

4 March 2020		ITEM: 6
Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education		
How Ofsted are reporting on RE?		
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 - Education and Learning		
Accountable Director: Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Health and Housing and Interim Director of Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

In July 2018, SACRE reviewed the documents then being used as the framework for school inspection. Since that time, a revised Ofsted framework and handbook has been published which places far more emphasis on curriculum design.

This report presents a sample of recent Ofsted reports that mention RE from around the country and suggests that SACRE consider their implications for Thurrock schools.

- 1. Recommendation(s) that SACRE:**
 - 1.1 Discuss the references to RE in appendix and consider what advice it might offer to schools about the implications for the place of RE in the curriculum.**
 - 1.2 Share this advice with school leaders through the Headteacher Briefing and Governors through training.**
- 2 Introduction And Background:**

The new education inspection framework from Ofsted was published 14th May 2019 along with the inspection handbook. This report highlights those areas where the handbook appears to be relevant to SACRE's interest in monitoring Religious Education (RE). Using the previous framework, Ofsted has recognised some schools for the high quality of RE and challenged those where provision or standards are weak. For example, there have been references in Ofsted reports to schools achieving the RE Quality Mark. The

previous framework did not lend itself to a thorough examination of the curriculum, especially because inspections would last only one day. One of the effects of this was that schools that were non-compliant with 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 new framework reverses this trend. Inspections last two days and there is a much greater emphasis on the curriculum. In addition, a small number of subjects, typically four, are chosen as a focus for examining the curriculum and this can just as easily be RE as any other subject. A bonus of 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.

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. SACRE might therefore decide to share its conclusions from discussing this paper with governing bodies.
- 3.2 The focus on the curriculum in the revised Ofsted framework is leading most schools to conduct a review of their curriculum to ensure they are prepared for an inspection when it is scheduled. This therefore is an appropriate time to remind schools of their responsibilities in relation to RE and of the resources SACRE provides.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 Ofsted are paying more careful attention to the curriculum and this has already led to many schools undertaking a review of the curriculum. This presents an opportunity for SACRE to encourage schools, especially those where RE has not previously been a priority to reconsider their position

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 activities recommended in this report 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: **Natalie Smith**
Strategic Lead for Community Development and Equalities

The aim of this exercise is to help school leaders and 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. Furthermore, several comments on RE in the inspection report are linked to the duty of all schools to promote the fundamental British Values including mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and for those without faith.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

- Not applicable

8. Appendices

- Appendix 1- What are Ofsted inspectors saying about Religious Education? – the first 101 reports that mention RE

Report Author:

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