

# ANNUAL REPORT OF THE THURROCK STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE) FOR 2018 - 2019



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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 to the local authority, to local schools and to other interested parties. One important element of the report is performance data and an analysis of the extent to which schools are meeting their legal duties in relation to RE. GCSE data, including the short course was not available until this month, hence the delay in the publication of the report. More recently, other datasets have been made available by the DfE, most significantly the school workforce data that supports the monitoring of the level of provision in secondary schools.

## Foreword by the Chair of SACRE – Rev. John Guest

It is a great privilege to write my final Foreword for the 2018/19 Annual Report of the Thurrock Standing Advisory Committee for Religious Education. May I begin by commending my friend and colleague, our hard-working RE advisor, Deborah Weston. So much of what Deborah does is unseen apart from the innumerable reports and papers she produces but I know she brings to our committee an immense passion, dedication and personal commitment to this vital area.

Once again, our Education Awards last November gave ample evidence of the sterling work being done by our local schools and we are grateful to Andrea Winstone and Cllr. James Halden for their support and encouragement.

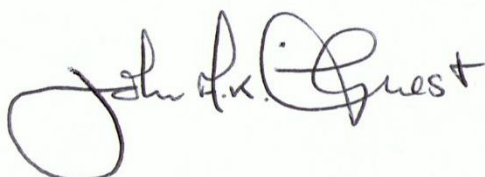
You can read in this report how SACRE has been building on its work of previous years, carrying out its duty in guiding and overseeing the delivery of religious education and collective worship in the schools of our borough. Through Deborah we have sought to carefully monitor the effectiveness of this delivery and make recommendations where needed. You will note particularly our continuing concerns about the provision of adequate training for RE teachers and responses of local schools to requests for information on the nature of their RE and collective worship. We will continue to challenge schools to “increase quality and standards of education” in line with the School Support Strategy 2019.

Please note carefully the key issues arising from the Report of the Commission on RE (p. 14) and the implications for the future activity of SACRE. I am very pleased to see the new Ofsted Framework for school inspection and its increased examination period. I hope this will provide a beneficial effect on the delivery of RE in Thurrock schools.

Writing just days after the observation of International Holocaust Memorial observance, I am delighted to commend the increasing diversity of our SACRE group. We are pleased to welcome contributions from across the Faith sector and from local council and local education. We would, however, welcome further involvement from committed local people to this important area of our community life. As members of our Youth Cabinet commented to us on a recent visit, RE was “particularly interesting because it relates to real life scenarios and everyday life.” We hope to build on the contributions of our young people at our Youth Conference on 3<sup>rd</sup> June this year but, in the meantime, can I make a plea to all those reading this important report to consider how they might themselves make a personal contribution to the work of this committee. We meet just three times a year but our discussions are always lively and engaging. Please join us!

Finally, as this is my last report before I step down in June, may I take the opportunity of thanking all my colleagues on SACRE and again commending all the hard work of our wonderful local schools. I am particularly grateful to the seven schools in my own parish of Stanford le Hope and for 27 years of friendship and fun.

Thank you and God bless you!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John A. Guest". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and a cross at the end.

## Membership of Thurrock SACRE 2018/2019

### Committee A

- Mrs S Lawson – Free Church Member
- Mrs M Shepherd – Roman Catholic Member
- Ms H Kaur Takhtar – Sikh Member
- Mr P Anderson – House Church Member
- Mt T Ojetola – Pentecostal Member
- Mr A Kariyawasam – Buddhist Member
- Mr A Rashid – Muslim Member
- Miss A Ahmed - Muslim Member
- Vacancy – Hindu Member
- Vacancy – Jewish Member

### Committee B

- Rev. John Guest – Chair - Church of England Member
- Mr D Bates - Church of England Member
- Vacancy X 2– Church of England Member

### Committee C

- Mrs R Gedalovitch -primary
- Ms J Culloty - secondary
- Ms H Martins - primary
- Ms A Harris -secondary
- Vacancy X 2

### Committee D

- Councillor M Kerin
- Councillor S MacPherson
- Councillor A Sheridan

## **SACRE Meetings Held**

The following SACRE meetings were held during the reporting period:

17<sup>th</sup> October 2018

9<sup>th</sup> January 2019

5<sup>th</sup> June 2019

All meetings were held at the Civic Offices, New Road, Grays, Thurrock, Essex

## **Membership and attendance**

Two of the three meetings of SACRE during the reporting period were inquorate. The constitution requires that at least one representative attends from each of the committees and for one meeting, no teacher was present and for two meetings no councillor was represented.

## **ADVICE:**

***SACRE wishes to advise the Council that it is not possible for SACRE for discharge its legal duties if meetings are not quorate. SACRE has therefore proposed some revisions to the terms of reference including increasing the number of members of committee D and the appointment of substitute members.***

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

### **The responsibility of SACRE**

According to government guidance<sup>1</sup>, SACREs should monitor the provision and quality of RE taught according to its agreed syllabus, together with the overall effectiveness of the syllabus. Ofsted inspection reports do not systematically include information on RE so cannot be relied on as a source of information about provision in schools.

Thurrock SACRE offers both the syllabus and schemes of work free of charge to academies via a password protect section of the website.

<https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/religious-education/syllabus-for-religious-education>. This decision was made based upon the principle enshrined in law that all children in all types of school are entitled to receive religious education and to be prepared for life in modern Britain. School requests for the password to these resources indicate that most academies use the syllabus. However, there is no mechanism by which to require academies to comply with the requirements of the syllabus since their funding agreement simply requires them to 'make provision for RE'.

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<sup>1</sup> Religious Education in English Schools (2010) p12

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/190260/DCSF-00114-2010.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/190260/DCSF-00114-2010.pdf)

## **Standards in Thurrock Schools.**

SACRE undertakes a number of activities annually to fulfil its responsibilities including the monitoring of:

### **School websites**

Schools are required to publish their curriculum for each subject for each school year. This includes Religious Education, even when it is called something else. SACRE investigated school websites in order to learn more about how RE, including the Thurrock Agreed Syllabus was being used. Some schools presented a comprehensive RE programme and were clearly using the Agreed Syllabus and accompanying scheme of work. Others failed to report on RE or reported a curriculum that did not appear to comply either with the Agreed Syllabus or, in the case of some academies, their funding agreement.

### **School Workforce Data (Secondary)**

Schools complete the school workforce census every November and this allows SACRE to discuss the number of teaching hours each secondary school reports for RE. Unfortunately, not all schools appear to complete the census accurately, especially when the subject is combined with another on the timetable. Table 1 below sets out what schools reported.

### **GCSE Entries and Results**

The Thurrock Agreed Syllabus requires that all students in all schools follow a course in Religious Education leading to a GCSE qualification. The publication of results therefore is another tool that helps us monitor levels and quality of provision.

## **2018-2019 findings**

### **Primary Schools**

During this year SACRE used an online survey to collect information about provision in primary schools and received a response from a small number of schools. Thanks are due to the following for providing this sample of data:

Quarry Hill Academy  
Giffards Primary School  
Aveley Primary School  
Ortu Corringham Primary  
Stanford le Hope Primary School  
Benyon Primary Academy  
Warren Primary School  
Dilkes Academy  
Abbotts Hall Primary Academy

All but one school reported following the Thurrock Agreed Syllabus and the scheme of work.

## Secondary Schools

SACRE continued its pattern of analysing school workforce data and examination results. The results are set out in the table below.

\*Denotes the published school workforce has been amended following conversation with the school and/or checking on the website

The data presented in the table above demonstrates that there are significant variations in the level and quality of provision for RE in Thurrock schools. In some schools, the subject is taken very seriously but in others, pupils are not guaranteed either their full entitlement to a Religious Education or to leave school with knowledge and understanding of religions and worldviews.

### **ADVICE**

***SACRE wishes to advise the council of its agreed view that where SACRE has identified strengths or areas for development in relation to Religious Education in specific schools, the subject should form part of the annual conversations conducted by the School Effectiveness Team. This we believe is consistent with School Support Strategy 2019 and the aim that by 2022, there will be an effective process to 'challenge and support all schools to increase quality and standards of education'.<sup>2</sup>***

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<sup>2</sup> Thurrock Council Education Support Strategy 2019-2022  
<https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/sites/default/files/assets/documents/education-support-strategy-2019-v02.pdf>



# Appendix 1

## GCSE provision

Two schools; Grays Convent and the Gateway offer GCSE for all pupils at Key Stage 4 and The Ockendon, Gable Hall, Harris Academy Chafford Hundred and the Hathaway all offer the subject as an option. Pupils at Grays Convent, the Ockendon, Gable Hall, Harris Academy Chafford Hundred and the Hathaway all achieved results at 9-4 that were above the national average. Special congratulations should be offered to the Ockendon Academy where the number of pupils achieving grades 9-4 rose from 41.3% when the course was taught to the whole cohort and 88% when it was taught as an option group.

Secondary Schools – Table 1

School	% of timetable RE					GCSE 2019 (2018)				Pupil Premium		
	Seven	Eight	Nine	Ten	Eleven	Course Entries%	KS4 Full Course	KS4 Short Course	Percentage 9-4 FC	Percentage 9-4 Short	Percentage of pupils entitled	Relative to national averages
Grays Convent High School	7.5	7.5	7.4	10.5	8.5	94.7% (98%)		3.5	86% (85.2%)	75	22%	Low
The Gateway Academy <sup>3</sup>	4*	4*	7	15.2	3.7	96% (74.8%)		0	44% (49.2%)		42%	Medium
Ormiston Park Academy <sup>4</sup>	0	0	0	0	0		0	0			43%	Medium
Harris Academy Ockendon	7.3	7.4	6.9	6.9	7.1	39% (100%)		0	88%(41.3%)		34%	Low
Ortu Gable Hall School <sup>5</sup>	2.7	1.6	3.2	1.4	0	24% (24.2%)		0	79% (63.8%)		21%	Low
William Edwards School <sup>6</sup>	0	4.2	4.1	0	1	0.4% (3%)		0	0% (71.4%)		16%	Very Low
St Clere's School <sup>2</sup>	4.8	4.9	2.7	2.3	0		0	28.6		87.7	24%	Low
Harris Academy Chafford Hundred <sup>7</sup>	0	0	0	0	1.5	6% (12.2%)		0	100% (77.3%)		14%	Very Low
The Hathaway Academy <sup>8</sup>	0	0	0	1.9	2.9	19% (13.7%)		0	75% (47.1%)		34%	Low
Hassenbrook Academy <sup>9</sup>	0	0	0	0	0		0	0			35%	Low

<sup>3</sup> At both the Gateway and St Clere's, pupils sit the examination at the end of Year 10

<sup>4</sup> Ormiston Park: RE is combined with Citizenship and Personal Education at Key Stage 3 and 4

<sup>5</sup> Ortu Gable Hall: RE is combined with PSHRSE Key Stage 3 and 4 but no specific RE content is visible in the online plan. There is an option for RS at KS4

<sup>6</sup> From 2019, William Edwards provides one hour per week in Y7 and an option group in KS4 but no discrete provision for those who do not opt for RS GCSE

<sup>7</sup> Harris Academy Chafford Hundred In KS3 RE is combined with Citizenship and PSHE. RE an option at GCSE and A Level but there is no provision for remaining pupils

<sup>8</sup> Hathaway offers core RE in Years 7,8 and 9 and an option group but no provision for those who do not opt for RE

<sup>9</sup> Hassenbrook: RE is combined with Personal, Social, Health, Relationships and Sex Education at Key Stage 3. There is no GCSE option provision for RS at KS4

## **Youth SACRE report to SACRE**

Thurrock's Youth Cabinet is a group of 11 to 19 year-olds, who work to make Thurrock a better place for young people. The Youth Cabinet was set up to give the young people of Thurrock a voice. Youth Cabinet members regularly meet with councillors, council officers and other decision makers to give their views on a number of issues including the school curriculum.

As part of their monitoring work therefore, SACRE invited representatives of the Youth Cabinet to attend a SACRE meeting. Members informed the representatives that SACRE had invited the Youth Cabinet to their meeting as they felt it was important to seek their views about their experiences of Religious Education in Schools and the importance of Religious Education in Thurrock today. The representatives reported enjoying RE lessons more at secondary School than in primary. They felt the material they studied in secondary Religious Education was particularly interesting because it relates to real life scenarios and everyday life. The representatives also reported appreciating the visits they were offered to places of worship. They agreed unanimously that RE should be taught in schools especially as it was important for all young people to know about people from other cultures.

## **ADVICE**

***SACRE wishes to thank all those involved in the Youth Cabinet for their contribution to the monitoring of RE and Collective Worship in Thurrock Schools***

## **SACRE discussion of National Developments in RE**

### **The final Report of the Commission on RE**

SACRE discussed the final report and how this related to RE in Thurrock. Members noted the following key issues in the report:

- A proposal for a national entitlement for RE
- A proposal to change the name of the subject from Religious Education to Religion and Worldviews
- The need to hold schools to account for the provision and quality of RE
- A renewed and expanded role for SACRES
- A call for Central Government to offer guidance to schools on the legal status of right of withdrawal and the challenges of selective withdrawal
- A National Plan for improving teaching and learning in RE

### **New OFSTED Framework for the Inspection of schools**

SACRE discussed both the draft and final versions of the 2019 Inspection Framework. Members heard that the pre-September 2019 framework had offered a degree of accountability to schools, for example with references in Ofsted reports to schools achieving the RE Quality Mark. A small number of schools had been criticized for failure to provide RE at all. This framework did not lend itself to a thorough examination of the curriculum, especially because inspections could last only one day. One of the effects of this was that schools that are non-compliant with

# Appendix 1

their Agreed Syllabus or in the case of academies, their funding agreements, appeared to be inspected and not challenged about these failings at all.

The 2019 framework reverses this trend. Inspections will last two days and there will be a much greater emphasis on the curriculum. It is likely that a small number of subjects, possibly four, will be chosen as a focus for examining the curriculum and this could just as easily be RE as any other subject. A bonus from this approach is that over time, the information collected about each individual subject could (and should) be collated to create subject reports that identify national trends. SACRE welcomed this information and looked forward to reading specific information about RE in inspection reports of Thurrock schools in due course

## **Other matters discussed that fall under the remit of SACRE**

### **Acts of Worship**

SACRE has a legal duty to monitor provision for collective worship in schools in its local area. SACRE collated policy documents from local schools in order to conduct a review. Thanks are due to the following for uploading their policies to their school websites:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Harris Academies' Trust</li><li>• Bonnygate Primary School</li><li>• Horndon on Hill</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• St Clere's</li><li>• Kenningtons</li></ul>
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Members agreed that the most helpful policies included some or all of the following:

- A statement about the legal requirements around collective worship including the parental and teacher right of withdrawal
- The aims of collective worship in the school including links to school ethos and values, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, fundamental British Values and the taught curriculum
- Objectives or intended outcomes for the programme of collective worship
- Practical arrangements about how Collective Worship is organised in the school:
  - Groupings (e.g. year groups, classes/tutor groups, houses, whole school)
  - Timings, including links to the school timetable, calendar and local and national occasions and festivals
  - Leaders and their roles in collective worship – e.g. visitors, senior and middle leaders, individual and groups of pupils
- A clear statement about the nature of collective worship; what it is and what it is not. How collective worship may link to but is distinct from 'assembly'
- A statement about how the effectiveness of the policy will be reviewed, by whom and when

## **Thurrock SACRE Youth Conference – Values through Religious Education 5th June 2019 - see images on the cover**

Thurrock SACRE was delighted to be able to host a Youth Conference in 2018-19 and that this was well attended by schools. By inviting teachers to attend alongside a small group of pupils from each primary and secondary school, it was possible to provide a training event for adults as well as a leadership experience for young people. The aims of the conference were as follows:

- To encourage pupils to learn from each other through dialogue and shared experience
- To provide an interesting and exciting experience in RE to pupils from Thurrock schools
- To develop pupils' creative and expressive talents
- To promote the place of excellent, open-minded RE in Thurrock

Feedback from pupils and teachers alike was very positive. The children were able to return to school equipped to run sessions for their peers on the 4 values we approached during the day. These were hope, commitment, peace and faith. A conference for 2020 is booked!