

<b>7 June 2023</b>		<b>ITEM: 7</b>
<b>Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education</b>		
<b>Update on National Developments and Opportunities</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:</b> Public		

## **Executive Summary**

This report details the key national developments that impact on Religious Education with suggestions for actions by SACRE

### **1. Recommendation(s) that SACRE:**

- **Review the information collected -see Appendix 1**
- **Evaluate the relevance of each section for RE in Thurrock**
- **Authorise the adviser to share the attached update with schools and their governing boards**

### **2. Introduction and Background**

In the period since the last SACRE meeting, a number of developments have taken place. These are presented to SACRE for consideration in support of the duties of SACRE and in accordance with the work plan.

### **3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options**

- 3.1 Schools need to be informed about national developments and opportunities available to them but it is important not to overload them with information
- 3.2 Likewise, SACRE needs to be aware of the national context for information they receive that applies just to Thurrock
- 3.3 SACRE needs therefore to decide on which information to share with schools and which reports and national data is most relevant to the situation in Thurrock

### **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 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 on behalf of Thurrock Council**

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

### **7.3 Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**  
**Community Engagement & Project Monitoring Officer**

The aim of this report is to provide information about issues that support 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 News Summer Term 2023

**Report Author:**

Deborah Weston OBE

Associate Adviser for RE

# SACRE News – Summer Term 2023

The role of SACRE is to create and monitor the agreed syllabus for RE in our local area, and to advise the local authority on matters relating to the provision and quality of RE and school collective worship. SACRE is eager to respond to teacher-needs and school requests for RE help.

## National RE news for Teachers!

This paper is a short digest of some useful items of interest about RE in the summer term 2023. Wherever possible we have provided hotlinks to additional web based resources.

16 What is your religion?  
This question is voluntary

- No religion
- Christian (including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations)
- Buddhist
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Sikh
- Any other religion, write in

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## Using the 2021 Census Data in RE

The 2021 Census data has now been released and we can use it to look at the results with pupils, and compare with the local area. Here are some tips on how to make the most of it!

1. Explain to pupils or students that the religion was question was voluntary. People over 18 had to choose which box to tick.
2. Show pupils the **results for the UK as a whole**: what do they notice? Note the **large fall in the number of people who identify as Christian, and the large rise in the number of people who tick 'no religion'**. Ask pupils why that might be.
3. Look at the **results for our area – local authority and region**. Can students notice some similarities and differences to the national picture?
4. Either show to the class, or allow students to investigate for themselves, the Census data on the internet. Use this link: below. **You can find clickable maps that allow you to zoom in on your really local area and search by religion**. Can students see how their area compares to the wider area? How is it similar, how is it different?  
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/bulletins/religionenglandandwales/census2021>
5. Note the age variations between religious and non-religious communities in Thurrock, particularly where it can be shown that the population in school will change in the next decade. E.g. Larger numbers in the 4-10 age group who will join secondary schools. (Hindu and Muslim)

Religion (10 categories)

Buddhist	2.6%	8.3%	9.3%	5.9%	25.3%	38.1%	10.6%
Christian	4.0%	8.6%	9.2%	5.8%	18.2%	28.2%	26.1%
Hindu	7.0%	12.0%	6.9%	5.2%	32.3%	26.9%	9.7%
Jewish	2.2%	2.7%	6.3%	5.4%	14.3%	36.8%	32.3%
Muslim	10.0%	16.4%	12.7%	7.3%	28.2%	21.6%	3.8%
No religion	6.9%	11.4%	12.5%	10.4%	24.4%	24.8%	9.5%
Not answered	7.0%	11.1%	10.1%	8.3%	21.7%	24.1%	17.6%
Other religion	2.2%	5.5%	6.9%	8.2%	25.7%	35.9%	15.5%
Sikh	4.9%	11.2%	12.1%	5.2%	25.4%	27.8%	13.5%

Q1 Can teacher representatives from SACRE provide any examples of how they have used the census in their RE lessons?

Q2 What are the implications of point 5 above for SACRE?

## NATRE Spirited Arts 2023 – new themes announced

Will your school join hundreds of schools from around the world taking part in this year's Spirited Arts competition? Entries are welcomed in (almost!) any art form pupils can think of. Winning entries will provide a good response to one of the 5 themes, and judges will be asking is it original? Is it well-crafted? And (most importantly!) is it excellent RE? Closing date is 31<sup>st</sup> March.

The 6 themes

1. "We have more in common than that which divides us."
2. Green faith, green future? ['God's good earth?']
3. Where is God today?
4. Faith in action, values in action.
5. Sacred space and holy buildings
6. All God's creatures?



More details here [www.natre.org.uk/about-natre/projects/spirited-arts/spirited-arts-2023/](http://www.natre.org.uk/about-natre/projects/spirited-arts/spirited-arts-2023/)

Q3 How can SACRE encourage schools in Thurrock to make entries to the National Competition?

## Ofsted appoint new Acting Subject Lead for RE

Hazel Henson HMI was appointed as acting subject lead for RE at OFSTED in March 2023. She has a background in primary education.



## Children's Commissioner shares her view on RE with former pupil

Shammi Rahman, recently interviewed The Children's Commissioner, Dame Rachel de Souza for RE Today magazine. Dame Rachel is a previous RE teacher and headteacher and Shammi, is a former secondary teacher and now a Race Equality Adviser. Dame Rachel was her RE teacher!

Dame Rachel says, 'a former RE teacher myself, I believe RE teachers have a crucial opportunity to teach children about the wider world and principals of fairness and equality. It was great to talk about how different faiths can teach us different things, for example treating others as we would like to be treated ourselves; having compassion for others; and celebrating the beauty of life in our environment.'



Listen to their conversation here: [Conversation with Shammi Rahman: The importance of Religious Education | Children's Commissioner for England \(childrenscommissioner.gov.uk\)](#)

## RE Hubs – Website now live!



RE Hubs website is now live at [www.re-hubs.uk](http://www.re-hubs.uk). RE Hubs aim to connect those who can provide resources with those who need them and create a neutral platform being RE professionals together.

Many organizations serve RE/RVE/R&W education in the UK, from places of worship and school speakers to CPD partnerships and resource providers. However, until now, there hasn't been a single place to equip, enable, and signpost everyone within the community.

## NATRE Secondary Survey

The NATRE survey of secondary RE teachers is now underway and open until Monday 31<sup>st</sup> July. Everyone who completes the survey will receive a £5 coupon for the RE Teaching Resources online shop as well as being entered into a prize draw to win a NATRE School Enhanced membership worth £270. The survey is here: [NATRE Survey - Secondary 2023 \(surveymonkey.co.uk\)](https://surveymonkey.co.uk)



[Q4 Might SACRE encourage teachers in Thurrock to take part in this survey and then request Thurrock specific data for further analysis?](#)

## Culham St Gabriel's launch FREE new self-study course

Digging Deeper: Subject Knowledge, this short, self-study course builds on the introduction level course and is available for FREE. Find out more here: [Culham St Gabriel's Trust Moodle \(cstg.org.uk\)](https://cstg.org.uk)

## Understanding Humanism launches new animation and free resources

Understanding Humanism has launched a **NEW animation** 'One Life, live it well' voiced by author and presenter, Alice Roberts. Accompanied by classroom activities, this simple but beautiful animation illustrates how humanists try to approach life: [One Life, Live It Well: watch our new animation narrated by Alice Roberts » Understanding Humanism](#)

They also have available new FREE resources for children in early years, and the stories of four amazing humanist women who changed the world.

## Training and CPD opportunities and other support

### Free webinars for primary and secondary ECTs – a taster for NATRE ECT membership

Early Career Teachers 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
12 June	Taught session: Focus on Sikhi
10 July	Café NATRE: Subject knowledge Christianity

ECT webinars booking link [www.natre.org.uk/membership/early-careers-teacher/ect-free-monthly-webinar/](http://www.natre.org.uk/membership/early-careers-teacher/ect-free-monthly-webinar/)

### NATRE: new membership packages!

NATRE is the largest membership organisation that promotes, defends and supports RE teachers and RE teaching. It does this through producing high-quality resources and CPD, lobbying government, being involved in conversations with the DfE and Ofsted, Local Authorities and SACREs, telling teachers' stories and experiences and being a voice for all teachers.



Membership packages for students, ECTs, teachers, schools, RE professionals and RE enthusiasts!

Details: [www.natre.org.uk/membership](http://www.natre.org.uk/membership)

### NATRE: welcome webinars for new members

New NATRE members are invited to a monthly welcome webinar. This will help them use their NATRE membership and enjoy it to its fullest!

#### What will they 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

**Members can register their interest to attend a webinar at this link.**

[www.natre.org.uk/member-login/natre-members-welcome-webinar/](http://www.natre.org.uk/member-login/natre-members-welcome-webinar/)

### BBC expands early years RE resources

There are new resources for 4 and 5 year olds for RE / RME and RVE from BBC Bitesize Reception. These include some simple craft activities and some recipes for festive food

with clear and simple ideas to bring the world of religion alive for small children. The subject is connected to work in the fields of expressive arts and design, helping pupils with their understanding of the world particularly in the field of religion and belief. These new materials cover Christmas, Easter, Eid Al Adha, Vaisakhi, Divali and more and have now gone live. They include video clips made for the age group, activity sheets and information for teacher-use. Lat Blaylock, who contributed to the work says: 'I'm really pleased to see that BBC have made such a diverse and well thought out contribution to Early Years learning about religion and belief. Teachers will find this is a little treasure trove.'

Here is a link: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/z24kqyc> [Religions, festivals and celebrations](#)

## Celebrating 25 years of children's emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing

2023 is an exciting year for Fischy Music as we celebrate our 25th Anniversary! Celebrations are already underway with free online concerts streaming live every month throughout this year, so whole classrooms and assembly halls of children can join in with 30 minutes of uplifting songs! Founded in 1998 by Stephen Fischbacher, Fischy Music ([www.fischy.com](http://www.fischy.com)) is a children's charity, writing songs for and with children to nurture positive mental health and help them express and manage a range of emotions.

Songs are at the heart of everything we do, with Health & Wellbeing and RE & Collective Worship songs and teaching resources made available to children, families, schools and churches. In addition to live events, our innovative song-streaming platform, Fischy Music Online has made it easy for teachers everywhere to access over 140 songs and teaching resources, with new songs regularly added.

*"Fischy Music songs open an emotional door allowing children to have the confidence to discuss issues and problems that we might otherwise not pick up on."* Teacher, St Philomena's Primary School, Glasgow

As well as the many health benefits of singing, the positive impact of the messages in the songs, like 'build up one another' and 'we can make a difference in this world of ours' stay with children as they grow up. Schools can subscribe to Fischy Music Online to access over 140 songs. The RE Package includes resources created in conjunction with Lat Blaylock, RE Today, to help staff use music well in RE and connecting to significant Christian concepts (eg from Understanding Christianity). The resources can be used by all staff and are useful in all primary schools wherever you want to enable spiritual reflection and can also be used in assemblies and services for collective worship. To find out more, email: [info@fischy.com](mailto:info@fischy.com)

## Educate Against Islamophobia (EAI)

**Educate Against Islamophobia (EAI)** has recently published a plethora of educational materials for the Early Years, primary schools, high schools and educational practitioners across the U.K. The teaching and learning materials are reflective of the respective curriculums and national frameworks, and offer learners with learning opportunities that are applicable to their respective nations.



### **Early Years resources:**

- Amna & Amy Storybook
- 2 lesson plans.

The storybook and accompanying lesson plans aim to support children in the Early Years to develop an awareness of equality, diversity and respectful behaviour and introduce learners to aspects of the Islamic identity.

### **Primary school resources:**

- Unit of work

The unit of work which comprises 6 lesson plans supports KS1-KS2/P2-P7 learners in developing positive attitudes towards diversity. This unit of work also aims to introduce learners to the Islamic identity and will enable them to explore some of the similarities and differences between Islam and other faiths/culture.

### **High school resources:**

- Unit of work

The unit of work which comprises 6 lesson plans supports KS3-KS4/S1-S4 learners in developing an awareness of Islamophobia, including its manifestations and dangers. Learners will explore the issue of Islamophobia through a range of themes and lenses including human rights, anti-bullying and media literacy.

### **Educator resources:**

- Islamophobia awareness training session
- Equality, diversity and inclusion audit

The Islamophobia awareness training and EDI audit aims to promote an awareness of Islamophobia and equip practitioners with the understanding of how to address it in the school community. These materials will also assist educational practitioners to meet their Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act (2010).

To download your free copy of EAI's materials, visit: <https://eai.org.uk/>

If you would like to learn more about Educate Against Islamophobia's work and services contact [info@eai.org.uk](mailto:info@eai.org.uk)

## Using Faith Inspired Art to Encourage Conversation, Enable Reflections and Inspire Action. *Cheryl Homer, Westhill Endowment*

RE Today and NATRE have always been great supporters of the arts and if you are wondering if using faith inspired arts in your school might be beneficial the answer is most likely 'yes'. But where do you start. Westhill Endowment are here to help, with years of experience working with faith inspired arts. The charity has 10 art collections which are available FREE\* to schools and community venues around the UK.

Many communities have already benefited from these resources which aim to encourage conversation, enable reflections, and inspire action. A Year 10 textiles student recently reflected on her experience with the Gethsemane Garments: "I liked the green garment [representing Hope] showing the rips and tears of the fabric, but with the sides being restitched to show signs of healing and positivity."

A Primary School Teacher reflected on a creative lockdown session provided by their local vicar using the exhibition Bald Statements: "The creative artwork [the children produced in response] has been thought provoking and the children were able to speak honestly on their feelings and experiences of lockdown."

The art collections come with a variety of themes and mediums, including free standing and wall mounted works of art. Additional materials such as booklets, education packs, and films are available. Westhill will also consider funding applications for events around your exhibition.

Westhill Endowment work one to one with all exhibition hosts helping you tailor your exhibition to suit your space and your audiences. If you'd like to know more, please contact Westhill's Arts Coordinator, Cheryl Homer, on [cheryl@westhillendowment.org](mailto:cheryl@westhillendowment.org) or check the website or social media. [www.westhillendowment.org](http://www.westhillendowment.org) [www.facebook.com/WesthillEndowment](https://www.facebook.com/WesthillEndowment)

[www.youtube.com/channel/UCHKjKpunQ0C4XSXD4j88XZA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHKjKpunQ0C4XSXD4j88XZA)

*\*You may incur transport and insurance costs, please ask if this is applicable.*

## Anti-racist RE: continuing debates and widening resources.

Jonathan Marshall, MBE, ran a brilliant RE and interfaith centre in Plymouth before he retired. Thanks to Jonathan for drawing attention to resources which might compliment the NATRE anti-racist RE materials (<https://www.natre.org.uk/about-natre/projects/anti-racist-re/>)

"I think teachers might find the work of the Equiano Project on anti-racist education helpful. In the true spirit of quality RE, some diversity of views might be welcome."

This black-led project may help teachers of RE who want to understand the complexity of an anti-racist RE approach: they should be encouraged to explore a range of different voices, one of which is to be found on the excellent website of "The Equiano project" <https://www.theequianoproject.com/>

See for example the video "Understanding the new politics of race" by Prof. John McWhorter. At just under twenty minutes, this perspective is an extremely helpful and profound insight into the background and current situation of anti-racism.

Jonathan also draws attention to the 'Don't Divide Us' project, whose opening statement includes these key ideas: "We should treat everyone as an individual worthy of respect regardless of race, religion or the colour of their skin We call this colourblind anti-racism – it is based on freedom and tolerance – and we believe it is the best way to counter prejudice where it does exist. Britain is a successful multi-cultural society with a positive story to tell about race relations: We won't benefit from importing divisive political ideas from the US that don't reflect our history and which undermine our shared values today. See much more at: <https://dontdivideus.com/our-beliefs/>

## Philosophy of Religion resources from the FT!

*Jack Robertson, RE teacher in north London, is working with the Financial Times to offer free access to FT.com for all schools and colleges teaching sixteen to nineteen year old students. An FT subscription can support students in developing the broad knowledge that will help them stand out to examiners, universities and employers. A Philosophy Class page, [ft.com/philosophyclass](https://ft.com/philosophyclass), is available for teachers and students of philosophy and ethics. It brings together relevant articles from across the FT and provides accompanying questions that prompt students to reflect critically and make connections to areas of the A-level specification. There is also an IB Theory of Knowledge page for IB students. Recent Philosophy Class articles cover topics from the ethics of climate protests and abortion to developments in AI and quantum physics, as well as interviews with philosophers such as MacAskill, Chalmers and Srinivasan. Participating schools receive the same level of access to FT.com as regular subscriber. Check if your school is registered or register your interest via the Philosophy Class page or at [ft.com/schoolsarefree](https://ft.com/schoolsarefree)*

Jack Robertson <[JRobertson@gebarnet.co.uk](mailto:JRobertson@gebarnet.co.uk)>

## Christian Aid Global Neighbours Assessors Needed!

The Global Neighbours accreditation scheme is an award scheme for schools run by the charity Christian Aid, in partnership with the Church of England Education Office. It is open to all primary schools and has recently expanded into secondary schools too. The scheme has been running for five years and celebrates the development of global citizenship and courageous advocacy in schools. Its aim is to encourage a deeper understanding of the world and for young people to be empowered to engage with and respond to global issues.

Schools can apply for a bronze, silver or gold award. To achieve accreditation, schools must demonstrate how they are fulfilling criteria relating to:

- Leadership, vision and values
- Teaching and learning
- Collective worship and spiritual development
- Pupil participation in active global citizenship
- Community engagement

Christian Aid is looking to recruit to its pool of assessors for this scheme. An assessor looks at all the evidence provided, makes a judgement and writes a report for the school. At bronze level this is a document based assessment supplemented by a phone conversation. At silver and gold levels a school visit is required.

The role of assessor especially suits education professionals with experience of school leadership and advising or inspecting schools.

Global Neighbours assessors need:

- An informed interest in best global citizenship/global learning practice in schools and an understanding of best practice in pupil participation
- Excellent interpersonal and written communication skills
- Experience of evaluating the quality of educational practice and leadership in schools
- Proven ability to adhere to deadlines

Christian Aid provide training, ongoing support and reimbursement for time given. The hours for this role are occasional and flexible.

For more information please contact Alison Brown (Global Neighbours Schools Programme Officer): [abrown@christian-aid.org](mailto:abrown@christian-aid.org)

## The RE Connect Environmental programme for RE

**Are you looking for ways to connect your RE teaching with the environmental crisis?**

The RE:Connect Teacher Fellowship Programme is designed to help deepen teachers' understanding and confidence for exploring the environmental crisis through the lens of religions and worldviews in RE. The programme is not just about getting ideas, but also enhancing your teaching practice and professional network around this theme.



After a successful pilot of the programme in 2021-22, RE:Connect will be running again from September 2023, thanks to a grant from the Culham St Gabriel's Trust. There are places for **up to 10 teachers** of RE (primary and secondary) on the 6 month teacher fellowship programme. The initiative is run by Dr Jeremy Kidwell, Associate Professor in Theological Ethics at the University of Birmingham and Dr Ian Jones of St Peter's Saltley Trust, with input from experienced primary and secondary specialists, environmental scientists, climate activists and academic researchers in religion and environment.

The programme offers opportunities to:

- Deepen subject knowledge on the intersection of religion and ecology
- Work with cutting-edge subject specialists on religious ethics/practice, ecology, and climate change policy

- Work as part of a supportive and dynamic team to create and trial new approaches and resources for teaching on this theme
- Become a champion for teaching and learning on religion and environmental crisis

The Teacher Fellowship Programme involves monthly workshops from Autumn 2023 to Spring 2024, with tasks to undertake between workshops. Programme sessions will include one fully-funded weekend residential and 6-8 online evening sessions (roughly one per month). There is no cost of participation to the teacher or their school and Fellows receive a bursary of £500 to cover costs of participation plus travel expenses to enable attendance at in-person sessions.

**Interested?** Please contact Ian Jones ([director@saltleytrust.org.uk](mailto:director@saltleytrust.org.uk)) to register your interest. Selection for the programme is by a formal application process.