

5 September 2017		ITEM: 7
Standing Advisory Council for 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: N/A		
Accountable Director: Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

SACRE has a legal duty to monitor provision for collective worship in schools in its local area. Collective worship is an area which many schools find challenging both on practical and philosophical level. This report aims to stimulate a discussion between members of SACRE with the aim that some support might be offered to schools.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That SACRE members

- **Discuss the issues raised by the NASACRE (National Association of SACREs) presentation**
- **Agree on what support schools might need that SACRE might offer**

2. Introduction and Background

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registered pupils in state-funded schools should take part in a daily act of collective worship unless wholly or partly withdrawn by parents.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.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 Some of the support SACRE might offer include:

- the production of a guidance document or a 'reading list' of useful guidance that is available
- information about local organisations prepared to support collective worship
- sharing examples of good practice collated from local schools
- sharing information about training that might be on offer

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 This area is of concern to many school leaders especially because it is a legal requirement that is often overlooked and it falls under the remit of SACRE.

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: **Nilufa Begum**

Management Accountant Corporate Finance

There are no financial implications to this report since the next steps from this discussion will be carried out by the Associate RE Adviser as part of their work. No budget pressures or costing required.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**

Principal Solicitor Safeguarding

The requirements for collective worship in schools are contained in the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998. This provides that subject to the parents' right of excusal or other special arrangements that all registered pupils in state-funded schools should take part in a daily act of collective worship.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
Community Development & Equalities Manager

The aim of this exercise is to support schools with meeting their responsibility to offer a daily act of collective worship. These 'acts' will include the celebration of a range of beliefs and worldviews whilst acknowledging that the majority will be 'of a broadly Christian character' For this reason, Acts of worship 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)

- 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 - NASACRE (National Association of SACREs) presentation

Report Author:

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