

9 January 2019		ITEM: 8
Standing Advisory Council for 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. Thurrock introduced a new Agreed Syllabus in 2016 and has conducted regular monitoring exercises to establish how effective the new syllabus has been in meeting its aim to raise standards of RE. At the last meeting of SACRE resolved to ask the associate adviser to undertake two monitoring actions:

1. To approach schools with a brief questionnaire to help them understand some of the choices schools have made concerning the use of the Agreed Syllabus and scheme of work.
2. To write letters to six schools where the data collected appeared to indicate there might be deficiencies in relation to their provision for RE.

1. Recommendation(s) that SACRE consider:

- **the information collected to date (December 2018)**
- **any lessons learned from these responses**
- **Consider what action might be necessary to collect more responses**

2. Introduction and Background

DfE guidance for Academies published [here](#) explains that Academy Funding Agreements require these schools to make one of three choices about their provision for Religious Education. This questionnaire aims to collect information about that choice in Thurrock Academies.

The rapid turnover of subject leaders in primary schools means that not all teachers appear to have access to the Thurrock Agreed Syllabus and schemes of work. The questionnaire is an opportunity to inform schools about the available resources.

To comply with the School Information (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012, all schools including academies and free schools must publish the content of the religious education curriculum for each academic year on their school website.¹ and ²

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The number of responses received both to the questionnaire and letters is disappointing and SACRE will need to consider its options in trying to collect this information. E.g. abandoning the questionnaire and letters, repeating the requests, for example for the questionnaire the Headteacher Bulletin, resending the letters (perhaps copying in the Chair of the Governing Board), informing schools by another method of the request for this information.

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**

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-maintained-schools-must-publish-online>

² <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-academies-free-schools-and-colleges-should-publish-online>

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 – Questionnaire and Answers

8.2 Appendix B – Letters sent to schools

Report Author:

Deborah Weston

Associate Adviser for RE

Appendix A

1. What is the full name of your school?

3 responses

Quarry Hill Academy
Giffards Primary School
Aveley Primary School

2. What is the name of the person completing this form?

3 responses

Christina Eldred
Nicola James
Nicola Shadbolt

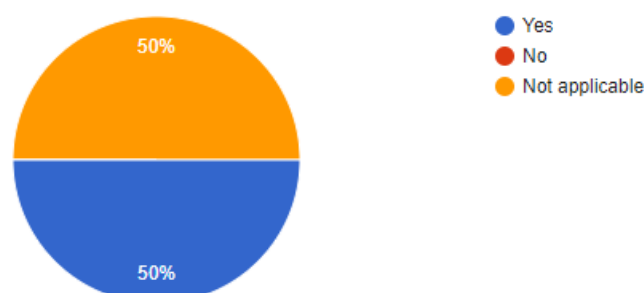
3. What is the role of the person completing this form?

3 responses

RE Co-ordinator
Assistant Headteacher
Headteacher

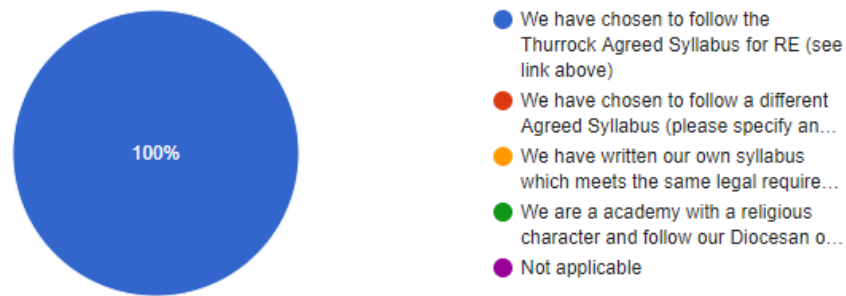
4. If your school is a LA maintained school, do all teachers of RE have access to the statutory Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education? <https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/religious-education/syllabus-for-religious-education>

2 responses



5. If your school is an Academy, which of the options stipulated by the DfE through <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/r/re%20and%20collective%20wors>

2 responses



6. If your school in an Academy and you have chosen to adopt a syllabus for RE other than the Thurrock Agreed Syllabus, please specify which one and send a link to document below.

0 responses

No responses yet for this question.

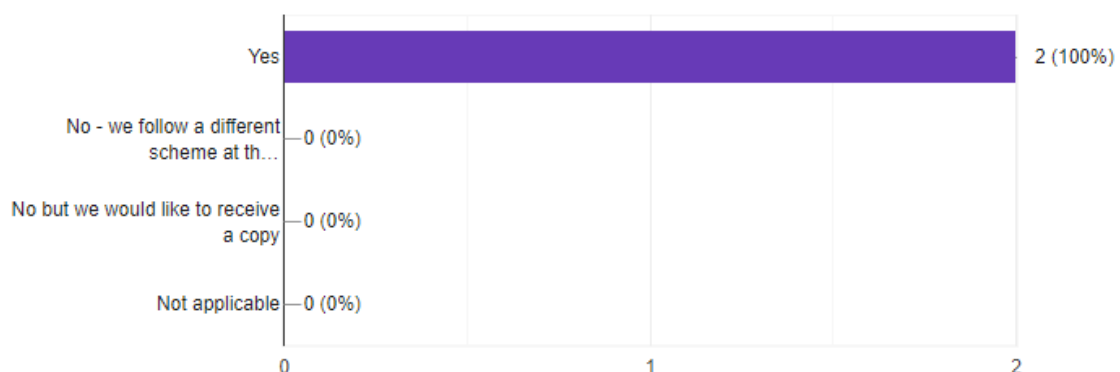
7. Link to non-Thurrock Syllabus for RE where applicable (see above)

0 responses

No responses yet for this question.

8. If your school includes the primary phase and has chosen to adopt the Thurrock Agreed Syllabus, do you follow the Thurrock Scheme of Work for primary schools?

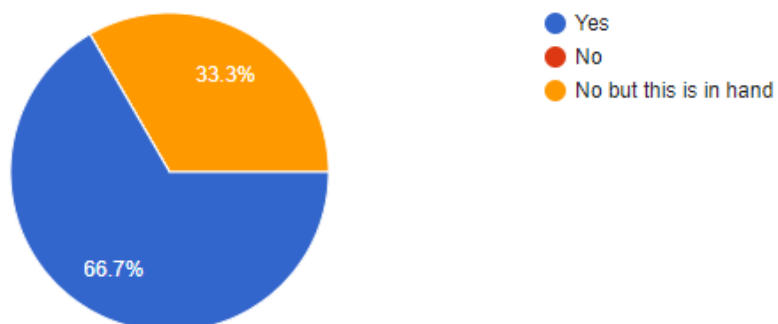
2 responses



9. Have you published the content of your school curriculum in each academic year for every subject, including Religious Education even if it is taught as part of another subject or subjects, or is called something else?



3 responses



10. Other comments or questions for SACRE

0 responses

No responses yet for this question.

Appendix B

Letters were sent to the following schools:

The Hathaway	no response
Gateway	response see below
Aveley Primary	response see below
William Edwards	response see below
Graham James	no response
Arthur Bugler	no response

From: N Shadbolt [<mailto:nshadbolt@aveleyprimary.thurrock.sch.uk>]
Sent: 10 December 2018 15:08
To: Buck, Sarah
Subject: RE: Religious Education - letters to schools from SACRE

Please forward to Deborah Weston – [Sacre](#)

Thank-you for your comments following completion of the RE survey.

Aveley Primary has adopted Cornerstones curriculum for foundation subjects – but not RE, where we follow the Thurrock agreed syllabus. An outline of the syllabus is on the school website in the curriculum tab – it is listed at the end of the Year group overviews – RE overview. Aveley Primary is joining the Catalyst Academy chain and will continue to follow the Thurrock agreed Syllabus.

I hope that this answers your questions.

Kind regards

[N.Shadbolt](#)

N. Shadbolt
Headteacher Aveley Primary
01708 865868



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William Edwards School

'Inspirational learning with a strong sporting ethos'

HEADTEACHER: MR S BELL

20th November 2019

Rev John Guest
Via Email: gof4god@aol.com

Dear Rev Guest,

I am writing in response to your letter which I received on the 16th November via Sue Lamkin at Thurrock Council. Your letter indicates that you wanted a reply by the 10th October but clearly this was not possible given when I have received it.

I am grateful for you contacting me in order to seek clarification about our RE provision. You are correct in your assertion that it is hard to draw conclusions from the publically available information but I wanted to reassure you that as a practicing OfSTED inspector with a specialism in the curriculum, I am perhaps more aware than most of the importance of a broad and balanced curriculum offer and clearly RE provision is central to this.

Our RE offer has not changed in the last five years and is outlined below:

- RE is taught to all pupils on the curriculum as a distinct subject in years 7, 8 & 9. We follow the locally agreed syllabus.
- In addition to this, all year groups have 'focus days' during the year when the normal timetable is collapsed. SMSC themes are the focus of these days and RE plays an equal part in this offer. This is also the case with our daily (35 minute) tutor programme delivered to all pupils.
- Unusually for a large Secondary School we also have a weekly whole school assembly. This is used as an opportunity to further deliver aspects of Religious Education. Our Head of RE is included on the delivery team for this.
- We offer GCSE RE each year to pupils in Years 10 & 11. Unfortunately, despite our best efforts over a number of years, numbers remain low. However, due to its importance, RE is the only subject on the curriculum I will allow to run even if uptake is low.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 who do not follow the GCSE course still receive significant RE Education as a result of the provision outlined above.

Once again, may I thank you for seeking clarification of our offer. I firmly believe that our curriculum is exceptionally broad and balanced and we work hard to ensure that Religious Education is an important part of that. Religious Education, spirituality, diversity and different belief systems are a crucially important part of our work to educate young people at William Edwards.

Many thanks again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Simon Bell
Headteacher

GMN/JJA

26 November 2018

Rev. John Guest
Chair of Thurrock SACRE

Dear Reverend Guest



RE: DELIVERY OF THE SACRE CURRICULUM AT THE GATEWAY ACADEMY

Thank you for your letter regarding the delivery of the SACRE curriculum at the Gateway Academy.

There appears to be some confusion regarding the figures and curriculum taught at the Academy. We recognise the importance of delivering high quality Religious Education and are fully committed to ensuring that we include it fully in our curriculum throughout the students' time at the Academy.

It is correct that we did teach Religious Education alongside History and Geography up until July 2017, although this was taught with distinct lessons for each subject. In September 2017 we changed this to separate disciplines and amended our Curriculum Policy appropriately. We continue to teach Religious Education as a discrete subject and have every intention to continue to do so. Over 95% of The Gateway Academy students sat a Religious Studies examination in 2018 and it is with great delight that I inform you that the students are now achieving grades above national average. We continue to deliver the course to all students and the content covers all aspects of the agreed curriculum.

We believe that every child at the Gateway benefits from the delivery of a Religious Education and have continuously strived to deliver high quality provision. In September 2016 we were fortunate to employ an experienced Head of Religious Education who is passionate about the subject and has further enhanced the profile and delivery to all students. As a result, students have many opportunities to explore the importance of Religious Education beyond the curriculum, including visits to, for example, Westminster Abbey - Symbols of Worship Tour and The London Central Mosque. We also regularly have a number of external visitors come into the Academy from different religious faiths to speak to our students at assemblies etc.

I have included a copy of our Curriculum Policy and the curriculum overview of the programme of study for you to look through and hope that this will help to clarify your concerns. We would welcome any feedback and be more than happy to discuss this further with you or any members of the Thurrock SACRE.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Grainne McLaughlin', written in a cursive style.

**Mrs G McLaughlin
HEAD OF SCHOOL**

The Gateway Academy,

| Tel: 01375 489000 | admin.gateway@theglc.org.uk |

ing upon our best