

Thurrock: A place of opportunity, enterprise and excellence, where individuals, communities and businesses flourish

## Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

The meeting will be held at **6.00 pm** on **15 January 2015** in **Committee Room 4, Civic Offices, New Road, Grays, Essex, RM17 6SL**

### Membership:

- Committee A:** Mrs S Lawson, Free Church Christian Member  
Mrs Shepherd, Roman Catholic Member  
Vacancy, Jewish Member; Miss A Ahmed, Muslim Member  
Mr A Rashid, Muslim Member; Mr B Gill, Sikh Member  
Vacancy, Hindu Member; Dr O Soley, Pentecostal Member  
Mr P Anderson, Free Church Representative
- Committee B:** Mr J Graham, Rev. J Guest, Mrs M Taylor and Mr D Bates – Church of England
- Committee C:** Ms A Jellicoe, Ms H Gillman, Mr R Epps, Mr R Priffiths and Ms N Fawell – Teachers' Association
- Committee D:** Councillors: Yash Gupta, Martin Kerin and Tunde Ojetola - Local Authority
- Co-opted:** Vacancy

### Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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| <b>1 Apologies for Absence</b>   |               |
| <b>2 Minutes of Previous Meeting</b>   | <b>5 - 10</b> |
| To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education Meeting held on 15 October 2014. |               |
| <b>3 Any Additional Items</b>  |               |

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.

- |          |  |                |
|----------|--|----------------|
| <b>4</b> | <b>Declarations of Interest</b>  |                |
| <b>5</b> | <b>Update of Membership</b>  |                |
| <b>6</b> | <b>Thurrock SACRE - Who delivers RE in Thurrock Primary Schools</b>    | <b>11 - 14</b> |
| <b>7</b> | <b>Inquiry Into Provision For RE In Thurrock Secondary Academies</b>   | <b>15 - 22</b> |
| <b>8</b> | <b>Thurrock SACRE - Academy Responses To The Local Agreed Syllabus</b> | <b>23 - 26</b> |

**Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:**

Please contact Kenna-Victoria Martin, Senior Democratic Services Officer by sending an email to [Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk)

Agenda published on: **7 January 2015**

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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.**

**Vision: Thurrock:** A place of **opportunity, enterprise and excellence**, where **individuals, communities and businesses** flourish.

To achieve our vision, we have identified five strategic priorities:

**1. Create** a great place for learning and opportunity

- Ensure that every place of learning is rated “Good” or better
- Raise levels of aspiration and attainment so that residents can take advantage of local job opportunities
- Support families to give children the best possible start in life

**2. Encourage** and promote job creation and economic prosperity

- Promote Thurrock and encourage inward investment to enable and sustain growth
- Support business and develop the local skilled workforce they require
- Work with partners to secure improved infrastructure and built environment

**3. Build** pride, responsibility and respect

- Create welcoming, safe, and resilient communities which value fairness
- Work in partnership with communities to help them take responsibility for shaping their quality of life
- Empower residents through choice and independence to improve their health and well-being

**4. Improve** health and well-being

- Ensure people stay healthy longer, adding years to life and life to years
- Reduce inequalities in health and well-being and safeguard the most vulnerable people with timely intervention and care accessed closer to home
- Enhance quality of life through improved housing, employment and opportunity

**5. Promote** and protect our clean and green environment

- Enhance access to Thurrock's river frontage, cultural assets and leisure opportunities
- Promote Thurrock's natural environment and biodiversity
- Inspire high quality design and standards in our buildings and public space

## Minutes of the meeting of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education held on 15 October 2014 at 6.00pm

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### Present:

**Committee A:** Mrs S Lawson, Mrs M Shepherd, Miss A Ahmed, Mr A Shodide, Mr B Gill and Mr P Anderson

**Committee B:** Mr J Graham and Rev. J Guest,

**Committee C:** Ms A Jellicoe, Mr R Epps, Mr P Griffiths

**Committee D:** Councillors Gupta and Ojetola (left at 7.15)

**Apologies:** Dr Soleye, Mrs M Taylor, Mr D Bates, Ms H Gillman, Ms Fawell and Councillor Kerin

**In attendance:** Ms D Weston – Associate Adviser for Religious Education  
Ms L Lloyd – School Improvement Adviser  
Miss K-V Martin – Senior Democratic Services Officer

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### 13. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education, held on 16 July 2014, were approved as a correct record, subject to the following amendment with regards to item 11 within the minutes:

The issue of a Humanist representative on Thurrock SACRE had previously been discussed and it was recommended that a request for representation from the British Humanist Association could be considered if the same tests as applied to other faiths and belief systems were met as set out within item 15 paragraph 2.8.2 of the report.

The Chair of the Committee referred members to Page 9 of the agenda where he brought their attention to the phrase 'Pentecostal Churches' and suggested that as a committee they seek a term that is acceptable to local churches who are multicultural. This was agreed by members and the Chair of the committee confirmed that he would make enquiries.

### 14. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business to declare.

### 15. Declaration of Interests

There were no such interests declared.

## **16. National Religious Education Review**

The Associate Adviser for Religious Education introduced the report to members of the committee explaining that the Religious Education Council of England and Wales initiated a review of RE to run in parallel with the review of the National Curriculum. The first phase of the review took place between May and December 2012, with the second phase being held in January 2013.

It was explained that a guide was offered to SACREs and launched in 2014, members were informed that the review was very successful in raising the awareness of RE.

Members asked that the recommendation stated that the committee respond to the review as the report was deferred from a previous meeting, what were members expected to agree. The Chair of the committee, explained that as he saw it, the committee were agreeing that they were happy to receive the report. The associate adviser for Religious Education informed members that Thurrock SACRE did comment at the first stage of the review.

### **RESOLVED:**

**That SACRE received the review.**

## **17. Report on the Inquiry into the Supply of and Support of Teachers of RE in England. All Party Parliamentary Group on RE**

It was explained to the committee that an inquiry was undertaken by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Religious Education to investigate the supply of and support for teachers of religious education

Members were informed that many teachers who taught RE were not actually trained within Religious Education, this meant that Headteachers where finding it difficult to employ RE teachers.

The Associate Adviser for Religious Education notified the committee that following this inquiry, the government had agreed offer bursaries for training teaches within Religious Education. It was enquired as to whether the offer of bursaries was likely to have immediate effect. Members of the committee were informed that unfortunately this offer would not be in effect until 2015.

Following discussions, it was highlighted that within Catholic primary schools all teachers are expected to teach RE, training is offered and paid for by the school.

### **RESOLVED:**

**That SACRE considered the investigations in might be made to determine whether or not the findings of the report apply to Thurrock**



## **18. Review of the Thurrock Agreed Syllabus 2009**

The Associate Adviser for Religious Education introduced the report to members of the committee informing them that SACRE had statutory duties to review the agreed syllabus every 5 years. It was the associate adviser's understanding that funding for this review had already been put aside for the committee.

It was further explained that the committee firstly had to decide as to whether they were to continue with their own syllabus and suggest updates or to adopt a neighbouring authority's syllabus.

Teachers sitting on the committee stated that they were happy with the syllabus and those teaching within Academies explaining that they opted to use the Thurrock Syllabus.

It was agreed that the committee would continue with the syllabus, and by undertaking a review would consult with all schools and academies to enable an accurate update to be completed.

Members of the committee discussed the timings as stated within the appendix attached to the report. It was agreed that as the report was deferred from a previous that the new syllabus be reviewed and finalised for the beginning of the next academic year (September 2015).

It was further agreed that the date for the next meeting of the committee be amended to allow the review committee to meet at 5pm; directly before the December meeting.

### **RESOLVED:**

**That SACRE advise the Council that the syllabus is due for review and resolve to discuss the budget required for such a review**

## **19. Academy Responses to the Local Agreed Syllabus**

The Committee were advised that 80% of academies within Thurrock were following the local agreed syllabus. It was enquired as to those who were following their own syllabus, as to what they were teaching and whether they were following a syllabus from another authority.

The associate adviser for Religious Education confirmed that she would contact the academies not following the Thurrock Syllabus and seek to what they were following.

Members of the committee queried that within the appendix to the report stated that more than 10 teachers taught RE as the main part of their timetable, this was 20% of teachers teaching in an academy. It was explained that this would be within a primary academy as every teacher teaches Religious Education.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1. That SACRE invite all schools to allow their subject leaders to be involved in the Agreed Syllabus working group.**
- 2. That SACRE continue develop its Agreed Syllabus and to make supporting materials available to all schools in Thurrock whether or not they are academies.**
- 3. That SACRE agrees to begin the process of revising its Agreed Syllabus using the timeline in appendix 1 as a starting point but with all dates moved to 2014-15.**

**20. The OFSTED Report - Realising the Potential**

The report was introduced to the committee and it was explained that primary and secondary schools were experiencing similar issues.

Following discussions it was explained that Catholic Schools do teach other faiths within Religious Education, examples given were Judaism, Sikhism and Hinduism. However the main focus of learning was Catholic Christianity.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1. That SACRE accept this report at the termly meeting.**
- 2. That SACRE agree to inform schools that the long report has been published by OfSTED.**
- 3. That SACRE advise the local authority and schools of the recommendations as included within the report**
- 4. That SACRE instruct the adviser to send a discussion document about the report to all subject leaders in Thurrock (see appendix A).**

**21. Secondary Religious Education**

Ms Jellicoe explained that the figures for St Clere's School for years 9, 10 and 11 were incorrect. She was explained that from year 9 Religious Education at the Academy was called Ethics and Morality and for this reason, the subject was not recorded in the data collection known as the School Census. She would ensure that her school were made aware of this.

It was explained to the committee that the information was gathered through the schools census, which was usually collected by data managers working in schools.

During discussions it was noted that although non-specialist teachers were teaching RE within schools in some cases these teachers would become specialists in RE through experience of teaching the subject.

The committee enquired as to whether it would be possible to compare the figures gathered on the level of provision in relation to specialist staff teaching the subject with other subjects such as History and Geography.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1. That SACRE receives this background paper and discusses the different sets of data as these become available.**
- 2. That the Chair of SACRE writes to the principal/headteacher of each of the academies concerned to:**
  - 2.1 Ask for further information and explanation about why they are not making provision for all pupils.**
  - 2.2 Draw attention to OfSTED's findings on the impact of over use of non-specialists and to ask for their comments.**
  - 2.3 Recommend that where non-specialists are being used to teach RE that those teachers be directed to attend subject specialist training.**

**22. Thurrock SACRE – Secondary Religious Education**

It was noticed that the report was a duplication of the previous report. The Chair therefore removed it from the agenda.

**Any Other Business**

The Chair of the committee asked members who would be happy to volunteer to visit schools to see how they are teaching Religious Education. It was suggested that a report be brought to the next meeting, to enable members to discuss a way forward.

This was agreed by all members of the committee.

**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](mailto:Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk)**

|  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| <b>15 January 2015</b>   | <b>ITEM: 6</b>                  |
| <b>Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education</b>                        |                                 |
| <b>Thurrock SACRE – Who delivers RE in Thurrock Primary Schools?</b>           |                                 |
| <b>Wards and communities affected:</b><br>All                                  | <b>Key Decision:</b><br>Non-Key |
| <b>Report of:</b> Deborah Weston, Associate Adviser for Religious Education    |                                 |
| <b>Accountable Head of Service:</b> Ruth Brock, School Improvement Manager     |                                 |
| <b>Accountable Director:</b> Carmel Littleton, Director of Children’s Services |                                 |
| <b>This report is Public</b>   |                                 |

## **Executive Summary**

This report was commissioned at the summer term meeting on SACRE in response to concerns raised by a report from the All Party Parliamentary Group on RE with the support of the RE Council of England and Wales that suggested that RE in primary schools was increasingly being delivered by adults other than teachers.

At the time of writing, almost 30% of primary schools in Thurrock had responded to a request for information about provision for RE and of those, no school reported that their entire RE provision was being delivered by adults other than teachers but almost 50% of those that responded did report that some lessons of RE were delivered by teaching assistants.

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

**1.1 That SACRE continue to encourage schools to respond to this request for information about provision for RE until at least 50% of primary schools have responded.**

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

2.1 Thurrock SACRE discussed the report, “RE: The Truth Unmasked” during its meetings in 2014 and launched an enquiry into the delivery of RE in Thurrock Primary schools in an attempt to discover whether or not the issues identified in this report were also the case in Thurrock. According to the report, almost one in four primary pupils were taught RE by teaching assistants.

## Who Teaches RE in Thurrock Primary Schools? - December 2014

(Numbers in brackets are the number of lessons where supplied)

|                                | Teachers  | General Teaching Assistants                      | PPA Cover Teachers | Higher Level Teaching Assistants |
|--------------------------------|---|--|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>1. Abbots Hall Primary</b>  |   |  |                    |                                  |
| <b>2. Arthur Bugler</b>        |   |  |                    |                                  |
| <b>3. Aveley Primary</b>       |   |  |                    |                                  |
| 4. Benyon                      | ✓   | ✓ (during PPA cover or in the teacher's absence) |                    |                                  |
| 5. Bonnygate                   | ✓   |  | ✓                  |                                  |
| 6. Bulphan C of E              | ✓   |  |                    |                                  |
| <b>7. Chadwell St Mary</b>     |   |  |                    |                                  |
| <b>8. Chafford Hundred</b>     |   |  |                    |                                  |
| 9. Corringham                  | ✓   |  |                    |                                  |
| <b>10. Deneholm</b>            |   |  |                    |                                  |
| 11. Dilkes Academy             | ✓   |  |                    |                                  |
| <b>12. East Tilbury</b>        |   |  |                    |                                  |
| <b>13. Gateway</b>             |   |  |                    |                                  |
| <b>14. Giffauds</b>            |   |  |                    |                                  |
| <b>15. Graham James</b>        |   |  |                    |                                  |
| 16. Herringham Primary         | ✓ (10)  |  |                    | ✓ (4)                            |
| <b>17. Holy Cross</b>          |   |  |                    |                                  |
| <b>18. Horndon on the Hill</b> |   |  |                    |                                  |
| <b>19. Kenningtons</b>         |   |  |                    |                                  |
| <b>20. Landsdowne</b>          |   |  |                    |                                  |
| <b>21. Little Thurrock</b>     |   |  |                    |                                  |
| <b>22. Manor</b>               |   |  |                    |                                  |
| <b>23. Orsett</b>              |   |  |                    |                                  |
| <b>24. Purfleet</b>            |   |  |                    |                                  |
| <b>25. Quarry Hill</b>         |   |  |                    |                                  |
| 26. Shaw Primary               | ✓ (presumably – not clearly indicated in email) |  |                    | ✓                                |
| <b>27. Somers Heath</b>        |   |  |                    |                                  |
| 28. St Joseph's Catholic       | ✓   |  |                    |                                  |

|                             |        |  |  |       |
|-----------------------------|--------|--|--|-------|
| Primary                     |        |  |  |       |
| <b>29. St Mary's</b>        |        |  |  |       |
| <b>30. St Thomas'</b>       |        |  |  |       |
| <b>31. Stanford le Hope</b> |        |  |  |       |
| 32. Stifford Clays          | ✓ (21) |  |  | ✓ (4) |
| <b>33. Thameside</b>        |        |  |  |       |
| 34. Tudor Court             | ✓      |  |  |       |
| <b>35. Warren</b>           |        |  |  |       |
| 36. West Thurrock Academy   | ✓      |  |  |       |
| <b>37. Woodside</b>         |        |  |  |       |

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

- 3.1 It is difficult to draw conclusions when only 30% of the data has been returned but early indications are positive. SACRE might opt to continue to encourage schools to respond to the request for information or decide to act on this sample of data.
- 3.2 The risk of writing to schools with incomplete data is that the conclusions might lack credibility in the minds of those who we wish to influence. However, the challenge of increasing the response-rate must not be under-estimated due to demands on the time of Headteachers

### **4. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 4.1 A more complete set of data would put SACRE in a better position to draw conclusions, make decisions and recommendations to the council and to schools.

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

- 5.1 Not applicable

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

- 6.1 Not applicable

## **7. Implications**

### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Kay Goodacre**  
**Finance Manager**

There are no financial implications contained within the report.

### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Lucinda Bell**  
**Education Lawyer**

This report simply recommends that actions agreed previously be continued. There are no further legal implications.

### **7.3 Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Price**  
**Community Development Officer**

The implications of this report are that there may be a risk that some pupils in Thurrock are being taught RE by those who have had no training in the teaching of the subject potentially leading to inequality of opportunity in terms of access to accurate knowledge and understanding. Until a fuller set of data is available however, it is premature to draw conclusions.

### **7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)**

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**

- None

### **Report Author:**

Deborah Weston

Associate Adviser for Religious Education



|  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| <b>15 January 2015</b>   | <b>ITEM: 7</b>                  |
| <b>Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education</b>                        |                                 |
| <b>Inquiry Into Provision For RE In Thurrock Secondary Academies</b>           |                                 |
| <b>Wards and communities affected:</b><br>All                                  | <b>Key Decision:</b><br>Non-Key |
| <b>Report of:</b> Deborah Weston, Associate Adviser for Religious Education    |                                 |
| <b>Accountable Head of Service:</b> Ruth Brock, School Improvement Manager     |                                 |
| <b>Accountable Director:</b> Carmel Littleton, Director of Children’s Services |                                 |
| <b>This report is Public</b>   |                                 |

## **Executive Summary**

Academies are contractually required to make provision for RE for all pupils on roll in accordance with their funding agreement with the Secretary of State for Education. During 2014, SACRE has considered evidence that might suggest that some of the Academies in Thurrock may not be fulfilling these requirements and concluded that the adviser for RE should collate this information and the Chair write to the academies concerned to seek an explanation. This report presents the evidence sent to the schools pending their responses and options for SACRE in terms of further action including support that might be offered to those academies that are not making appropriate provision for RE.

### **1. Recommendation(s)**

**That SACRE:**

- 1.1 Consider any response from the six academies listed in 2.3 below and respond as appropriate**
- 1.2 Take further action in relation to any academy that has not responded to the letter from the Chair of SACRE selecting from one of the options set out in 3.2 below**

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

- 2.1 A Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) has a statutory remit to advise the Local Authority on Religious Education to be given in accordance with an agreed syllabus and to support the effective provision**

of collective worship. A SACRE also has within its powers to discuss any matter related to its functions as it sees fit and may therefore include the provision of RE in Academies in its discussions or address such matters as may be referred to it.

2.2 Thurrock SACRE resolved to write to academies where information in the public domain gave members cause to question that the terms of the funding agreement were being met in relation to all or some of the students on the school roll.

2.3 In December 2014, the Chair wrote to the following six secondary academies (for letter template please see appendix 1):

- a. Gable Hall School
- b. Harris Academy Chafford Hundred
- c. William Edwards School
- d. Hassenbrook Academy
- e. Ormiston Park Academy
- f. The Gateway Academy

2.4 The specific concerns about each school were as follows:

In relation to Gable Hall we noted that:

1. The school workforce data (Nov 2012) includes no hours of teaching of RE in year 11;
2. only 4% of students on roll were entered for GCSE RE in 2013;
3. the data on your school website makes no mention of provision for RE in year 11 and might possibly imply that only some of year 10 are being taught RE.

In relation to Harris Academy we noted that:

1. workforce data for November 2012 indicates zero hours for RE in years 7, 8 and 10
2. only 30% of students on roll were entered for GCSE RE in 2013;
3. the data on your school website indicates that RE is an option in years 10 and 11 and does not include it as one of the core subjects, this might possibly imply that the subject is not taught to all students in years 10 and 11

In relation to William Edwards we noted that:

1. workforce data for November 2012 indicates zero hours for RE in years 7 and
2. only 19% of students on roll were entered for GCSE RE in 2013;
3. the data on your school website does not include RSE in year 7 and indicates it as being part of only one of three Pathways in year 10 and

might possibly imply that the subject is not taught in year 7 and that only some of year 10 are being taught RE.

In relation to Hassenbrook we noted that:

1. The school workforce data (Nov 2012) includes no hours of teaching of RE in years 8 and 9;
2. only 9% of students on roll were entered for GCSE RE in 2013;
3. the data on your school website makes no mention of provision for RE in years 9 through to 11 and might possibly imply that only some of years 9 through to 11 are being taught RE.

In relation to Ormiston Park we noted that:

1. only 13% of students on roll were entered for GCSE RE in 2013;
2. the data on your school website indicates that RE is one of the option choices in years 9 through to 11 and might possibly imply that only some of years 9 through to 11 are being taught RE.

In relation to the Gateway Academy we noted that:

1. We have no record of any students entered for GCSE RE in 2013;
2. the data on your school website indicates that in years 10 and 11 “students will be guided into one of four courses”, only one of these includes RE and this might imply that not all students are taught RE during these years.

At the time of writing, no response has been received from any of the academies list but a verbal update will be presented at the meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2015.

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

- 3.1 Thurrock is not atypical in having identified a problem in relation to academies and free schools not always meeting their responsibilities in relation to RE. At the Religious Education Council’s General meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2014, the minister for schools; Nick Gibb MP, was asked several questions from the floor about this issue and responded as follows:

“In terms of RS and RE, they are required to teach RE right through to the end of their school time. With regards to the RS issue, if they are not teaching any RE in years 10 and 11 they are breaking the law, they are breaking the terms of their funding agreement.”

“In terms of who enforces, who ensures that academies and free schools are fulfilling their obligation to provide Religious Education, that is the role of the education funding agency to enforce the conditions of the contract, so if there

is evidence that you have that a particular academy isn't fulfilling any condition in their funding agreement and those funding agreements are public documents, then you should be in touch with the Education Funding Agency at the department and they will take action."

3.2 The following options are available to SACRE:

1. To write again to the principal or headteacher of the school in the form of a complaint
2. To write to the governing body of the Academy via the Chair
3. In the case of academies that are part of a multi-academy trust, such as Ormiston or Harris, to write to the Chief Executive Officer of the trust.
4. To write directly to the Education Funding Agency at the Department for Education as suggested by the minister for schools above

#### **4. Reasons for Recommendation**

4.1 Failure to meet the terms of an academy funding agreement in relation to RE for all or some of the pupils in an academy would mean that pupils leaving school in Thurrock are at increased risk of being religiously illiterate and this is unacceptable in modern Britain.

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

5.1 Not applicable

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

6.1 Thurrock Council has set out its five community priorities here:

<https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/vision/our-priorities>

Priority 3 is "build pride, responsibility and respect to create safer communities" Failure to assure provision for Religious Education in Thurrock schools places this priority at risk since students who leave school with little knowledge and understanding about the diversity of religion and belief in their local community, the UK and in the world will be less well equipped to take their place in society. SACRE should therefore advise the council of its concerns and actions.

#### **7. Implications**

##### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Kay Goodacre**  
**Finance Consultant**

There are no financial implications contained within the report.

## 7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lucinda Bell**  
**Education Lawyer**

SACRE is being asked to note responses and then to make decide on action from a choice of several options. All of these are within its powers. Academies are bound by their funding agreement to provide RE, as mentioned in the report. It is the Funding Agency that must take action if an academy is in breach of this term.

## 7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Price**  
**Community Development Officer**

This report sets out a series of options for SACRE in response to the apparent failure of number of local secondary schools to make provision for Religious Education for all or some of its students. The implications of this report are that there is a risk that according to the standards applied by the Department of Education, that some children and young people leaving school in Thurrock may not have sufficient knowledge and understanding of religion and belief to be fully equipped to take their place in a diverse society.

## 7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

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):

- Not applicable

## 9. Appendices to the report

Appendix 1: Letter template to schools

### Report Author:

Deborah Weston

Associate Adviser for Religious Education

## Appendix 1

Dear Headteacher,

A Standing Advisory Council on RE is a permanent statutory body which must be established by each local authority. Local authorities must appoint representatives to each of four committees, representing respectively:

- Group A: Christian denominations and such other religions and religious denominations as, in the authority's opinion, will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area
- Group B: the Church of England
- Group C: teacher associations
- Group D: the local authority

The Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education has a statutory remit to advise the Local Authority on RE to be given in accordance with the agreed syllabus. A SACRE also has within its powers to discuss any matter related to its functions as it sees fit and can therefore include the provision of RE in Academies in its discussions or address such matters as may be referred to it.

At a recent meeting of the Standing Advisory Council for RE members reviewed a number of pieces of evidence about the level of provision for Religious Education in schools and academies in Thurrock. In relation to Gable Hall we noted that:

1. The school workforce data includes no hours of teaching of RE in year 11;
2. only #% of students on roll were entered for GCSE RS in 2013;
3. the data on your school website makes no mention of provision for RE in year 11 and might possibly imply that only some of year 10 are being taught RE.

We appreciate that it is not possible to draw any firm conclusions about the curriculum of a school from these sources of data alone, however this information leads us to question whether or not the terms of your funding agreement are being met in relation to RE. We understand that under these terms you are under contract to the Department for Education to make provision for RE for **all** of your pupils in each school year.

We are of course keen to support you in developing your provision for RE so we would be grateful if you could reply to this letter to inform SACRE whether or not it is your understanding that you are currently meeting the terms of your funding

agreement in relation to RE and if you have plans to make changes to your curriculum in this respect.

SACRE meets again in early 2015, so I would appreciate a response to this letter before this date. I am attaching a document produced by the Department for Education about the requirements for Religious Education in Free Schools and Academies.

I look forward to hearing from you

**Rev. John Guest**  
**Chair, Thurrock SACRE**

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|  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| <b>15 January 2015</b>   | <b>ITEM: 8</b>                  |
| <b>Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education</b>                        |                                 |
| <b>Thurrock SACRE – Academy Responses To The Local Agreed Syllabus</b>         |                                 |
| <b>Wards and communities affected:</b><br>All                                  | <b>Key Decision:</b><br>Non-Key |
| <b>Report of:</b> Deborah Weston, Associate Adviser for Religious Education    |                                 |
| <b>Accountable Head of Service:</b> Ruth Brock, School Improvement Manager     |                                 |
| <b>Accountable Director:</b> Carmel Littleton, Director of Children’s Services |                                 |
| <b>This report is Public</b>   |                                 |

## Executive Summary

This report is an update on a report commissioned in 2014 in order to identify the level of demand for the local Agreed Syllabus in the Academies in Thurrock. It shows that the majority of Academies who have a choice over whether or not to adopt the local Agreed Syllabus for RE have chosen to do so. This means that SACRE can expect a good level of commitment and support for the revision to the Agreed Syllabus.

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

**That SACRE:**

- 1.1 Ask all schools to allow their subject leaders to be involved in the Agreed Syllabus working group**
- 1.2 Continue to make its Agreed Syllabus and supporting materials available to all schools in Thurrock whether or not they are academies**

### 2. Introduction and Background

In order to prepare for the revision of the Agreed Syllabus, SACRE asked the Associate Adviser to survey the Academies in Thurrock to determine the level of support for the Agreed Syllabus. In addition to the list of academies whose response was included in last term’s report, those italicised have also responded:

|                             |              |
|-----------------------------|--------------|
| Abbots Hall Primary Academy | TAS          |
| Beacon Hill Academy         | Own syllabus |

|   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| Belmont Castle  | TAS                        |
| Benyon Primary School   | TAS                        |
| Dilkes Academy  | TAS                        |
| <b><i>East Tilbury Infant School &amp; East Tilbury Junior School</i></b> | <b><i>TAS</i></b>          |
| Gable Hall school   | TAS                        |
| Gateway Academy   | Own Syllabus               |
| GLC Academy   | TAS                        |
| <b><i>Graham James Primary Academy</i></b>                                | <b><i>Own syllabus</i></b> |
| Harris Academy Chafford Hundred   | TAS                        |
| Harris Primary Academy Chafford Hundred                                   | TAS                        |
| <b><i>Hassenbrook Academy</i></b>   | <b><i>Own syllabus</i></b> |
| Hathaway Academy  | TAS                        |
| Herringham Primary Academy  | TAS                        |
| <b><i>Kenningtons Primary Academy</i></b>                                 | <b><i>TAS</i></b>          |
| <b><i>Lansdowne</i></b>   | <b><i>TAS</i></b>          |
| Ockendon Academy  | TAS                        |
| <b><i>Purfleet primary Academy</i></b>                                    | <b><i>TAS</i></b>          |
| Quarry hill Academy   | TAS                        |
| Shaw Primary Academy  | Own syllabus               |
| St Cleres   | TAS with some adaptation   |
| Stanford -le - Hope as part of St Cleres Multi Academy Trust              | TAS and own syllabus       |
| Thameside Primary School  | Essex                      |
| West Thurrock Academy   | TAS                        |
| William Edwards   | Own syllabus               |
| Woodside Academy  | TAS                        |

- 1.2** SACRE has a legal responsibility to recommend an Agreed Syllabus to the council irrespective of how many schools or academies chose to adopt it. The council is legally obliged to fund the development of that Agreed Syllabus once every five years.
- 1.3** This additional data however, reinforces the argument that revising the Agreed Syllabus is a worthwhile activity since around 70% of academies have chosen to follow the Agreed Syllabus even when they have a choice over whether to do so or not
- 1.4** Responses to the survey would suggest that some academies are unclear about their responsibilities in relation to RE and have responded that they do not follow the syllabus when they actually do follow it but have devised their own scheme of work.

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

3.1 SACRE should to continue to discuss how it might build on the commitment of academies to the Agreed Syllabus and to continue to build understanding about the Agreed Syllabus, provision for RE and collective worship.

3.2 Options for achieving this aim might include:

3.2.1 Further written communication with schools, addressing headteacher meetings, publication on the SACRE website, encouraging involvement with the London RE Hub and/or revitalising the local teacher group

### **4. Reasons for Recommendation**

4.1 The positive response of schools to the Agreed Syllabus would suggest that the revision of the Agreed Syllabus is worthwhile both educationally and in terms of value for money

4.2 Given the council is statutorily obliged to revise the Agreed Syllabus, it would seem sensible to ensure that best use is made of it by as many schools as possible.

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

5.1 Not applicable

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

6.1 Not applicable

### **7. Implications**

#### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Kay Goodacre**  
**Finance Manager**

There are no financial implications contained within the report.

#### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Lucinda Bell**  
**Education Lawyer**

Academies are required to teach RE by their funding agreements. The Education Act 1996 s391 makes provision for the functions of SACREs.

These include advising the Local Authority on matters connected with religious worship in community and foundation schools with non religious character and the religious education to be given in accordance with an agreed or other syllabus in accordance with Schedule 19 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. S375(2) of the Education Act 1996 defines “agreed syllabus”. There is a duty on the Authority, imposed by Schedule 31 of the Education Act 1996 to convene a conference to reconsider the agreed syllabus at least every five years.

### 7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Price**  
**Community Development Officer**

The implications of this report are that commitment to the Agreed Syllabus by Thurrock schools suggests that the syllabus and associated materials has the potential to make a significant impact on pupils’ understanding of religion and belief and to ensure that they leave school fully equipped to take their place in a religiously diverse society.

### 7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

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**

- None

### **Report Author:**

Deborah Weston  
Associate Adviser for Religious Education