

**Annual Report Of The Thurrock Standing  
Advisory Council On Religious Education  
(SACRE)**

**September 2014 - July 2016**

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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 has over the years developed its own particular style and character 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 the local authority, to local schools and to other interested parties.

Thurrock SACRE has customarily discussed its annual report in the summer term meeting following publication of validated GCSE data after the spring meeting. It had been previously agreed that publishing invalidated data might be considered inappropriate by schools in case there were errors that misrepresented their provision. Over time, SACRE has reached the conclusion that this practice was problematic since by the time the report reached schools, the validated data was almost a year old.

This report therefore covers two academic years and includes invalidated GCSE data in order that the advice to Thurrock Council and to its schools can be as immediately relevant as possible.

**Forward by the Chair of SACRE – Rev. John Guest**

## **The membership of Thurrock SACRE 2014-2016**

### **Committee A**

Mrs S Lawson – Free Church Member  
Mrs Shepherd – Roman Catholic Member  
M A Rashid – Muslim Member  
Ms A Ahmed – Muslim Member  
Mr B Gill – Sikh Member  
Mr P Anderson – House Church Member  
Dr O Soley – Pentecostal Member  
Mr A Kariyawasam – Buddhist Member  
Vacancy – Jewish Member  
Vacancy – Hindu Member

### **Committee B**

Rev. John Guest – Chair (from July 2014) Church of England Member  
Mrs Mary Taylor – Church of England Member  
David Bates – Church of England Member

### **Committee C**

Angela Jellicoe – Teacher representative  
Paul Griffiths – Headteacher representative  
Hayley Gillman - Teacher representative

### **Committee D**

Councillor Gupta (Until April 2016)  
Councillor Kerin  
Councillor Ojetola

## **SACRE Meetings Held**

The following SACRE meetings were held during the two year period:

- 15 October 2014
- 15 January 2015
- 15 July 2015
- 14 October 2015
- 2 December 2015
- 3 February 2016
- 22 March 2016
- 18 April 2016

## **National Items Discussed By SACRE**

### **National Religious Education Review (October 2014)**

Members discussed draft documentation related to the review and shared their comments with the Religious Education Council of England and Wales.

### **Report on the Inquiry into the Supply of and Support of Teachers of RE in England. All Party Parliamentary Group on RE (October 2014)**

Following a discussion on the supply of and support for teachers of religious education SACRE determined to carry out its own research into the practice of using teaching assistants rather than teachers to deliver the RE curriculum in primary schools.

They were informed by a Headteacher colleague member of SACRE that within Catholic primary schools all teachers are expected to teach RE, training is offered and paid for by the school.

### **The OFSTED Report - Realising the Potential**

SACRE was disappointed to learn that the extent to which RE was not being taught well, especially in secondary schools. They decided to share this report with schools and to publicise its findings in the Headteacher's briefing.

### **A New Settlement: Religion and Beliefs in Schools**

During the Committee's discussion the following points were highlighted:

- It was felt that organised religion appeared to be less important, with an increase in interest in matters of spirituality;
- The Chair informed the Committee that he was to have a meeting with the Headteachers within his area of the boroughs to discuss Collective Worship and would report back to the council;
- The associate adviser pointed out that the research of Professor Linda Woodhead had demonstrated that because a person reported themselves as having no religion on the census did not make them atheist, it meant that they did not consider themselves to be part of an organised religion;
- The Chair suggested that it seemed that collective worship was a normal part of daily life within schools but once it was made compulsory it appeared to decline;
- A teacher representative on the council, stated that collective worship still took place within schools as thoughts, prayers and reflection this was usually undertaken during assemblies. It was felt that by doing collective worship in this way it wouldn't offend anyone with or without a faith.

## **Judicial Review R (Fox) v Secretary of State for Education [2015] EWHC 3404**

This judicial review was held in the High Court of Justice following a challenge to the legality of the Department for Education's GCSE Subject Content for Religious Studies. In his judgment, Justice Warby upheld the claim that a section of the content contained an error of law.

The judge found that the section of the content might mislead those responsible for the provision for RE in schools without a religious character into believing that irrespective of which specification they chose or route through that specification they would automatically be fulfilling their legal requirements in relation to Religious Education and that this was not necessarily true.

During discussions it was agreed to share the outcome of the judicial review Schools with Thurrock

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

SACRE carried out its statutory duty to review the agreed syllabus. Members considered their options for carrying out this review: (i) to revise their current syllabus (ii) to adopt a neighbouring authority's syllabus. (iii) to adopts the RE Today Model Syllabus.

After consulting with all schools SACRE invited a RE Today adviser to make a presentation about the RE Today model syllabus and subsequently decided to adopt it for Thurrock Schools. It was agreed that if local Academies agreed to formally adopt the syllabus, that the Council would pay for a licence for these schools too on the basis that good RE would benefit all the children in the area and there for the local community. All Academies were consulted and it was discovered that 80% of these had chosen to adopt the local agreed syllabus.

Almost all the secondary and many of the primary schools in Thurrock had become academies which meant that although making provision for RE was a contractual responsibility, these schools were not obliged to follow the Thurrock Agreed Syllabus. SACRE decided to conduct some research to determine whether or not the syllabus was commonly used. The results were that 70% of schools who were not obliged to follow the agreed syllabus chose to do so. This information led to the decision to invite all academies to be involved in the review of the Agreed Syllabus.

Details of which syllabus schools had chosen to use as of December 2014 can be found on the following page.

<b>Syllabus Choices of Thurrock Schools</b>	
Abbots Hall Primary Academy	TAS
Beacon Hill Academy	Own syllabus
Belmont Castle	TAS
Benyon Primary School	TAS
Dilkes Academy	TAS
East Tilbury Infant School & East Tilbury Junior	TAS
Gable Hall school	TAS
Gateway Academy	Own Syllabus
GLC Academy	TAS
Graham James Primary Academy	Own syllabus
Harris Academy Chafford Hundred	TAS
Harris Primary Academy Chafford Hundred	TAS
Hassenbrook Academy	Own syllabus
Hathaway Academy	TAS
Herringham Primary Academy	TAS
Kenningtons Primary Academy	TAS
Lansdowne	TAS
Ockendon Academy	TAS
Purfleet primary Academy	TAS
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

## **School Workforce Data – Who Teaches RE in Thurrock**

SACRE continued its practice of reviewing all forms of data that might help them to monitor provision for RE. The number and characteristics of teachers, teaching assistants and other non-classroom-based school support staff, collected through the annual school workforce census.

The statistics include:

- the curriculum subject taught
- whether teachers have qualifications in the subjects they teach
- the hours spent teaching by subject

SACRE 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. They were nonetheless concerned at the high proportion of lessons being taught by teachers whose main specialism and timetable focused on a different area and also that the data appeared to show that some secondary academies did not appear to be fulfilling the terms of their funding agreement to make provision for all pupils on the roll.

SACRE wrote to schools where there were concerns to ask for further information and explanation about why they are not making provision for all pupils and to draw attention to OfSTED's findings on the impact of over use of non-specialists and to ask for their comments.

In December 2014 SACRE examined the results of a survey showing who, at that time, was teaching RE in Thurrock Primary Schools. See the following page for tabulated results

Who delivers RE in Thurrock Primary Schools?	Teachers	General Teaching Assistants	PPA Cover Teachers	Higher Level Teaching Assistants
1. Abbots Hall Primary				
2. Arthur Bugler				
3. Aveley Primary	✓			
4. Beacon Hill Academy	✓			
5. Belmont Castle	50%	33% by teachers+HLTA	16%	
6. Benyon	✓	✓ (during PPA cover or in the teacher's absence)		
7. Bonnygate	✓		✓	
8. Bulphan C of E	✓			
9. Chadwell St Mary				
10. Chafford Hundred				
11. Corringham	✓			
12. Deneholm				
13. Dilkes Academy	✓			
14. East Tilbury				
15. Gateway	✓			
16. Giffauds				
17. Graham James				
18. Herringham Primary	✓			✓(4)
19. Holy Cross	✓			
20. Horndon on the Hill				
21. Kenningtons				
22. Landsdowne	✓			
23. Little Thurrock				
24. Manor				
25. Orsett	✓			
26. Olive AP Academy	✓			
27. Quarry Hill				
28. Shaw Primary	✓			✓
29. Somers Heath				
30. St Joseph's Catholic Primary	✓			
31. St Mary's	✓			
32. St Thomas'	✓			
33. Stanford le Hope	✓			
34. Stifford Clays	✓			✓
35. Thameside	✓			
36. Treetops	✓			
37. Tudor Court	✓			
38. Warren	✓			
39. West Thurrock Academy	✓			
40. Woodside	✓			✓ 2 classes out of 18 for 1 term for PPA

## **Thurrock SACRE Youth Conference**

Funding from the Culham St Gabriel's Trust allowed Thurrock to offer a free youth conference during Interfaith Week in 2015. The event was well attended and the visiting Ambassadors from Redbridge Sixth Forms were well received. Many students had opportunities to talk to young people from Protestant and Catholic traditions of Christianity, Islam, Sikh, Hindu, Pagan as well as atheists.

Youth Conference was taking place on Thursday 10th December being held at the Culver Centre, commencing at 9.30am – 3.00pm

## **Standards in RE in Thurrock**

### **GCSE and GCE A Level Results**

The tables below indicate the entries and results for the exams held in 2015 and 2016.

#### **Entries**

*To Follow*

#### **Results**

*To Follow*

#### **GCE A Level**

The table below illustrates A level results for the Harris Academy where entries doubled in 2014 over 2013 but A\*-B attainment reduced from 100% to 90%