

17 October 2018		ITEM: 7
Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education		
Monitoring Provision for 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: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director Learning Inclusion and Skills		
Accountable Director: Rory Patterson, Corporate 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. This report includes data from the school workforce census data conducted in November 2016 and 2017. It identifies a number of secondary schools that appear not to be meeting their legal duty to provide religious education for all pupils.

1. Recommendation(s) that SACRE:

That SACRE members

- Receives this background paper and discusses the different sets of data
- Writes to the principal / head teacher of each of the academies concerned to:
- Ask for further information and explanation about why they are not making provision for all pupils
- Where such letters have not been acknowledged in the past, to issue a complaint the governing board of this academy

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 One of the key aims of SACREs around the country is to ensure that children and young people in their area are properly educated in Religious Education. Academies must make provision for RE for all their students according to their funding agreements and it is within the legal remit of a SACRE to agenda any matter concerned with RE.

The model funding agreement which forms the basis of almost all non-faith Academies legal contract states the following:

- a) subject to clause 27, the Academy Trust shall ensure that provision shall be made for religious education to be given to all pupils at the Academy` in accordance with the requirements for agreed syllabuses in section 375(3) of the Education Act 1996 and paragraph 2(5) of Schedule 19 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, [and having regard to the requirements of the QCDA's national framework for religious education in schools]

2.2 The Department of Education have been consulted on the interpretation of this section of the paragraph and they were pleased to inform us that it means that ALL students in ALL year groups must be taught Religious Education. This means that all students must study RE at all key stages. Further clarification about how schools and academies can be held accountable for their provision has been received from the department of education. See appendix B

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

Level of provision in relation to timetable time:

The provision for RE in some of the Academies in Thurrock appears to be low in relation to the amount of timetable time dedicated to the subject. If students are not receiving their legal entitlement to Religious Education, what impact might this have on the degree to which they are able to take their place in a plural society?

According to this data, the academy schools highlighted are not making provision for RE for all pupils as required by their funding agreement.

RE teaching in Thurrock local authority area academies in a typical week in November 2017, hours taught by year group – see Appendix A

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: **Kay Goodacre**

Finance Manager 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: **Natalie Warren.**

Community Development & Equalities Manager

The aim of this review 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

8.0 Appendices to the report

8.1 Appendix A – School Workforce Data (DfE) – 2016 and 2017

8.2 Appendix B – Greater Clarity for Academies in relation to Religious Education

Report Author:

Deborah Weston

Associate Adviser for RE

APPENDIX A

School Workforce Data (DfE) - 2016 and 2017

School name:	Religious character:	School type:	% hours spent on RE Teaching 7	% hours spent on RE Teaching 8	% hours spent on RE Teaching 9	% hours spent on RE Teaching 10	% hours spent on RE Teaching 11	% hours spent on RE Teaching 12	% hours spent on RE Teaching 13	% hours spent on RE Teaching for years 7 to 13
The Hathaway Academy	None	Academy Sponsor Led	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.1	2.1	.	.	0.7
Harris Academy Chafford Hundred	None	Academy Converter	0.0	0.0	1.6	2.0	0.9	3.4	4.1	1.6
St Clere's School	None	Foundation School	2.8	2.6	2.0	2.4	0.0	.	.	1.8
William Edwards School and Sports College	None	Academy Converter	0.0	4.2	4.4	1.0	1.0	.	.	2.1
The Gateway Academy	Does not apply	ACADEMY SPONSOR LED	0.0	0.0	7.2	3.0	0.0	.	.	2.1
Gable Hall School	None	Foundation School	4.0	3.7	4.9	1.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.4
Hassenbrook Academy	None	ACADEMY CONVERTER	4.4	4.5	4.4	2.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.0
The Ockendon School	None	Foundation School	7.3	7.4	7.4	7.3	7.6	0.0	4.5	6.6
Grays Convent High School	Roman Catholic	VOLUNTARY AIDED SCHOOL	9.2	9.4	9.6	10.0	10.5	.	.	9.8

School name	Religious character	School type	School type group	Sponsor (if applicable)	Percentage of timetable time spent on teaching RE								GCSE examinations 2017						
					Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Year 13	Hours of RE taught to key stage 3 year group	Hours of RE taught to key stage 4 year group	Percentage of key stage 5 teaching spent on RE	Percentage of all teaching spent on RE	% Y11 cohort entered for Full Course	% Y11 cohort entered for Short Course	% Year 11 cohort entered for ANY GCSE RS	% achieved grade A*-C (Gold = exceeded national average)
Gable Hall School	None	Academy converter	Academies	-	2.7	1.6	3.2	1.4	0	0	0	19	3	0	1.6	24.2	0	0	63.8
Grays Convent High School	Roman Catholic	Voluntary aided school	LA maintained schools	-	7.5	7.5	7.4	11	8.5	0	0	24	23	0	8.3	94.7	3.5	0	84.8
Harris Academy Chafford Hundred	None	Academy converter	Academies	-	0	0	0	0	1.5	2.9	3	0	4	3	1.1	12.2	0	0	77.3
Hassenbrook Academy	None	Academy converter	Academies	The Stanford & Corringham Schools Trust	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.
Ormiston Park Academy	Does not apply	Academy sponsor led	Academies	Ormiston Academies Trust	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.
St Clere's School	None	Academy converter	Academies	-	4.8	4.9	2.7	2.3	0	0	0	22	5	0	2.8	0	28.6	0	87.7
The Gateway Academy	Does not apply	Academy sponsor led	Academies	Gateway Academy Trust	0	0	7	15	3.7	0	0	3	13	0	5.5	74.8	0	0	49.2
The Hathaway Academy	None	Academy sponsor led	Academies	Academy Transformation Trust	0	0	0	1.9	2.9	0	0	0	6	0	0.8	13.7	0	0	47.1
The Ockendon Academy	None	Academy converter	Academies	-	7.3	7.4	6.9	6.9	7.1	6.7	0	40	23	3.2	6.5	100	0	0	41.3
William Edwards School	None	Academy converter	Academies	-	0	4.2	4.1	0	1.0	0	0	18	3.0	0	1.8	3	0	0	71.4

APPENDIX B

Greater clarity for Academies in relation to RE

At the end of March 2018, minister for schools; Nick Gibb MP responded to a parliamentary question about RE. In the response he said the following: “Where academies are subject to the same statutory duties as maintained schools, the Secretary of State has powers to enforce compliance via the terms of the funding agreement.” NATRE subsequently wrote to the DfE in an attempt to clarify what sort of matter might result in a Secretary of State using these powers in relation to RE. We asked: ‘Can you please provide us with some guidance about how you might judge a complaint about the failure of an academy to meet its funding agreement in relation to RE?’

The letter we received in response this week included the following six points:

1. In most non-religiously designated academy funding agreements, the requirement to provide religious education is in line with S.375(3) of the Education Act 1996 – religious education that **reflects the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are Christian, whilst taking into account the practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain;**
2. Academies **may choose to use an agreed syllabus** in full or part to meet their requirements to provide RE. They may also choose to develop their **own syllabus that meets the requirements in their funding agreement** (including S.375 above);
3. We would expect that all schools provide pupils with **a curriculum that is high quality and promotes progression** through the key stages, including in RE;
4. Head teachers should ensure that “the subject is **well led and effectively managed**, and that standards and achievement in RE, and the quality of the provision, are subject to **regular and effective self-evaluation;**
5. If inspectors become aware that a school is not delivering the curriculum that it is expected to be offering, this will be reflected in the **assessment of the leadership and management** of the school, which in turn will inform the overall effectiveness of the school;
6. If the department is made aware of an academy that is not meeting the requirements for providing RE as outlined above, the **complaint would be passed onto the operational team** where the academy was located. The operational team would work with the policy team to understand the arrangements and specific situation in that school, and work with the school to resolve the matter.

The implication of these points is that when academies publish details of their curriculum for RE for each year group (as they are required to do following statutory guidance) the curriculum must be clear about:

- a) How it reflects the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain (S.375(3) of the Education Act 1996)
- b) Which specific syllabus is followed e.g. A local Agreed Syllabus or other Syllabus that includes sufficient clear information to allow teachers, parents and others to be clear about what content is to be taught in each year of each key stage? (Note: a previous complaint about a syllabus for RE has secured this working definition of a syllabus with support from DfE lawyers)
- c) How progression in knowledge, understanding and skills is secured in Religious Education as pupils move from one-year group to another