
- 3.2.3 Acts of worship provide an opportunity to celebrate the diversity present in their school community, locally and nationally. The way that policies are developed are therefore a useful indicator of how they engage with these issues.
- 3.2.4. Acts of worship may help schools promote the British Value of tolerance and respect for those with different religions and beliefs.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 In the absence of information from school visits to observe collective worship, the review of websites appears to be a strategy that can be used to conduct some monitoring of collective worship.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 Not applicable

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 The Local Authority reviews its Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education on a regular basis;
- Publishes an Annual Report of its work;
 - Offers guidance on resources and methods of teaching and in consultation with Thurrock Schools;
 - Monitors the quality of provision for RE and Collective Acts of Worship in Thurrock.

This exercise falls under the third element of this programme.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **David May**
Strategic Lead Finance

There are no financial implications to this report since the analysis of the data collected through this exercise will be conducted by the Associate RE Adviser as part of her work

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Daniel Longe**
Principal Solicitor

The legal duties on the advisory council are set out in s391 of the Education Act 1996. The main one is to advise the local authority on such matters connected with the religious worship in community schools or in foundation schools which do not have a religious character and the religious education to be given in accordance with an agreed or other syllabus as the authority may refer to the council or as the council may see fit.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Becky Lee**
**Team Manager Community Development and
Equalities Adults, Housing and Health
Directorate**

As mentioned in section 3.2 above, the Acts of Worship, like religious education can be a means by which schools celebrate the diversity in their school and local community. This in turn may help pupils to develop respect and tolerance for those with beliefs that are different to their own.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder or Impact on Looked After Children

- Not applicable

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None

9. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1 – SACRE Acts of Collective Worship - A guide for schools in Thurrock

Report Author:

Deborah Weston, Associate Adviser for RE

Appendix 1

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Acts of Collective Worship

A guide for schools in Thurrock



For further information, contact:

Deborah Weston – Associate Adviser for Religious Education deborah@retoday.org.uk

Adapted with permission from The London Borough of Redbridge January 2023

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Introduction

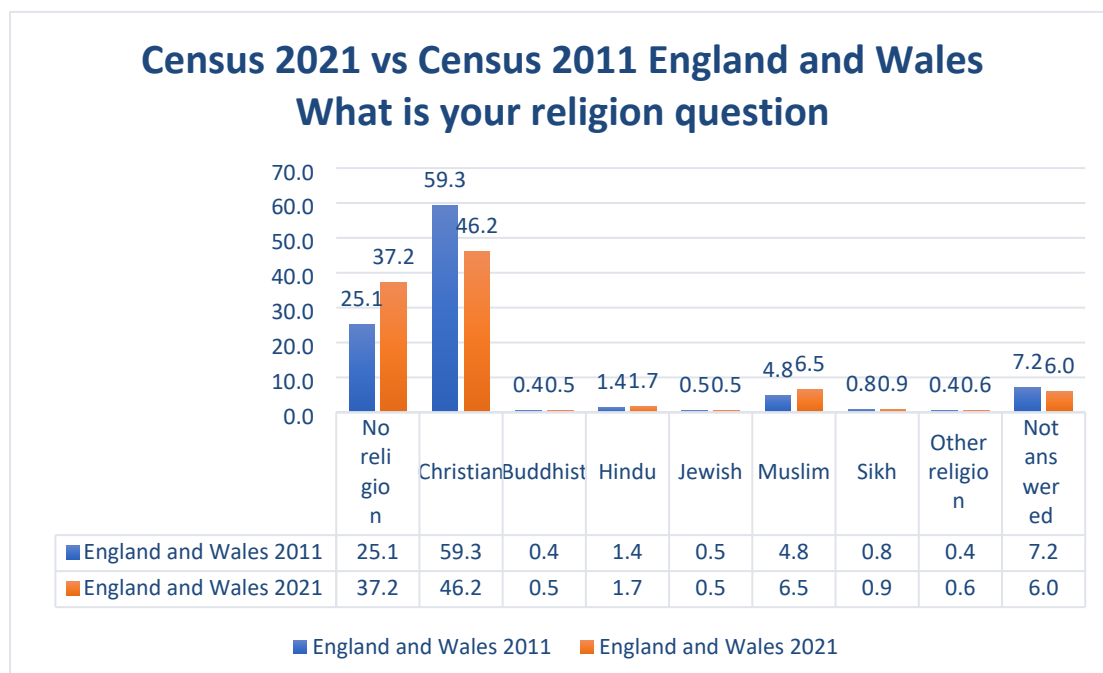
Acts of collective worship – traditionally called ‘assemblies’ by teachers and pupils alike – have long been a feature of British school life.

The 1944 Education Act simply stated that each school day should begin with an act of collective worship on the part of all pupils in attendance at the school. The daily requirement was restated in the 1988 Education Act which also set out a series of new legislative requirements concerning the organisation and character of collective worship.

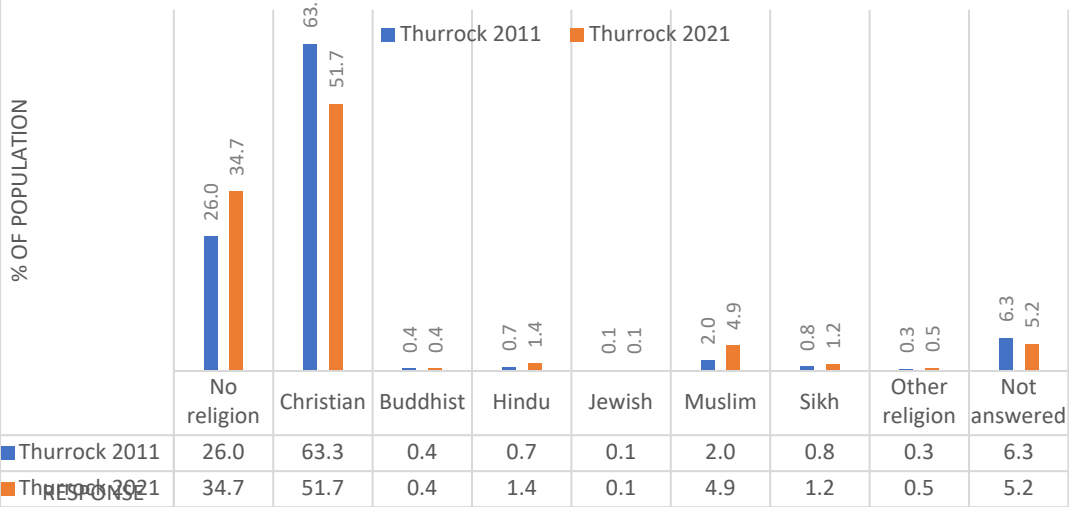
The government introduced guidance for schools in relation to the law of Religious Education and Collective Worship in the form of Circular 1/94. The Religious Education element of this document was updated by the publication of ‘Religious Education in English Schools’ in 2010 but no update was provided in relation to Acts of Collective Worship leaving schools with guidance that is more than 20 years old.

This updated guidance for Thurrock Schools is therefore being issued in response to school requests for clarification about fulfilling their statutory responsibilities in a way that takes account of the modern context of Thurrock Schools.

Thurrock context



CENSUS 2021 VS 2011 THURROCK



What does the legislation require?

The legal requirements can be summarised as follows:

All registered pupils in state-funded schools should take part in a daily act of collective worship unless wholly or partly withdrawn by parents. The term 'registered pupils' includes students up to and including the age of eighteen years in a school sixth form or at a sixth form college but not pupils in nursery schools or classes. Students over the age of 18 are entitled to withdraw themselves from the Act of worship. Collective worship for special school pupils should be provided so far as practicable.

There can be a single whole school act of collective worship or separate acts for pupils in different age of school activity groupings.

Acts of collective worship can take place at any time of the school day and, with certain exceptions, should take place on the school premises.

In a community, academy or foundation schools (ie other than at voluntary-aided schools), most acts of collective worship each term should be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character', that is, 'reflecting' the 'broad traditions of Christian belief' without being denominationally biased. But acts of collective worship should also be appropriate, having regard to pupils' ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds.

If a community, academy or foundation school believes that the Christian character clause (4 above) is inappropriate for the whole school or certain pupils within it, application can be made for a determination to have that clause lifted or modified. In the case of Academy schools, that application should be made to the Educational Funding Agency. In the case of community or foundation school, to the local Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) Unless the school requests otherwise, a determination will be reviewed by the local SACRE after five years.

A determination does not lift the requirement for daily collective worship. Such worship must still be undenominational but may be distinctive of a particular faith.

Teachers – including head teachers – have the right to withdraw from collective worship (though, in voluntary schools, these conditions may vary) and cannot be discriminated against for so doing. Attending 'assemblies', on the other hand, is part of a teacher's contractual duty.

In a community or foundation school, it is the responsibility of a head teacher, in consultation with the governors, to see that these arrangements are carried out. In a voluntary-aided school, it is the responsibility of the governors, in consultation with the head teacher.

What is the meaning of the terminology?

Worship: SACRE members found the following definition of worship helping in their exploration of Acts of Collective worship in a school context: “Worship has to do with worth and worthiness. It is the recognition, affirmation and celebration of the ‘worship’ of certain realities and values, held to be of central importance to the community which worships. The act of worshipping renews the meaning of these realities and values for the community, helping each of its members to grasp them personally”¹

Reflection on celebration of those values that the school considers important can therefore provide a good starting point for the planning of collective worship.

The imprecise use of terms can sometimes both reveal and perpetuate imprecise understanding. It is important, then, to draw to a distinction between:

collective worship
religious education (RE)

Collective worship and RE are separate parts of school provision for which different legislative requirements apply. Time used for RE counts towards a school’s total curriculum time whilst this is not the case for collective worship.

This is not to deny, of course, that there can be a fruitful interplay between RE and collective worship – as the 2014 Thurrock Agreed Syllabus makes clear

But OFSTED reports have sometimes pointed out that, when the distinction between collective worship and RE is blurred, the quality of both aspects of school provision can be lowered. To guard against this, it is advisable for schools to have a policy on collective worship separate to that on RE. In the same way, an increasing number of schools make a clear distinction between the roles of ‘RE subject leader’ and ‘assembly leader’;

Collective worship and assembly

Though the latter term has traditionally been used in schools, drawing a formal distinction between the two terms is important because there is no legislative requirement for schools to hold assemblies

the right of withdrawal applies to collective worship but not assembly

the term ‘act of collective worship’ carries implications for practice which the term ‘assembly’ does not;

Corporate worship and collective worship

1. ¹ Paths to Understanding, Hampshire Education Authority, 1980.

There is an irreconcilable tension or paradox within the notion of 'school worship'. This might best be expressed as a question: how can a community which is not by nature religious (ie a school) meaningfully provide an activity called 'worship'?

It is now generally acknowledged (1) that the kind of 'worship' which a school is required to provide is not the same kind of activity as that found within a faith group. In order to stress this, the distinction is often made between

'corporate worship' (ie that kind of worship found within a religious community – a 'corpus' or body of believers – whose members meet voluntarily and for reasons of shared commitment)

and

'collective worship' (ie that kind of worship which legislation requires schools to provide, which should be consistent with educational aims, and which involves a 'collectivity' of people with a range of religious commitments and none).

Legislation requires schools to provide collective, not corporate worship.

A period of reflection

The requirement that schools offer a daily act of collective worship can be a valuable opportunity to provide the school community with a period of time for reflection or prayer at the start of or during the busy school day. The school community in a Thurrock school will almost certainly be made up of children from families with different faiths and from those with non-religious worldviews. The style of the period of reflection must therefore be inclusive of all of these groups by inviting a response but not requiring one.

An invitation to think or pray

A period of reflection can be as simple as asking children to bow their heads and think or pray for a while and following this invitation with a brief period of silence. The advantage of this method is that it gives students the chance to consider the ideas that have been explored in an assembly rather than immediately returning to class where a new learning activity begins. The invitation to think or pray may be a little more specific and include a suggestion for a focus. For example, after an assembly in a secondary school about the work of a charity working to ensure that children in different parts of the world receive an education, the invitation might be to think or pray for a while about their own educational opportunities. In a primary school, the reading of a story such as the parable of the Good Samaritan or the story about Prophet Muhammad and the woman who was planning to leave town might be followed by an invitation to think or pray for while about how they might show kindness to someone today.

As some children may be some time to become used to the sound of silence, a period of reflection may be accompanied by some gentle music. Some teachers have found that

providing a focus such as an artefact, a work of art or a large candle is helpful in creating an atmosphere that is conducive to reflection.

Adults present in the room where the assembly is taking place should consider taking part in the period of reflection themselves since as with many desired behaviours, adult role models are vital.

More extended periods of reflection

With practice, teachers can learn to lead a form of breathing space meditation for classes of students. Typically, the session begins with a discussion about posture to allow the children to learn how to sit comfortably with minimal fidgeting during the period of meditation or reflection. An exercise known as a body-scan is sometimes used. You can find out more about training in this technique here <http://www.breathingspacelondon.org.uk/mindfulness-for-schools/breathing-space-in-schools/>

Labyrinths

Another form of reflection can be to offer children the opportunity to experience a Labyrinth. Traditionally, a labyrinth involves children moving between a series of stations, learning a little about a story, an event or a ritual and then contemplating on a feature linked to that story in relation to their own lives. Each station also involves a task or a creative activity. In 2011 Thurrock SACRE won a bursary to explore this technique with local clergy and lay people in a joint training event at St Mary's Church Woodford Bridge. Following the training, a number of local churches opened their Churches in the period leading up to the Christian Festival of Easter to provide children with the opportunity to experience an Easter Labyrinth. More information about this project including instructions for setting up some reflective stations of your own can be found here: <http://www.Thurrockrenet.co.uk/teaching.html> Since that time, a Hajj labyrinth has also been developed and trialled in several schools. All the resources to support this activity have been published by RE Today here: <http://shop.retoday.org.uk/9781905893881>

Prayer Space in schools

Schools and their teachers can learn more about developing techniques for reflection by working with the organisation, Prayer Space in Schools. This organisation works children of all faiths and none to explore some of the fundamental questions of life in a reflective and creative way. A prayer space is usually set up in a classroom for a few days or even a week. Issues explored include subjects such as forgiveness, injustice, thankfulness, big questions, identity and stillness. Learn more about this resource here <http://www.prayerspacesinschools.com/>

Themes for acts of worship

A series of themes might be a useful tool to help plan acts of worship.

Anger	God	Peace
Care for the environment	Good deeds	Prayer
Careful speech	Good thoughts	Religion and belief
Caring for others	Happiness	Self-control
Character	Humility	Self-confidence
Community	Journeys	Success
Compassion	Justice	Taking Action
Contentment	Keeping good company	Teaching
Correcting wrongs	Kindness	the mystery of life
Courage	Leadership	the value of change
Effort	Learning	the value of every individual
Equality	Love	Truth
Finding a purpose	Making good choices	Unity
Forgiveness	Modesty	Wealth
Freedom	Parenting	Wisdom
Friendship	Noticing beauty	Work
Generosity	Patience	

Styles of acts of worship

Terence Copley, in his publication, "Worship, Worries and Winners" suggests the following different types of stimulus for assemblies

The Active Assembly The "Thing of Beauty" Assembly The Anecdotal Assembly The Singing Assembly The Straight theme Assembly	The Television or Newspaper Theme The Stunt Assembly The Testimony Assembly The Dramatic Monologue The Charity Assembly
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Copley, T., (1989) *Worship Worries and Winners*. London: The National Society and Church House Publishing

Some suggested types of stimulus for acts of worship

Quotations		Interviews		Pupil performance	
	Newspaper reports		A story		Religious text
Everyday objects		Religious artefacts		jokes	
	Audio recordings		Video clip		Prayer

Silence/reflection		Visiting speaker		Personal memorabilia	
	Classical/modern music		Pupil creative writing		Dramatic monologue
Painting/picture		Historical artefact		Literature/poetry	

Thoughts for the day

When planning a programme of daily acts of collective worship, schools may decide that a short stimulus might suit a teacher or student led act of worship in the style of 'thought for the day'. In this model, a quotation is introduced, discussed with the class and then an opportunity is provided for students to worship should they wish. This opportunity might be introduced with the words:

"Please bow your heads and think or pray for a while about what you have just heard." The following are a set of examples of how a series of 'Thoughts for the day' might be planned for a weekly theme over a complete week;

Will someone else's life be brighter tomorrow because of what you have done today?	W. A. Ward	Author	Good deeds
We cannot all do great things, but we can do small things with great love.	Mother Teresa of Calcutta	Christian	Good Deeds
Cruelty, material attachment, greed and anger are the four rivers of fire. Nanak says, one is burned by falling into them. One is saved only by holding tight to good deeds	Guru Granth Sahb Ji, 147	Skhism	Good Deeds
Keep yourselves far from envy; it eats up and takes away good actions, just as fire eats up and burns wood	Prophet Muhammad	Islam	Good Deeds
Happiness is not something ready made. It comes from your own actions	His Holiness the Dalai Lama	Buddhist	Good deeds
True happiness consists in making others happy	Hindu proverb	Hinduism	Happiness
Greet every person with a pleasant face...Receive every person in a cheerful manner	Ethics of the Fathers 1:15; 3:16	Judaism	Happiness
Many people think excitement is happiness.... But when you are excited you are not peaceful. True happiness is based on peace.	Thich Nhat Hanh	Buddhist	Happiness
Don't trust someone who tells you all of his troubles and keeps you from all of his joys.	Jewish Proverb	Jewish	Happiness
Thousands of candles can be lit from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared	Buddha		Happiness
"You can't win unless you know how to lose."	Kareem Abdul-Jabbar	Muslim	Humility
Never look down on anybody unless you're helping him up.	Jesse Jackson		Humility
There is nothing noble about being superior to some other man. The true nobility is in being superior to your previous self.	Hindu proverb	Hinduism	Humility
The rattan basket criticizes the palm leaf basket, still both are full of holes.	Philippine Proverb		Humility

Writing a policy document

It would be advisable for schools to draw up a policy document on collective worship which, like all effective policy documents:

- serves the purpose of clarifying, informing and guiding; and
- is marked by brevity, simplicity and clarity.

A policy document on collective worship might contain a number of elements.

1. A brief statement about the nature and character of the school
2. This is important in that the pattern and style of collective practice should reflect and 'speak to' the traditions and character of a particular school. Section 7 of the 1988 Act also requires that collective worship should be appropriate for the ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds of the pupils in the school.

3. An explanation of the role that collective worship plays within the life of the school. This can be done in a number of ways. For instance

a. by listing a central aim and then a series of objectives e.g.

“Collective worship occupies an important and unique place in the life of Nowhere Primary School. It provides an opportunity for members of the school community to pause from activity, to gather, to remind themselves of and to reflect upon the beliefs and values which bind the school community together. It also allows those with a religious commitment the possibility of entering into worship and those with no religious commitment to sense what worship is and to reflect deeply. In this way we aim both to affirm and to protect the integrity of all members of the school community. (2)

In particular, collective worship:

- provides an opportunity for all members of the school community to stop activity, to pause and to reflect on important issues;
- builds up the sense of group identity;
- gives pupils the experience of being still or silent;
- provides an opportunity for celebrating times of success or joy;
- provides an opportunity for meeting at times of sadness or sorrow;
- provides an opportunity for highlighting and reflecting upon core school values – such as striving to be honest and truthful, trying hard in all things, respecting oneself as well as other people, striving to be fair and just; and
- offers the opportunity to mark significant points in the year, such as festivals and school events.

by giving examples of how collective worship contributes to the spiritual, moral, social, cultural development of pupils (3) e.g.

Collective worship contributes to the spiritual development of pupils by providing them with an opportunity to:

- reflect upon the value, purpose and meaning of things;
- experience times of quiet inactivity to counterbalance the activity which generally marks the rest of the school day; and
- hear stories and words from religious and other literature which suggest that there is more to life than meets the eye

Collective worship contributes to the moral development of pupils by providing them with an opportunity to:

- reflect on matters concerning right and wrong;
- hear about incidents in which, and people in whom, goodness or right are exemplified; and
- learn about religious and other teachings concerning right and wrong.

Collective worship contributes to the social development of pupils by providing them with an opportunity to:

- gather with others for a common purpose;
- share times of joy and times of sadness with others; and
- learn how to behave appropriately within a specific social setting.

Collective worship contributes to the cultural development of pupils by providing them with an opportunity to:

- hear music from a range of times, places and cultures;
- reflect upon ideas concerning beauty and that which is pleasing to the eye and ear; and
- appreciate the range of talents and gifts found within the school community and beyond.

4. An outline of the pattern and structure for collective worship that has been created

This might best be shown in the form of a grid that outlines the weekly structure eg

Day	Grouping	Venue	Time	Leadership	Style/Approach	Notes
Monday						
Tuesday						
Wednesday						
Thursday						
Friday						

5. Comment might also be made concerning other organisational aspects, such as the use made of themes and the role of the assembly coordinator.

6. A brief explanation of how key aspects of the legislative requirements are being met

The wording of key sections of the legislation demands interpretation and a school which is willing to indicate confidently its line of interpretation will be placing itself in a position of strength. Two clauses of the 1988 Act in particular call for interpretation:

A: the requirement that, over a term, the majority of acts of collective worship are of a broadly Christian character. In strict legal terms this means that more than half of Acts of worship should be 'broadly Christian'. This means that the remainder may focus on other traditions entirely should that be appropriate for the context of the school. "

It has often been noted that the requirement is not that acts of collective worship should be narrowly or exclusively Christian, and that the requirement relates to Christian character rather than Christian content. Thus, a school could say that the broad Christian character is achieved in the majority of its acts of collective worship through, for example:

- through a focus on themes that are both broadly Christian but can also be linked to other religions and beliefs. For example: encouraging a positive and responsible attitude to the environment;

- encouraging a quest for honesty, integrity, justice and truth;
- encouraging children to look beyond the obvious, the immediate and the material;
- encouraging love and respect for self and for the other person;
- encouraging service to others and to the community; and
- building Christian festivals into the yearly programme (which does not, of course preclude focusing on festivals from other traditions as well).

B: the requirement that acts of collective worship are appropriate for the ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds of pupils at the school

The reference to ages and aptitudes is a reminder that acts of collective worship should be both educational and meaningful. The fundamental way in which a school might take note of the children's family backgrounds (religious and non-religious) is by seeking to make collective worship as inclusive as possible. This might mean that a school:

- recognises that there are many forms of commitment, religious and non-religious;
- recognises that there are many forms of religious commitment;
- has carefully chosen songs to use in collective worship (on the basis that some are more appropriate to the collective setting of a school);
- regards variety – in culture, religion and belief – as something to be acknowledged and explored rather than avoided and denied; and
- builds festivals from a variety of cultural and religious traditions into its yearly programme.

7. A brief exploration of the relationship between collective worship and the school curriculum

This statement might explore the idea that collective worship is in 'dialogue' with the curriculum i.e.

collective worship draws from the curriculum – by providing an opportunity to reflect on and highlight classroom work, for example; and
 collective worship feeds back into the curriculum – by providing ideas and suggestions which can be followed up in the classroom, for example.

A special relationship with religious education might be noted (in that beliefs and values will often be the focus of collective worship, as will celebration and festival) but it would also be proper to point out to teachers that this should not replace religious education within the classroom, a part of the school curriculum.

8. A policy statement concerning requests for withdrawal from collective worship

This statement might simply reiterate the right of parents wholly or partly to withdraw their children from collective worship (see page 3) and the right of teachers to withdraw. The statement might continue by stating: what a member of staff should do if a parent requests withdrawal either verbally or in writing; and what a member of staff considering withdrawal should do.

9. Any other policy statements which the school feels would be helpful

These might include policy statements on such issues as:

prayer e.g.

The use of prayers from Christianity and other religious traditions has a place within school collective worship. However, leaders should be sensitive to the mixed nature of the school community and should be particularly careful with how prayers are introduced. School policy is that an 'invitation' to listen to the words of the prayer should be offered so that a variety of responses are possible – for example, "And now, in a moment of quietness, I want you to listen to some words which are very special for ... (eg Christians). Think about these words or other words which are special for you".

visitors e.g.

- The school has a long tradition of inviting visitors to contribute to or lead collective worship. However, it is important that visitors are chosen who:
 - understand the nature and purpose of collective worship and who will not, therefore, use the opportunity to preach or evangelise; and
 - can communicate well with children.

- In arranging for a visitor to collective worship, it is important that teachers:
 - liaise with the school assembly leader;
 - consider the format of the occasion (eg a talk by the visitor, interviewing the visitor);
 - provide the visitor with all necessary information (the school statement about the purpose of collective worship, the relevant theme, the size and age-range of the group, timings, equipment which is available, car parking facilities); and
 - write to thank the visitor (or get children to do so) after the visit.
- A small brochure has been prepared which can be sent to visitors after initial contact has been made.

Using visitors to lead or support Acts of collective worship

SACRE recommends that schools use the NATRE publication: "Voices of Faith and Belief" to help prepare visitors to support Acts of Worship.

As part of safeguarding duties and those that fall under the counter terrorism and securities act, schools must vet all visitors to the school including those who will contribute to Acts of worship.

In order to safeguard pupils from visitors who may have extreme or radical views school should:

- ensure all visitors are carefully vetted and take immediate action if any individual or group is perceived to be attempting to influence members of the School community as part of an act of worship
- consider open source checking any organisations which you might consider inviting into school for an act of worship, particularly those in the voluntary sector.

Keeping a record

- It is advisable for schools to keep a brief record of what takes place in its collective worship programme for a number of reasons. For example, records can:
 - in the short term, be a ready source of reference to ensure continuity and variety;
 - in the long term, provide a focus for review and development.
 - In addition, they can:
 - be a source of reference should a parent or other person raise a question about practice; and
 - provide material to show to and discuss with OFSTED inspectors.
 - experience shows that effective records are simple and accessible. As such, many schools:
 - o use a published grid for each week of the term, for example below:

Date	Leader	Content/Focus/Message	Song/Hymn Used	Comments

- keep the grids in a shared area on the school computer network where staff can both complete details of acts of collective worship for which they have been responsible and glance at the structure and content of those led by others.

Planning

In planning Acts of worship in different groupings, schools are advised to consider to what extent:

- an appropriate atmosphere (conducive to worship, albeit in an educational sense) is being created

- means of doing this might include: using appropriate seating arrangements, subtly marking the transition into and out of the activity (eg by changing the tone and volume of the voice), using a visual focal point, playing music;
- pupils are being given the opportunity to reflect and to think at depth
- means of doing this might include: encouraging response and the asking of questions, using stories which have depth, using silence and quietness, reading out words which invite reflection (poems, prayers etc), encouraging response but not necessarily discussion; and
- pupils and teacher adopt an appropriate bearing towards the activity
- this might include: quietening down, being prepared to listen to other people's responses, acknowledging 'deep' questions without necessarily attempting to answer them, accepting both religious and non-religious responses.
- a key question to ask would be, "Have children been provided with the opportunity to worship in their own way should they wish?"

Acts of worship and fundamental British Values

Acts of worship that promote the Fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs can help schools to demonstrate how they are meeting the requirements of section 78 of the Education Act 2002, in their provision of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Acts of worship and OFSTED inspections

A school might wish to address and consider the following questions prior to an OFSTED inspection.

1. In what ways is the school seeking to meet legal requirements relating to frequency and character?
2. What documentation do we aim to make available to the inspectors should they ask to see it?
3. Who will be the best person within the school to meet with the inspector dealing with the section relating to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development? How should this person prepare for the meeting?
4. Are we aware of what OFSTED documentation says about assembly and collective worship? (9)
5. Are we sufficiently clear about the distinction between 'assembly' and 'collective worship'?
6. What acts of collective worship will take place during the week of the inspection?
7. What is our thinking about how collective worship contributes to pupils' spiritual and moral development in particular? What is the evidence for this in practice?
8. To what extent are pupils involved in the assembly life of the school? Should their involvement be greater? Should the involvement of others (staff, visitors etc) be greater?
9. How many pupils (if any) are withdrawn from collective worship by parents? Have we formalised what they should be doing during collective worship time?
10. What are the strengths and weaknesses of current practice? How are we seeking to address weaknesses and to build on strengths?

Notes & References

1. NB DFE Circular 1/94 (January 1994), Religious Education & Collective Worship, para 58: 'Collective worship and assembly are distinct activities. Although they may take place as part of the same gathering, the difference between the two should be clear. Collective worship can, nevertheless, be related to the day-to-day life, aspirations and concerns of the school'.
2. NB DFE Circular 1/94 (January 1994), Religious Education & Collective Worship, para 57: '... worship in schools will necessarily be of a different character from worship amongst a group with beliefs in common. The legislation reflects this difference in referring to 'collective worship' rather than 'corporate worship'.
3. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
4. NB 'The challenge ... consists in creating an experience: which neither imposes nor compromises belief or unbelief but rather recognises the integrity and dignity of all members of the school community; which is essentially educational and stimulates the possibility of reflecting inwardly, sharing outwardly and living upwardly.'
(Angela Wood, Assembly Kit (BBC/Longman, 1991), p8)
5. NB 'Our fragmented society needs a whole series of 'reflective pools', places where the very deepest issues of life and death may be explored and understood away from the cut and thrust of the market-place.'
(Terry Waite, Taken on Trust (Coronet, 1994), p460)
6. Schools are advised to familiarise themselves with references to collective worship in the school inspection framework and handbook published by OFSTED; in particular the passages relating to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and also the inspection of religious education and collective worship.

18 January 2023	ITEM: 6
Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education	
Monitoring Provision for RE in Thurrock Schools	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key
Report of: Deborah Weston, Associate Adviser for Religious Education	
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director Learning Inclusion and Skills	
Accountable Director: Shelia Murphy, Corporate Director of Children’s Services	
This report is: Public	

Executive Summary

In order to discharge its legal duties, SACRE monitors provision for Religious Education in its local area where RE is delivered in accordance with the local Agreed Syllabus. Thurrock introduced a new Agreed Syllabus in 2022 and regularly monitors data on provision for the subject to establish how effective the new syllabus has been in meeting its aim to raise standards of RE. This report is based on a survey conducted as part of the launch of the syllabus

1. Recommendation(s) that SACRE:

1.1 Consider the survey report in Appendix 1,

1.2 Ask the LA officer to include the following information in conversations with schools:

- Where good practice is identified
- Where there is no evidence that the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus are met
- Where there are reports of limited or no provision.

2. Introduction and Background

It has been possible in the past for SACRE to carry out its monitoring function using a variety of methods:

- a. School visits and lesson observations
- b. The collation of comments on RE found in Ofsted inspection reports

c. Analysis of data

Smaller education budgets and less staff capacity mean that specific visits to schools by specialist advisers for RE are no longer possible for most local authorities, Ofsted no longer routinely reports on RE in particular and therefore SACREs around the country largely rely on data and information that schools are prepared to share from their own self-evaluative work.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 The data in this report was collected from delegates at the launch conference and has not necessarily been verified by a member of the senior leadership team of the school.

3.2 It is recommended therefore that this information on provision for RE should be considered alongside other data collected for SACRE.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 One of the responsibilities of a SACRE is to monitor provision for RE to be given in accordance with its Agreed Syllabus

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

5.1 Not applicable

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

6.1 The Local Authority reviews its Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education on a regular basis:

- Publishes an Annual Report of its work;
- Offers guidance on resources and methods of teaching and in consultation with Thurrock Schools;
- Monitors the quality of provision for RE and Collective Acts of Worship in Thurrock.

This exercise falls under the third element of this programme.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **David May**
Strategic Lead Finance

There are no financial implications to this report since the actions recommended in this report, if approved will be conducted by the Associate RE Adviser as part of her work

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Daniel Longe**
Principal Solicitor

The legal duties on the advisory council are set out in s391 of the Education Act 1996. The main one is to advise the local authority on such matters connected with the religious worship in community schools or in foundation schools which do not have a religious character and the religious education to be given in accordance with an agreed or other syllabus as the authority may refer to the council or as the council may see fit.

This report asks that the committee considers the attached documents and further action that may be warranted. No other decision is requested.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Becky Lee**
Team Manager Community Development and Equalities Adults, Housing and Health Directorate

The aim of this review is to collect information about the provision for RE in Thurrock, to address concerns and to celebrate success. Higher standards in the teaching of RE will help schools to fulfil their statutory duty to promote community cohesion and to encourage better respect and tolerance for those with different religions and beliefs.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder or Impact on Looked After Children

- Not applicable

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None

9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1 – SACRE survey of provision for Religious Education in Thurrock November 2022
- Appendix 2 – SACRE survey of provision for Religious Education in Thurrock November 2021

Report Author:

Deborah Weston, Associate Adviser for RE

Appendix 1

SACRE survey of provision for Religious Education in Thurrock November 2022

Methodology

The Survey was launched as part of the launch of the Agreed Syllabus using Thurrock Council's "Have your say" portal. There were 46 visitors, 12 from secondary schools and 34 from primaries. Respondents did not always answer all the questions. Where there was more than one respondent from a particular school, these have been indicated.

1. Has the subject leader taken part in any RE specific CPD over the last year?

No	27	59%
Yes	19	41%
Grand Total	46	

2. Have other teachers taken part in any RE specific CPD over the last year?

Blank	1	2.2%
No	37	80.4%
Yes	8	17.4%
Grand Total	46	

3. Do you have links with a local group of teachers in Thurrock? Would you be interested in leading or co leading a group?

Primary

No	13
We are part of the Grays Hub	4
Not yet	6
We have links within our Trust	9

Secondary

No links	6
SACRE	2
Yes	1
Trust	1

In the comments section, the majority of those with links and without expressed an interest in making links with others

There were two volunteers to lead or co-lead a network group. These were from Quarry Hill and Belmont Castle

4. Is the delivery of RE routinely combined with another subject e.g. PSHE, Citizenship?

Three secondary schools answered yes to this question; Gateway, Gable Hall and Harris Academy Ockendon. It is worth noting that the first two of these allocate a very small amount of teaching time to the subject whereas Harris Ockendon offer far more. See responses to the next question

5. How much time does each pupil spend on RE specific lessons each week on average?

Primary: Most schools report offering between 31-60 minutes at Key Stage 1 and 2 and a mixture of between 1-30 and 31-60 in the Early Years Foundation Stage

School	Minutes in EYFS	KS1	LKS2	UKS2
Quarry Hill Academy	1-30	31-60	31-60	31-60
Arthur Bugler Primary school	31-60	31-60	31-60	31-60
Aveley Primary school	1-30	31-60	31-60	31-60
Belmont Castle Academy	1-30	31-60	31-60	31-60
Corringham Primary School	N/A	31-60	31-60	31-60
Deneholm	31-60	31-60	31-60	N/A
Dilkes Academy	1-30	31-60	31-60	31-60
Gateway Primary Free School	1-30	31-60	31-60	31-60
Giffards Primary School	1-30	31-60	31-60	31-60
Herringham Primary	31-60	31-60	31-60	31-60
Horndon-on-the-Hill	1-30	31-60	31-60	31-60
Kenningtons Primary Academy		31-60	31-60	31-60
Little Thurrock	1-30	31-60	31-60	31-60
Quarry Hill Academy	31-60	31-60	31-60	31-60
Somers Heath Primary School	1-30	31-60	31-60	31-60
St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary school	61-90	91+	91+	91+
Stanford le Hope Primary School	1-30	1-30	1-30	1-30
Stanford-le-Hope Primary School	31-60	31-60	31-60	31-60
Stifford Clays	1-30	1-30	1-30	1-30
Thameside primary	1-30	31-60	31-60	31-60
Tilbury Pioneer Academy	31-60	31-60	31-60	31-60
Treetops School		31-60	31-60	31-60
Tudor Court Primary School	31-60	31-60	31-60	31-60
Warren Primary School	1-30	1-30	1-30	1-30
West Thurrock Academy	31-60	31-60	31-60	31-60
Woodside primary academy	1-30	31-60	31-60	31-60

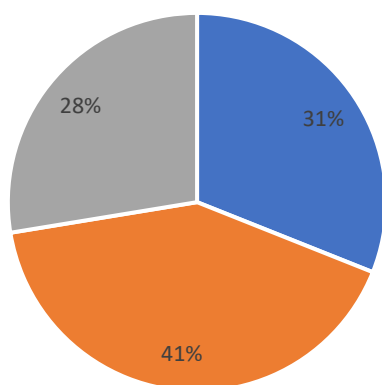
Secondary

How much time does each pupil spend on RE specific lessons each week on average?

- Compare with data in appendix B discussed at the Autumn Term meeting

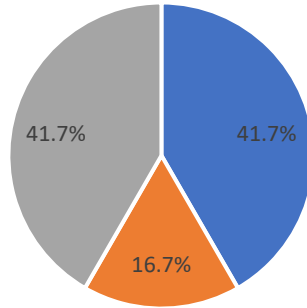
Name of school	KS3	KS4 (GCSE)	KS4 (Core)		
Gable Hall*	31-60	0	31-60		GCSE RS is not offered
Gable Hall*	1-30	0	1-30	Comb	GCSE RS is not offered
Gateway Academy*	1-30	0	0	Comb	GCSE RS is not offered
Gateway Academy*	31-60	0	0		There is no core RE lesson for pupils who do not opt for GCSE
Harris academy Chafford Hundred	61-90	91+	1-30		GCSE RS is an optional subject at KS4
Harris Academy Riverside*	61-90	61-90	0		GCSE RS is an optional subject at KS4
Harris Ockendon	61-90	61-90	61-90	Comb	GCSE RS is an optional subject at KS4
Orsett Heath Academy	31-60	n/a	n/a		
Ortu Hassenbrook Academy	61-90	0	31-60		GCSE RS in not offered
St Clere's School	31-60	91+	1-30		There is a core RE lesson for pupils who do not opt for GCSE
The Hathaway Academy*	31-60	90+	0		GCSE RS is an optional subject at KS4
William Edwards	31-60	91+	1-30		GCSE RS was offered in 2022 but insufficient pupils chose to allow the course to run

6. Who delivers RE in your primary school?



- All classes are taught RE by their class teacher
- Some classes are taught RE by an HLTA and some by their class teacher
- Some classes are taught RE by a PPA teacher and some by their class teacher

7. Who delivers RE in your secondary school?



- All lessons of RE are taught by teachers who only or mostly teach RE
- More than 50% of lessons are taught by a teacher who only or mostly teaches RE with the remainder taught by teachers who mostly teach a different subject
- More than 50% of lessons of RE are taught by teachers who mainly teach a different subject with some taught by those who mainly teach RE

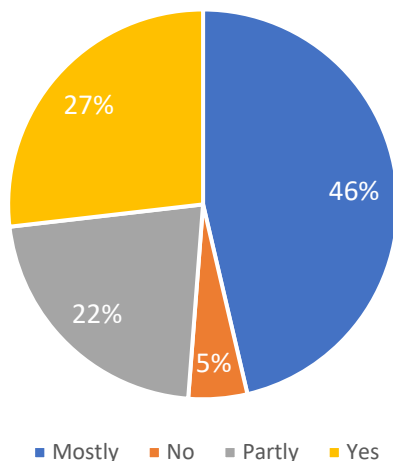
8. Has your academy chosen to adopt the Thurrock Agreed Syllabus?

Blank	8
N/A (e.g your school has a religious character and does not use the units of work)	1
No	1
Yes - fully	24
Yes - mostly	7
Yes - partly	5
Grand Total	46

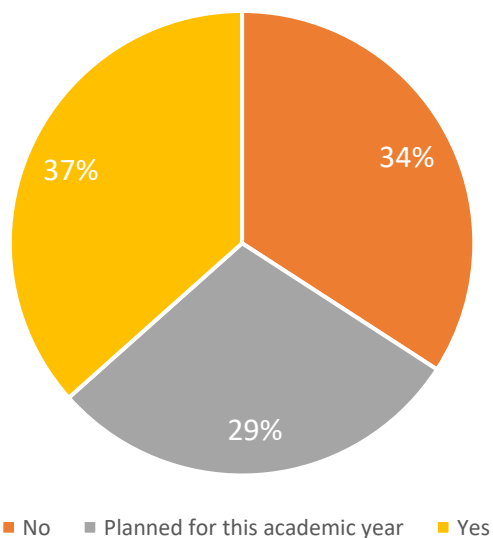
9. Does your school use or intend to use the Thurrock units of work?

Blank	5
N/A (e.g .your school has a religious character and does not use the units of work)	1
No	1
Yes -fully	19
Yes mostly	16
Yes partly	4
Grand Total	46

10. Are the resources available to you sufficient to support the RE programme?



11. Have any classes visited a place of worship in the last 12 months?



12. How long has the RE subject lead been in the school?

1 year	10
2 years	3
3 years	5
4 years	6
5 years plus	15
Don't know	2

Appendix 2

SACRE survey of provision for Religious Education in Thurrock November 2021

School name	% year 7 hours - RE	% year 8 hours - RE	% year 9 hours - RE	% year 10 hours - RE	% year 11 hours - RE
Grays Convent High School	7.86	6.92	4.58	10.7	8.11
Harris Academy Chafford Hundred	6.17	5.2	6.3	1.1 (Phil)	0.85 (Phil)
Harris Academy Ockendon	4.14	4.66	4.04	4.96	0
Harris Academy Riverside	0	1.85	0	0	0
Ormiston Park Academy	.	.	.	.	.
Orsett Heath Academy	2	4	.	.	.
Ortu Gable Hall School	2.48	2.56	2.35	0	0
Ortu Hassenbrook Academy	5.45	4.9	5.76	4.5	0
St Clare's School	4.74	4.39	4.33	0	0
Thames Park Secondary School	3.58	3.71	.	.	.
The Gateway Academy	3.68	3.49	0	0	0
The Hathaway Academy	4.44	5.01	3.85	2.19	2.07
William Edwards School	4.28	4.34	4.12	2.73	0.98

18 January 2023	ITEM: 7
Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education	
Census 2021 and its implications for SACRE	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key
Report of: Deborah Weston: Associate Adviser for Religious Education	
Report of: Deborah Weston, Associate Adviser for Religious Education	
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director Learning Inclusion and Skills	
Accountable Director: Shelia Murphy, Corporate Director of Children’s Services	

Executive Summary

The publication of the 2021 census on 29th November 2022 provides a useful source of information for SACRE. It allows members to consider whether or not the Agreed Syllabus is sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of schools serving both religious and non-religious families and where the demographic in relation to different religions varies. The 2021 census also provides a snapshot of the size of some of the smaller groups, allowing members to consider whether to recommend to the local authority that new members be included in Committee A.

- 1. Recommendation(s) that SACRE:**
 - 1.1 Review the data from the census as it applies to Thurrock**
 - 1.2 Consider whether the membership of Committee A is appropriate and, in particular, if SACRE should recommend to the Council that a representative of any other religion or belief system should be sought**
- 2. Introduction and Background**
 - 2.1 Group A of SACRE is required by law to include, "Such Christian denominations and other religious denominations as, in the opinion of the Authority, will approximately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area. In respect of Group A, section 390(6) Education Act 1996 states: The number of representative members appointed to any representative group under subsection (4)(a) [referred to as Group A] to represent each

denomination or religion required to be represented shall, so far as consistent with the efficient discharge of the group's functions, reflect broadly the proportionate strength of that denomination or religion in the area.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The decision of which groups to include in committee A is a matter for the council but it is within the remit of SACRE to make recommendations on this matter as it sees fit.
- 3.2 The Equality Act 2010 makes it illegal to discriminate against someone because they are of a particular religion, and the guidance published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission makes it clear this applies to smaller religions like Paganism: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/religion-or-belief-discrimination> If the council were to receive an application from a Pagan to serve SACRE then these legal matters would need to be considered. SACRE has not received such an application recently.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The options are therefore to act proactively in the light of the census data and recommend that the Council approach the Pagan Federation to find a local representative of the local community. Or wait to see if an application for membership is forthcoming and consider the matter at that time.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 Not applicable

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 None

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **David May**
Strategic Lead Finance

There are no financial implications to this report since the actions recommended in this report, are part of the council's duties in relation to SACRE which are funded by central government as part of the Central Schools Services Block

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Daniel Longe**
Principal Solicitor Council

The Equality Act 2010 makes it illegal to discriminate against someone because they are of a particular religion, and the guidance published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission makes it clear this applies to smaller religions like Paganism: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/religion-or-belief-discrimination>

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Becky Lee**
Team Manager Community Development and Equalities Adults, Housing and Health Directorate

Thurrock Collaborative Communities Framework, below, was agreed in January 2021. It sets out our equality objectives for the next 4 years. These are:

- access to services
- building cohesion and integration
- improving resilience
- developing our workforce

Consideration of data from the census about the different religious and non-religious communities in the area is part of this work and this report will allow SACRE to play its part in that.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder or Impact on Looked After Children

- Not applicable

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None

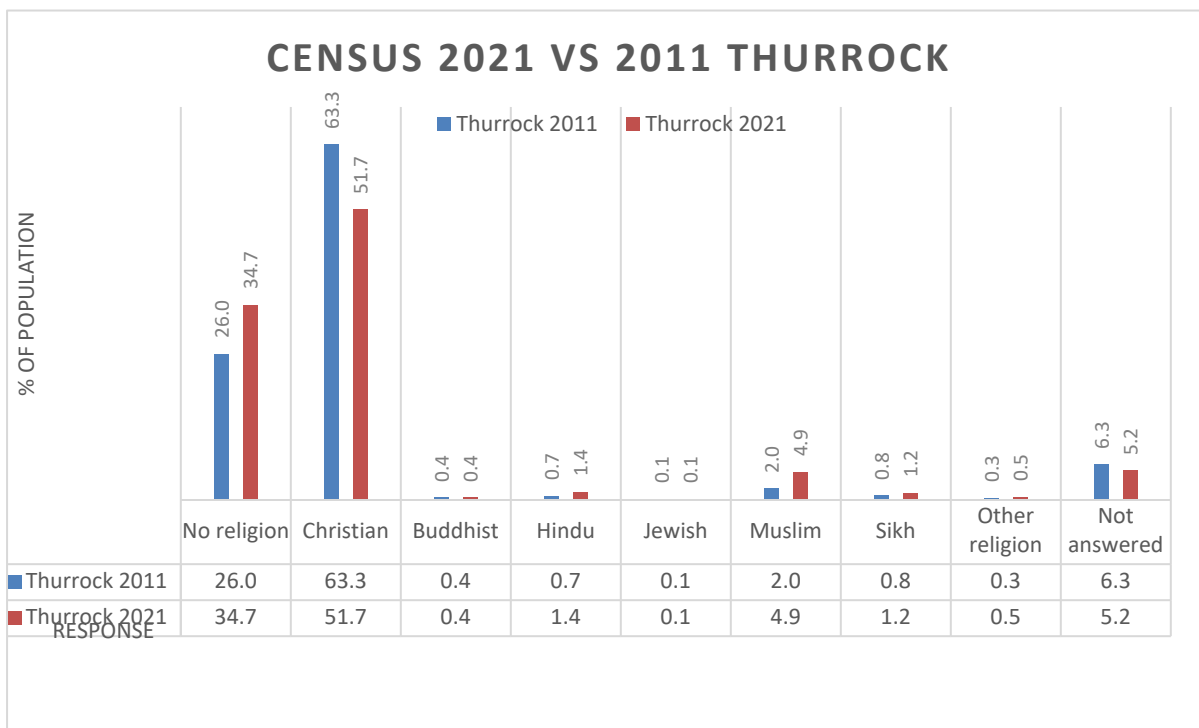
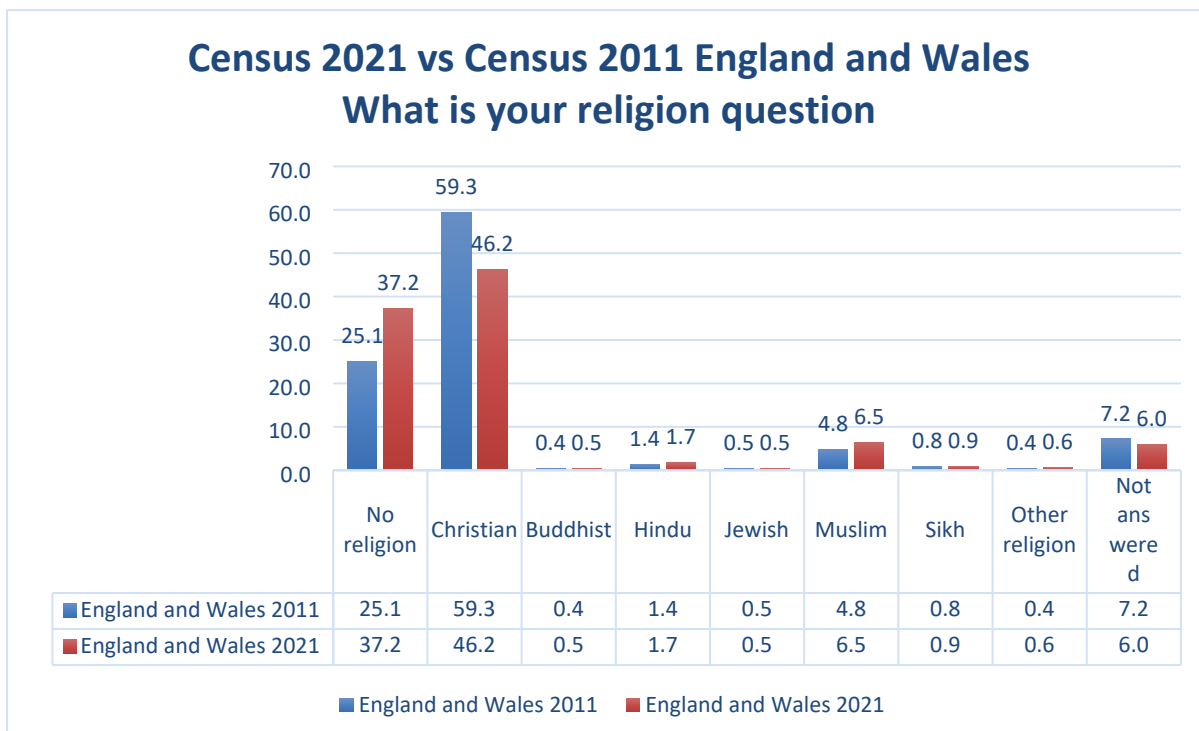
9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1 – Main points from the Office for National Statistics with additional commentary in relation to Thurrock
- Appendix 2 - National RE Updates for SACREs Spring 2023

Report Author:

Deborah Weston, Associate Adviser for RE

Appendix 1



Main points – From the Office for National Statistics with additional commentary in relation to Thurrock

For the first time in a census of England and Wales, less than half of the population (46.2%, 27.5 million people) described themselves as “Christian”, a 13.1 percentage point decrease from 59.3% (33.3 million) in 2011; despite this decrease, “Christian” remained the most common response to the religion question.

- In Thurrock the proportion of the population responding “Christian” fell by a similar number of percentage points but from a higher starting point (63.3) leaving the

population affiliating with Christianity (51.7%) higher than the national average (46.2%).

- “No religion” was the second most common response, increasing by 12.0 percentage points to 37.2% (22.2 million) from 25.2% (14.1 million) in 2011.
- In Thurrock “No religion” was also the second most common response but the increase was small; 8.7 percentage point to 34.7%.
- There were increases in the number of people who described themselves as “Muslim” (3.9 million, 6.5% in 2021, up from 2.7 million, 4.9% in 2011) and “Hindu” (1.0 million, 1.7% in 2021, up from 818,000, 1.5% in 2011).
- The Muslim population in Thurrock has grown at a faster rate than the national figure – increasing by almost two and a half times. The proportion of the population (4.9%) however, remains below the national figure (6.5%).
- The Hindu population of Thurrock has double since 2011 from 0.7% to 1.4% which is now approaching the national figure of 1.7%.
- London remains the most religiously diverse region of England in 2021, with over a quarter (25.3%) of all usual residents reporting a religion other than “Christian”; the North East and South West are the least religiously diverse regions, with 4.2% and 3.2%, respectively, selecting a religion other than “Christian”.
- In Thurrock 8.5% of the respondents reporting a religion other than Christianity, more than half of those are Muslims.

Regional data can be found here which demonstrates that some areas of Thurrock are far more religiously diverse than others.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/bulletins/religionenglandandwales/census2021>

Religion	Total population Thurrock	% Thurrock 2021	Total Population E&W	% E&W
Christian	90940	51.670%	27522672	46.181%
No religion	60954	34.633%	22105473	37.091%
Religion not stated	9196	5.225%	3595589	6.033%
Muslim	8586	4.878%	3868133	6.490%
Hindu	2376	1.350%	1032775	1.733%
Sikh	2030	1.153%	524140	0.879%
Buddhist	703	0.399%	272508	0.457%
Other religion: Shamanism	247	0.140%	7889	0.013%
Jewish	225	0.128%	271327	0.455%
Other religion	185	0.105%	7889	0.111%
Other religion: Pagan	150 (443 PF)	0.085% (0.25%)	73733	0.124%
Other religion: Spiritualist	89	0.051%	33134	0.056%
Other religion: Spiritual	60	0.034%	31611	0.053%
No religion: Agnostic	52	0.030%	32114	0.054%
Other religion: Mixed Religion	33	0.019%	11402	0.019%
Other religion: Wicca	29	0.016%	12813	0.021%
No religion: Atheist	26	0.015%	13848	0.023%
Other religion: Alevi	15	0.009%	25672	0.043%
Other religion: Jain	12	0.007%	24991	0.042%
Other religion: Satanism	9	0.005%	5054	0.008%

Other religion: Rastafarian	8	0.005%	5948	0.010%
Other religion: Traditional African	8	0.005%	661	0.001%
No religion: Humanist	7	0.004%	10246	0.017%
Other religion: Baha'i	6	0.003%	4716	0.008%
Other religion: Druid	6	0.003%	2490	0.004%
Other religion: Believe in God	6	0.003%	2414	0.004%
Other religion: Own Belief System	6	0.003%	2199	0.004%
Other religion: Heathen	5	0.003%	4721	0.008%
Other religion: Ravidassia	4	0.002%	9572	0.016%
Other religion: Taoist	4	0.002%	3724	0.006%
Other religion: Pantheism	3	0.002%	2299	0.004%
No religion: Free Thinker	3	0.002%	305	0.001%
Other religion: Chinese Religion	3	0.002%	112	0.000%
Other religion: Zoroastrian	2	0.001%	4090	0.007%
Other religion: Scientology	2	0.001%	1859	0.003%
Other religion: Theism	2	0.001%	860	0.001%
Other religion: Universalist	2	0.001%	764	0.001%
Other religion: Witchcraft	1	0.001%	1045	0.002%
Other religion: Animism	1	0.001%	802	0.001%
Other religion: Reconstructionist	1	0.001%	742	0.001%
Other religion: Vodun	1	0.001%	257	0.000%
Other religion: Thelemite	1	0.001%	227	0.000%

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National RE Updates for SACREs

Spring 2023

Research into parent views on Religious Education

In summer 2021, the Culham St Gabriel's Trust (CSTG) commissioned a survey to understand more about public perception of an education in religion and worldviews. In the summer of 2022, CSTG commissioned another survey, this time exploring the views of parents about education in religion and worldviews. In both cases, the language used in the questions was chosen to try to avoid these misconceptions and to collect a more accurate set of data about what people thought about modern RE.

Some key findings about what parents talk about with their children:

Around 8 in 10 discuss beliefs about the origins of life and the universe (78%), 7 in 10 discuss beliefs concerning what happens when we die (72%), 8 in 10 discuss beliefs that affect people's behaviour and decision making (77%) and 7 in 10 discuss issues related to religious and non-religious worldviews that appear in the media (67%)

Find out more here: <https://www.cstg.org.uk/activities/campaigns/parent-survey/>

How can SACRE capitalise on these findings to further improve RE provision in the LA?

Link between study of RS at examination level and positive outcomes for disadvantaged students?

There is a growing body of research linking the study of Religious Education/Studies with improved outcomes for pupils identified as 'disadvantaged'.

This collection of research would suggest that schools that are serious about improving the outcomes for their disadvantaged pupils, should look carefully at their provision for Religious Studies at key stage 4 and 5.

Find out more [here](#):

What do we know about the levels of disadvantage in the schools in our area and their experience of Religious education?

Cross-party calls for RE National Plan after Westminster debate

London, 01 November 2022: A Westminster Hall debate heard cross-party calls of support for religious education, as MPs urged the Government to do more to protect the subject, they considered vital for young people in modern Britain.

The debate, entitled ‘Religious Education in Modern Britain’, was called by Conservative MP Martin Vickers who cited concerns about the number of schools fulfilling their statutory responsibility to teach the subject. At year 11, one school in five reported offering zero hours of RE.

[Read more here](#)

How do these figures compare with the picture in our LA?

What action (if any) should SACRE be taking?

Would SACRE like to inform local politicians further about issues facing RE? [This document](#) might support this activity

NATRE survey of provision for RE in primary schools published

Key highlights from the survey show:

- The number of schools where pupils are withdrawn is increasing. 23% of schools report some withdrawal from RE (18.6% in 2020. and 16% in 2018).
- 96% of schools report that they make provision for RE for all pupils in their school.
- More than 40% of teachers report that they received between 0 and 3 hours of training to teach RE in their initial teacher training. 20% received none.
- 63% of schools say some RE is being delivered by adults other than teachers (TAs/HLTAs etc.)
- In 28% of schools, RE receives no budget or no set budget and is 30% less funding than foundation subjects.
- In just under a third of schools (31.5%) insufficient time (less than 60 mins) is being spent on the teaching of RE to ensure that pupils make good progress.
- In 80% of schools, subject leaders receive some training but 25% of other teachers receive none and report reduced confidence.
- In over 30% of schools, time for RE increased and in 30% of these, Ofsted has cited as the main reason: inspection comments, the Framework, or the Research Review in RE.

Read more [here](#) and an infographic [here](#):

To what extent do these findings from primary teachers nationally, reflect the situation in our area?

Office for National Statistics publishes responses to the question on religion in census 2021

For the first time in a census of England and Wales, less than half of the population (46.2%, 27.5 million people) described themselves as “Christian”, a 13.1 percentage point decrease from 59.3% (33.3 million) in 2011; despite this decrease, “Christian” remained the most common response to the religion question.

“No religion” was the second most common response, increasing by 12.0 percentage points to 37.2% (22.2 million) from 25.2% (14.1 million) in 2011.

There were increases in the number of people who described themselves as “Muslim” (3.9 million, 6.5% in 2021, up from 2.7 million, 4.9% in 2011) and “Hindu” (1.0 million, 1.7% in 2021, up from 818,000, 1.5% in 2011).

Wales had a greater decrease in people reporting their religion as “Christian” (14.0 percentage point decrease, from 57.6% in 2011 to 43.6% in 2021) and increase in “No religion” (14.5 percentage point increase, from 32.1% in 2011 to 46.5% in 2021) compared with England and Wales overall.

London remains the most religiously diverse region of England in 2021, with over a quarter (25.3%) of all usual residents reporting a religion other than “Christian”; the North East and South West are the least religiously diverse regions, with 4.2% and 3.2%, respectively, selecting a religion other than “Christian”.

What are the implications of this census for our Agreed Syllabus and the membership of SACRE?

How are the religious and non-religious traditions, including the smaller ones reflected in the membership of our SACRE?

How does the data for 2021 compare with 2011? How is our area similar and different to England and Wales as a whole?

Theos Report: Who are the ‘Nones’ and what do they believe?

This report published on 24th November, shortly before the census data above was released explores the demography, beliefs and practices of Nones and then presents a cluster analysis of this group. It shows that Nones comprise a complex and sometimes counter-intuitive group with, for example, only 51% of them stating they “don’t believe in God,” and 42% believing in some form of the supernatural. [Read more here](#)

What, if any, are the implications of this report for our Agreed Syllabus?

Welcome webinars for NATRE members

New NATRE members are invited to our monthly welcome webinars. Get started and access our free live monthly webinar training designed to help you use your NATRE membership and enjoy it to its fullest!

What will you learn?

- How to Access NATRE resources
- Access online termly mailing resources
- Access Local Groups area
- Take the best out of the NATRE monthly newsletter
- How to redeem your REtoday library membership
- How to use your membership discount

Register your interest to attend a webinar at this link.

<https://www.natre.org.uk/member-login/natre-members-welcome-webinar/>

Inclusive Judaism: resources from the Jewish Museum of London

Classroom resources, including an extensive image library, open up the diversity of Jewish communities. Developers, Shereen Hunte and Eliana Mendelsohn, say:

The teaching of Inclusive Judaism is important for many reasons and ensures that:

- *The Jewish community is represented authentically.*
- *Students truly understand what it means to be Jewish, in all its diversity.*
- *We are able to connect to each other's experiences with empathy and compassion.*

See: [Inclusive Judaism - The Jewish Museum London](#)

Monday nights on Café Natre: Free webinars for primary and secondary ECTs – a taster for NATRE ECT membership.

Early Career Teachers of RE have access to a range of free support through a series of online sessions. 'Café' sessions give you a chance to talk with experienced teachers and experts from different worldview backgrounds. The taught sessions offer expert input with a focus on practical classroom strategies.

Date – All Mondays 4.00-5.30pm	Topic
9 Jan	Taught session: Focus on Non-religious worldviews
13 Feb	Taught session: Focus on Hindu Dharma

13 Mar	Café NATRE – Subject knowledge Judaism
8 May	Taught session: Focus on Worldviews
12 June	Taught session: Focus on Sikhi
10 July	Café NATRE: Subject knowledge Christianity

ECT webinars booking link <http://ow.ly/VupG5oKG3cP>

CPD for all teachers of RE



28 - 29 January 2023

Includes recordings and downloads from all seminars!



[Download the timetable here](#)

Saturday 28 January AND Sunday 29 January 2023 (PLUS additional weekday twilight seminars leading up to Strictly!)

Venue: Online, all from the comfort of your own home!

Cost: tickets are **£135 each**, which includes downloadable handouts and presentations from all sessions PLUS access to all recordings after the event! Delegates will also receive a gift box of goodies, posted straight to your door!

NATRE MEMBER DISCOUNTS AVAILABLE: All NATRE member types will receive an extra £25 off the cost. PAY JUST £110 (saving £25).

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18 January 2023		ITEM: 8
Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education		
Annual Report 2021-2022 Thurrock SACRE		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key	
Report of: Deborah Weston, Associate Adviser for Religious Education		
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director Learning Inclusion and Skills		
Accountable Director: Shelia Murphy, Corporate Director of Children’s Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report presents the Annual Report to members of SACRE for approval

- 1. Recommendation(s) that SACRE:**
 - 1.1 Accept this report as an accurate record of its work for the period September 2021 – July 2022**
 - 1.2 Requests that the Assistant Director Education and Skills continues to include discussions about RE provision in the scheduled discussions with senior leadership teams**
 - 1.3 Requests that the school effectiveness team include a review of schools’ provision for RE and Collective Worship as part of their annual conversations. Specifically, that they consider:**
 - **whether the level and quality of provision in academy schools is similar in breadth and ambition to that provided in LA maintained schools (i.e. through compliance with the Thurrock Agreed Syllabus including the knowledge, understanding specified and the standards for each key stage. This is the expectation of the DfE and Ofsted**
 - **If timetabling of RE in secondary schools ensures that those delivering RE are suitably trained/qualified to do so.**
 - **Whether RE is treated differently from other subjects on the secondary curriculum, such as being offered in tutor time, drop**

down days, taught by teachers who mainly teach other subjects etc.

- **the impact on pupil outcomes of the combination of subjects such as RE, RSE, Citizenship and PSHE**
- **the level of training provided to those teaching RE in all phases especially when they have no previous experience of teaching the subject**
- **the impact on pupil attainment of pupils being entered for a GCSE at the end of year 10**

2. Introduction and Background

It is a legal requirement that SACRE submit an annual report of its activities to the local authority. A copy should also be sent to the Department for Education and is requested by the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE).

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

Members are requested to accept, amend or reject the report.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

In order that SACRE fulfils its statutory duty to publish an annual report and to advise the LA on RE given in accordance with the agreed syllabus, and on matters related to its functions, whether in response to a referral from the LA or as it sees fit.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- Not applicable

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

The Local Authority reviews its Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education on a regular basis;

- Publishes an Annual Report of its work;
- Offers guidance on resources and methods of teaching and in consultation with Thurrock Schools;
- Monitors the quality of provision for RE and Collective Acts of Worship in Thurrock.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **David May**
Strategic Lead Finance

There are no financial implications for this report.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Daniel Longe**
Principal Solicitor

SACRE is asked to accept, reject or amend the report. S391 of the Education Act 1996 requires SACRE to publish a report as to the exercise of its functions and any action taken by representative groups on the council during the last year. The section states that “The council’s report shall in particular—

- a) specify any matters in respect of which the council have given advice to the authority,
- b) broadly describe the nature of the advice given, and
- c) where any such matter was not referred to the council by the authority, give the council’s reasons for offering advice on that matter.”

The Committee is requested to accept the report, and also that it makes two decisions that are related to the report findings.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Becky Lee**
Team Manager Community Development and Equalities Adults, Housing and Health Directorate

Although there are no direct diversity implications, the Annual Report demonstrates how the work of SACRE continues to promote an understanding of different religions in education therefore promoting cohesion.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder or Impact on Looked After Children

- Not applicable

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council’s website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None

9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1 – Annual Report Of The Thurrock Standing Advisory Council On Religious Education (SACRE) For 2021 – 2022

Report Author:

Deborah Weston, Associate Adviser for RE

Appendix 1

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE THURROCK STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE) FOR 2021 – 2022



This artwork by David O (Quarry Hill Academy Key Stage 2) was inspired by Psalm 19:1
“The heavens declare the glory of God. The skies proclaim the work of His hands.”

David was one of the prize winners in the Thurrock Spirited Arts Competition.

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Introduction

Since 1988, it has been a requirement that every local authority (LA) has a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE).

Though legislation sets out both the structure and the remit of a local SACRE - principally, overseeing religious education (RE) and collective worship - in practice every SACRE has developed its own particular style and character.

Thurrock SACRE developed its own particular style and character has over the years, as this report will testify.

It is a legislative requirement that each SACRE produces an annual report of its work and that this is published, sent to the local authority, to local schools and to other interested parties. One important element of the report is performance data and an analysis of the extent to which schools are meeting their legal duties in relation to RE. Validated GCSE data was not available until this month, hence the delay in the publication of the report. More recently, other datasets have been made available by the DfE, most significantly the school workforce data that supports the monitoring of the level of provision in secondary schools.

Foreword by the Chair of SACRE – Mr Phil Anderson

Membership of Thurrock Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education 2021-2022						
Committee	Representing	Nominating Body	No. of Reprs	Names of Reprs.	Date Appointed	Date due for re-election
A	Christian Denominations & other RE Denominations		9			
A	Free Church Christian	Free Church Federal Council	2	Mrs S Lawson	June 2019	May 2023
A		Free Church Federal Council		Mr P Anderson	June 2019	May 2023
A	Roman Catholic	Diocese of Brentwood	1	Mrs R Saul	March 2020	May 2024
A	Muslim	Thurrock Islamic Education & Cultural Association	2	Mr J Hussein	October 2019	September 2023
A		Thurrock Islamic Education & Cultural Association		Vacancy	Vacancy	Vacancy
A	Sikh	Local Sikh Guru Gudwara Committee.	1	Ms H Kaur Takhtar	May 2018	June 2022
A	Pentecostal		1	Mr T Ojetola	July 2018	June 2022
A	Buddhist	Buddhist Society	1	Mr A Kariyawasam	June 2019	May 2023
A	Jewish	Board of Deputies of British Jews	1	Ms S Perlmutter	June 2019	May 2023
A	Hindu	Vacancy	1	Vacancy	Vacancy	Vacancy

Committee	Representing	Nominating Body	No. of Reps	Names of Reps.	Date Appointed	Date due for re-election
B	Church of England		4			
B	Church of England	Diocese of Chelmsford		Mr P Anderson	June 2019	May 2023
B	Church of England	Diocese of Chelmsford		Mrs L Fry	March 2020	February 2024
B	Church of England	Diocese of Chelmsford		Ms L Olajide	2021	2025
B	Church of England	Diocese of Chelmsford		Vacancy	Vacancy	Vacancy

Committee	Representing	Nominating Body	No. of Reps	Names of Reps.	Date Appointed	Date due for re-election
C	Teachers' Associations (pref. Primary, Secondary & Special Schools)		6			
C	Teachers' Associations Primary	Professional Associations Group		Ms J Culloty	May 2022	June 2026
C	Teachers' Associations, Primary	Professional Associations Group		Mrs C Pumfrey	March 2020	February 2024
C	Teachers' Associations, Secondary	Professional Associations Group		Ms A Jellicoe	May 2021	May 2024
C	Teachers' Associations Secondary	Professional Associations Group		Vacancy	Vacancy	Vacancy

C	Teachers' Associations	Professional Associations Group		Vacancy	Vacancy	Vacancy
C	Teachers' Associations	Professional Associations Group		Vacancy	Vacancy	Vacancy

Committee	Representing	Nominating Body	No. of Reps	Names of Reps.	Date Appointed	Date due for re-election
D	Local Education Authority		3			
D	Local Education Authority	Thurrock Council		Councillor M Kerin	May 2018	May 2022
D	Local Education Authority	Thurrock Council		Councillor G Collins	May 2019	May 2023
D	Local Education Authority	Thurrock Council		Vacancy	Vacancy	Vacancy

Committee	Representing	Nominating Body	No. of Reps	Names of Reps.	Date Appointed	Date due for re-election
(non-voting)	Co-opted Member		1			
	Vacancy	SACRE		Vacancy	Vacancy	Vacancy

SACRE Meetings Held

The following SACRE meetings were held during the reporting period:

3rd November 2021

5th January 2022

8th June 2022

All meetings were held remotely on Microsoft Teams and were quorate.

Membership and attendance

SACRE are pleased to report that attendance at SACRE has improved during the pandemic. It appears that remote meetings are easier for people to attend than face to face. SACRE have agreed to meet remotely for the Autumn and Spring meetings and face to face or hybrid in the Summer.

ADVICE:

SACRE wishes to thank officers for their support in ensuring places on all four committees of SACRE are filled.

Work Plan 2021-22

The work plan for 2021-2022 is reported as Appendix A

Monitoring and Evaluation

Standards in Thurrock Schools.

SACRE undertakes a number of activities annually to fulfil its responsibilities including the monitoring of:

School websites

Schools are required to publish their curriculum for each subject for each school year. This includes Religious Education, “even when it is called something else.” SACRE investigated school websites in order to learn more about how RE, including the Thurrock Agreed Syllabus was being used. Some schools published a comprehensive RE programme and were clearly using the Agreed Syllabus and accompanying scheme of work. Others failed to publish information on RE or reported a curriculum that did not appear to comply either with the Agreed Syllabus or, in the case of some academies, their academy funding agreement.

SACRE Advice: SACRE has advised the council to carry out an investigation into these cases.

School Workforce Data (Secondary)

Schools complete the school workforce census every November and this allows SACRE to discuss the number of teaching hours each secondary school reports for RE. Although not all schools appear to complete the census accurately, it appears that more schools are reporting RE and there are fewer incidents of a mismatch between different sources of data on the same school i.e. a website check, GCSE entry data and school workforce figures.. SACRE is pleased that steps to encourage schools to report their provision for RE accurately are having a positive effect.

Appendix B below sets out the data schools reported to the Department for Education.

SACRE advice: SACRE has advised the council to remind four schools that they appear not to be reporting their provision for RE accurately and should try to rectify that situation when completing the next census. We have also asked the council to discuss provision for RE in three schools where the available data might indicate that they are not providing RE for all pupils in accordance with their funding agreement.

GCSE Entries and Results

The Thurrock Agreed Syllabus requires that all students in all schools follow a course in Religious Education leading to a GCSE qualification. The publication of results therefore is another tool that helps us monitor levels and quality of provision. However, during the pandemic, DfE made a decision from the summer of 2020 to Summer 2021 that because qualifications such as GCSE and A were awarded based on school assessment, it would not be reasonable to use them in national performance tables. This means that 2022 is the first time that SACRE has had a chance to monitor GCSE entry and performance in three years.

SACRE noted that in 2019 74% of Thurrock children entered for GCSE RS were achieving a grade of 9-4, the national average was 78%. In 2022, only 55% of Thurrock students were achieving this grade. One explanation for this rapid fall might be that in some schools the recommended time for GCSE of 120-140 guided learning hours is not being offered and in others, entry appears to be made at the end of year 10 instead of year 11.

It was highlighted that Thurrock's position in a ranked list of local authorities by rate of entry for GCSE had fallen from 120 to 138 out of 151 local authorities when ranked according to entries for GCSE Religious Studies. This is because on 19% of pupils (down from 25%) completing year 11 are entered for GCSE in Thurrock. Members were disappointed by this figure. The highest ranked authority entered 87% and the lowest 14%.

SACRE ADVICE

SACRE wishes to advise the council of its agreed view that where SACRE has identified strengths or areas for development in relation to Religious Education in specific schools, the subject should form part of the annual conversations conducted by the School Effectiveness Team. This we believe is consistent with School Support Strategy 2019 and

the aim that by 2022, there will be an effective process to 'challenge and support all schools to increase quality and standards of education'.¹

Acts of Worship

Following a review of a small number of school policies for collective worship, SACRE resolved to provide revised guidance to schools including a model policy. SACRE agreed that even though this policy is not a required policy, it was important for schools to have a published document so that their practice was clear to parents and also in case there were to be a challenge to that practice.

¹ Thurrock Council Education Support Strategy 2019-2022
<https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/sites/default/files/assets/documents/education-support-strategy-2019-v02.pdf>

SACRE discussion of National Developments in RE

At each meeting, SACRE received an update of some of the national developments in RE. In this reporting year, these updates and publications included the following:

- i. the completion of a public perception survey on RE conducted by Culham St Gabriel's Trust <https://www.cstg.org.uk/activities/campaigns/public-perception/>
- ii. Publications from Ofsted and Ofqual in relation to examination
- iii. Resources published by organisations linked to specific religious or non-religious worldviews.
- iv. Government action related to RE including responses to parliamentary questions and the White Paper 2022.

Other matters discussed that fall under the remit of SACRE

Thurrock SACRE is pleased to be part of the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE) and welcomed the introduction of a comprehensive training programme for SACRE members.

Officers from the Chafford Hundred Teaching School Hubs attended SACRE during the year and briefed members about the services offered to schools. SACRE agreed to work closely with the hub, especially in relation to initial teacher education and addressing the shortage of secondary specialists in Thurrock schools.

Agreed Syllabus review

SACRE completed its Agreed Syllabus review in the spring of 2022 with a launch planned for Autumn 2022. SACRE and its Agreed Syllabus Conference resolved to renew the license with RE Today for their model syllabus A and to offer printed copies for all schools in Thurrock.

Teacher Education

SACRE noted the disappointing news that following the withdrawal of bursaries in the previous year, the number of recruits to training to teach RE had fallen again. Given that the DfE had failed to meet its target for recruiting teachers of RE for 9 years in the previous 10, and the fact that three times as many lessons of RE are taught by those with no-post A level qualification in the subject, it was difficult to see how this could be justified.

In more positive news, the government had decided to continue funding subject knowledge enhancement courses so that those with a degree in a subject outside the Theology and Religious Studies field could be better prepared to train as a teacher of RE.

SACRE continued to monitor opportunities for training and to circulate these to teachers in Thurrock. These included:

[NATRE's New2RE programme](#) for primary and secondary Early Career teachers (in their first two years of teaching) and those trained in another subject but new to teaching RE

[Research of the Month](#) from RE:Online to help teachers keep up to date with the latest developments in their subject

[#REChatUK twitter forum](#)

Occurs the first Monday of every month in term time. The timetable is here: [#REchatUK \(natre.org.uk\)](#)

Appendix A Workplan 2021-2022

SACRE WORK PLAN 2021-2022 To meet the statutory duties of a SACRE

Objective	Action	Responsibility	Date	Success criteria
1. SACRE meetings are planned and dates published annually	Agenda planning Liaison with relevant council departments Meeting preparation Report writing Meeting attendance Minute taking Publication of meeting agendas and minutes SACRE members to consider taking part in NASACRE provided online training	Clerk, Chair, Adviser LA representative, members	Termly SACRE meetings	Meetings are effective meetings with actions followed up between meetings Members have a working knowledge of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> issues affecting RE in the area the Agreed Syllabus for RE an understanding of the responsibilities of SACRE
2. SACRE have the opportunity to consider national developments in relation to RE in Thurrock	Consider relevant material from National organisations (AREAIC, NATRE, NASACRE/RE Council/ Culham St Gabriel's Trust as well as the DfE, Ofsted and Thurrock Council departments	Adviser	As information is published	Items on the Agenda for each meeting, Attendance at relevant meetings e.g. NASACRE AGM Minutes record discussions and actions
3. Produce annual report of the work of SACRE including advice to the council.	Consider the National Association of SACRES template for annual reports Collate information, source data and draft report Ensure final report presented to LA Send copy to Department for Education and to NASACRE	Adviser to draft Chair to write introduction Clerk to circulate. Elected representative to present to council	Spring Term (to account for data publication dates)	Completed draft in time for Spring meeting Report presented to council Copies sent to all schools Copy acknowledged by DfE

4. Engage with local schools and Academy Trusts to understand how Religious Education and Collective Worship are provided in Thurrock	<p>Invite a sample of schools to complete the RE Quality Mark Template for self-evaluation.</p> <p>Share with school leaders and governors to encourage completion</p> <p>Committee considers school reports (REQM self-evaluations)</p>	<p>(SACRE members at least one per year)</p> <p>Associate Adviser with support from TPHA.</p>	<p>Up to 4 school visits – 2 per term</p> <p>Suggested schedule – schools to complete once every three years</p>	<p>Meaningful evaluation visits or discussion completed, and reports discussed at SACRE meetings.</p>
5. Provide information on the RE curriculum to schools including through training	<p>Update schools on current developments in RE (NATRE and other material requested by SACRE)</p>	<p>Adviser</p> <p>Adviser and RE Today</p>	<p>Termly</p> <p>Annually – Summer Term subject to funding</p>	<p>Schools in receipt of material</p> <p>Teachers respond to material received</p> <p>Teachers raise questions to the adviser</p>
6. Monitor provision for RE and Collective Worship	<p>Source and present national and local data as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – GCSE validated and unvalidated results and entries (local and national) – School workforce data (local and national) – Surveys of provision and of issues such as withdrawal, use of agreed syllabus, who teaches RE etc (local) – Review school websites – Write to schools about findings – Sample collective worship policies 	<p>Adviser</p> <p>All SACRE members</p> <p>LA representative</p>	<p>Annually</p>	<p>LA respond to advice offered on strengths of RE and collective worship, and areas in need of development</p> <p>Schools respond to feedback on their websites and policies</p>
7. Evaluate SACRE work and establish priorities	<p>Item at autumn term meeting</p>	<p>All SACRE members</p>	<p>Autumn term meeting</p>	<p>Evaluation identified success criteria are met</p>

Schedule 2021/22 Date of meeting	Subject	Objective (note – objectives 1 and 2 apply to all meetings)
Autumn 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National developments - update • Monitoring provision via school workforce data / self-evaluation • Review of membership and attendance • Evaluation of work plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 • 7 • 2 • 6
Spring 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring provision via GCSE and A level results (if available) • Annual report approval/ using new template • Relationships e.g: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Schools and Academies ○ Teaching School Hubs ○ the Council ○ Governors ○ Communities of religion and belief ○ Thurrock work on Community Integration ○ NASACRE ○ Youth Cabinet ○ Regional Schools Commissioners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 • 3 • 4+5
Summer 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards and Achievements in RE in schools • Review of SACRE website • Review of Collective Worship and right of withdrawal • Ofsted Framework on RE – latest reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 • 6 • 6 • 5

	• Spirited Arts Competition	• 4
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Appendix B - Provision for RE as reported in the workforce census -November 2021

November 2021

School name	% year 7 hours - RE	% year 8 hours - RE	% year 9 hours - RE	% year 10 hours - RE	% year 11 hours - RE	GCSE entries	GCSE Grade 9-4	Notes
Grays Convent High School	7.86	6.92	4.58	10.7	8.11	95%	85%	
Harris Academy Chafford Hundred	6.17	5.2	6.3	1.1 (Phil)	0.85 (Phil)	3%	2.2%	RE is optional at KS4
Harris Academy Ockendon	4.14	4.66	4.04	4.96	0	0%	N/A	RS is optional at KS4. Core RE delivered by tutors but planned by RE specialist
Harris Academy Riverside	0	1.85	0	0	0	21%	20.5%	RE is optional at KS4
Ormiston Park Academy	.	.	.	.	.	0%	N/A	Not reported in 2021
Orsett Heath Academy	2	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Ortu Gable Hall School	2.48	2.56	2.35	0	0	0.4%	0%	No GCSE offered
Ortu Hassenbrook Academy	5.45	4.9	5.76	4.5	0	0%	N/A	
St Clere's School	4.74	4.39	4.33	0	0	0%	N/A	There is a core RE lesson for pupils who do not opt for GCSE
Thames Park Secondary School	3.58	3.71	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
The Gateway Academy	3.68	3.49	0	0	0	96%	50.5%	No GCSE offered for 2022. There is no core RE lesson
The Hathaway Academy	4.44	5.01	3.85	2.19	2.07	9%	4.2%	RE is optional at KS4
William Edwards School	4.28	4.34	4.12	2.73	0.98	4%	1.7%	GCSE RS was offered in 2022 but insufficient pupils chose to allow the course to run

Key Blue Shading: Reporting Query

Orange Shading: Provision Query