

18 July 2018		ITEM: 6
Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education		
How Ofsted are reporting on Religious Education		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key	
Report of: Deborah Weston: Associate Adviser for Religious Education		
Accountable Assistant Director: – Michele Lucas, Assistant Director Learning Inclusion and Skills		
Accountable Director: - Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children’s Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

1. Ofsted is looking more seriously at whether schools are offering a broad and balanced curriculum – senior leaders need to ensure they are making good provision for RE long side other subjects.
2. Where there is good quality provision for RE, there is now a greater chance that it will contribute positively to the evidence Ofsted are using to make their overall judgements about a school.
3. Similarly, where there is limited or poor-quality provision, it is possible that RE will be used as an example to illustrate a broader concern or where there is a contrast between practice in some subject areas and others.

1. Recommendation(s) that SACRE:

That SACRE members

- **Assess the likely effectiveness of analysing comments on RE in Ofsted reports for Thurrock Schools and their Governing Bodies**
- **Discuss the key points found in these reports.**
- **Consider writing to all schools and to their Governing Bodies to encourage them to use the materials as a part of their meetings.**

2 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

There has been a marked increase in the number of references to Religious Education in both secondary and secondary Ofsted reports. RE was mentioned in approximately 15% of long reports in 2015/16 and 16% in 2016/17. There are wide variations between regions however, with RE mentioned least frequently in London and most frequently in the North West, the North East and the West Midlands. There were almost 650 comments in total of which 80% were positive and 20% negative.

Ofsted has not inspected subjects for many years, so it is not possible to draw many conclusions about the health or otherwise of the subject from these reports.

The increase in the number of references to RE in Section 5 reports probably tells us as much about changes in the focus of Ofsted inspection as it does about RE itself. Ofsted is now paying much more attention to the wider curriculum and inspectors are drawing their evidence from a wider range of subjects when making their overall judgements. Recent comments from the Amanda Spielman (HM Chief Inspector of Education) here would suggest that this trend will continue into the new framework for inspection due to be launched in 2019.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 Governing Bodies are responsible for the educational standards and provision in their schools. The work of governors forms a key part of the judgement of leadership and management in Ofsted reports.
- 3.2 Governors are expected to take part in regular training. One option for making it more likely that governors receive training in RE is to provide materials to facilitate such a session.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 Ofsted are paying more careful attention to RE in schools and are likely to do so even more frequently when the new framework for inspection is published in 2019
- 4.2 The evidence from the reports in the appendices would suggest that governors are not always well informed about their responsibilities in relation to RE
- 4.3 The provision of training materials will make it more likely that governors will receive such training and that RE is a focus for discussion.

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: **David May**
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

This report asks that SACRE accepts a recommendation for action that comes within the remit of its monitoring function.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

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

The aim of this exercise is to help governors become better informed about the provision for RE in their schools. If governors hold senior leaders to account for the level and standards of provision in RE, it is likely to help raise standards. 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):

8.1 None

9 Appendices to the report

9.1 Appendix A – How are Ofsted reports making reference to Religious Education – Secondary

9.2 Appendix B - How are Ofsted reports making reference to Religious Education – primary

9.3 Appendix C - Ofsted Governor Activity – secondary

9.4 Appendix D - Ofsted Governor Activity – primary

Report Author:

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Associate Adviser for RE