

<b>3 November 2021</b>		<b>ITEM: 5</b>
<b>Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education</b>		
<b>Public Perception of Religious Education</b>		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Non-Key	
<b>Report of:</b> Deborah Weston, Associate Adviser for Religious Education		
<b>Accountable Assistant Director:</b> Michele Lucas, Assistant Director Learning Inclusion and Skills		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Shelia Murphy, Corporate Director of Children's Services		
<b>This report is Public</b>		

## **Executive Summary**

This report details the findings of a survey about public perceptions of Religious Education with suggestions for actions by SACRE

- 1. Recommendation(s) that SACRE:**
  - 1.1 Review the summary of the survey (see Appendix 1)**
  - 1.2 Consider the relevance of the points for RE in Thurrock**
  - 1.3 Write to school leaders and governors to make them aware of the survey and its results**
  - 1.4 Write to teachers to suggest they use the infographic in open evenings or options consultations.**
- 2. Introduction and Background**
  - 2.1** One of the challenges for teachers of religious education is that parents and the wider public often have misconceptions about the subject. These misconceptions may be passed on to children and impact on their attitude to the subject. Some parents may even request withdrawal from RE on the basis of their own experience of RE at school or because they think it is about religious nurture.

## 2.2 The findings of the survey are as follows:

On understanding religious and non-religious worldviews:

- Around two-thirds of UK adults say it's important to understand the beliefs of others in at least four contexts:
  - In everyday life (69%)
  - In relationships with friends and family (65%)
  - In school (65%)
  - In local communities (64%)
  - In the workplace (61%)
- Two-thirds (64%) think that an understanding of their own beliefs is important to them, while over half (57%) agree that this understanding has a positive impact on their wellbeing

On the importance and role of Religious Education:

- Nearly two-thirds (64%) of UK adults think that it is important that RE is part of the school curriculum today
- Two-thirds (65%) of respondents agree that RE has an impact on people's ability to understand each other in wider society
- 71% stated that RE should reflect the diversity of backgrounds and beliefs in the UK today

## 2.3 The main conclusion is that:

Most UK adults think that RE should be taught in schools, with the majority agreeing that it helps young people understand and respect others' beliefs, regarded by many as important in a variety of social and private contexts.

## 3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 Schools need to be informed about educational research, especially when it affects a curriculum subject or relationships with parents/carers.

3.2 Likewise, SACRE needs to be aware of these issues because they impact on the delivery of RE according to the Agreed Syllabus.

## 4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 According to the non-statutory guidance – RE in English Schools (2010), SACRE should provide advice and support on the effective teaching of RE. This advice and support includes keeping stakeholders include SACRE members and schools informed about current developments that impact on the subject.

## 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 first element of this programme.

## **7. Implications**

### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **David May**  
**Strategic Lead Finance, Corporate 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: **Lucinda Bell**  
**Education Lawyer**

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 (1) the religious worship in community schools or in foundation schools without a religious character and (2) the religious education to be given in accordance with an agreed or other syllabus, as the authority may refer to the advisory council, or as the council may see fit.

This report is for review and consideration. No decision is required.

### **7.3 Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Becky Lee**  
**Community Development and Equalities Team Manager**

The aim of this report is to provide information about the context for RE in Thurrock, and to address concerns. If SACRE better understand the way that the public perceive RE, they will be able to better support schools. 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, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder, Health Inequalities and Impact on Looked After Children

- Not applicable

8. **Appendices to the Report**

- Appendix One - Religion & Worldviews Survey 2021

**Report Author:**

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Associate Adviser for RE