

**22 November 2017**

**ITEM: 5**

**Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education**

**Monitoring of Religious Education in Thurrock Schools**

**Wards and communities affected:**

All

**Key Decision:**

Non-Key

**Report of:**

Deborah Weston, Associate Adviser for Religious Education

**Accountable Assistant Director:**

Roger Edwardson, Strategic Lead for School Improvement, Learning and Skills

**Accountable Director:** Rory Patterson, Director of Children's Services

**This report is Public**

**Executive Summary**

In order to discharge its legal duties, SACRE monitors provision for Religious Education in its local area where RE is delivered in accordance with the local Agreed Syllabus. Thurrock introduced a new Agreed Syllabus in 2016 and decided it would now seem timely to carry out a monitoring exercise to establish how effective the new syllabus has been in meeting its aim to raise standards of RE. At the last meeting on SACRE a mechanism by which SACRE might collect information to meet this monitoring requirement and this has updated following members' instructions.

**1. Recommendations that SACRE:**

**1.1 Discuss the revised proforma at Appendices 1 and 2 of the report;**

**1.2 Authorise a pilot monitoring programme that might be reviewed in the summer term meeting.**

**2. Introduction and Background**

**2.1** It has been possible in the past for SACRE to carry out its monitoring function using a variety of methods:

- a) School visits and lesson observations
- b) The collation of comments on RE found in Ofsted inspection reports
- c) Analysis of data

2.2 Smaller education budgets and less staff capacity mean that specific visits to schools by specialist advisers for RE are no longer possible for most local authorities, Ofsted no longer report on RE in particular and therefore SACREs around the country largely rely on data and information that schools are prepared to share from their own self-evaluative work.

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

3.1 SACRE cannot require schools to respond to a request to complete a self-evaluation form however, all schools must evaluate their work. The draft questions on the survey encompass the areas that best practice would suggest are key areas of concern, so it is likely that many schools will respond albeit at different rates.

3.2 If this method of collecting information about RE in Thurrock schools is not successful then SACRE will need consider a different method or rely on data alone.

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

4.1 One of the responsibilities of a SACRE is to monitor provision for RE to be given in accordance with its Agreed Syllabus

### **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 analysis of the data collected through this exercise will be conducted by the Associate RE Adviser as part of her work.

### 7.2 Legal

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

The legal duties on the advisory council are set out in s391 of the Education Act 1996. The main one is to advise the local authority on such matters connected with the religious worship in community schools or in foundation schools which do not have a religious character and the religious education to be given in accordance with an agreed or other syllabus as the authority may refer to the council or as the council may see fit.

### 7.3 Diversity and Equality

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

The aim of this exercise is to collect information about 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, 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 - RE School Self-Evaluation (Primary)
- Appendix 2 - RE School Self-Evaluation (Secondary)

### **Report Author:**

Deborah Weston

Associate Adviser for RE