

6 January 2021		ITEM: 8
Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education		
What do stakeholders say about RE in Thurrock?		
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: Shelia Murphy, Corporate Director of Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report invites SACRE members to consult with each other and with young people in relation to Religious Education in general and how it supports promotes positive community relations as well as tolerance and respect for people from different religions and beliefs.

1. Recommendation(s) that SACRE Members:

- 1.1 Engage in a discussion firstly with young people from the Youth Cabinet (starter questions are provided in appendix A) and then with each other about Religious Education in Thurrock and its links to promoting tolerance and respect.**
- 1.2 Agree what other stakeholders it needs to consult as part of its monitoring work and to inform the revision of the Agreed Syllabus.**

2. Introduction and Background

The 2020-21 SCRE workplan sets out a list of objectives for SACRE based on the responsibilities for SACRE described in the non-statutory guidance. SACRE planned to make relationships with stakeholders a focus for the spring terms meeting with a view to exploring opportunities for sharing resources for RE in Thurrock. Two groups will be the focus of the discussion at the meeting:

- Thurrock Youth Cabinet
- Communities of Faith and Belief

Thurrock Youth Cabinet

Thurrock's Youth Cabinet is a group of 11 to 19 year-olds, who work to make Thurrock a better place for young people.

The Youth Cabinet was set up to give the young people of Thurrock a voice. Youth Cabinet members regularly meet with councillors, council officers and other decision makers to give their views on:

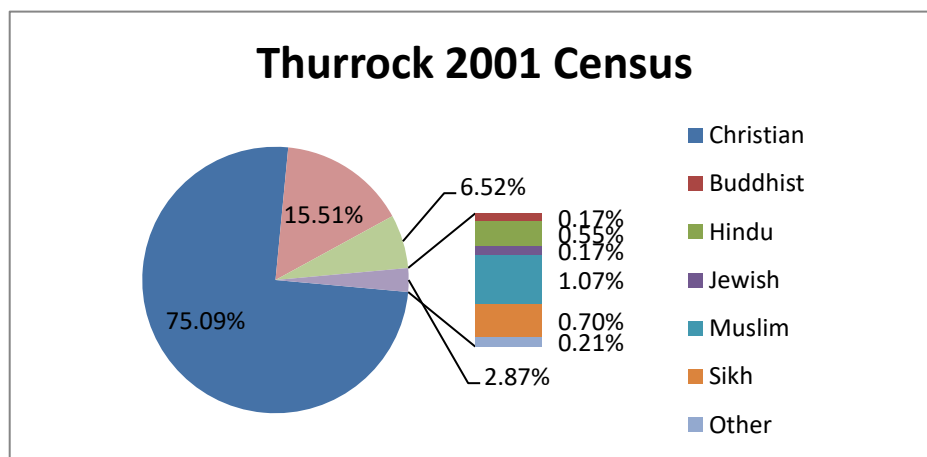
- public transport
- school curriculum
- youth activities
- police and community safety
- health
- careers

Thurrock's Youth Cabinet works by:

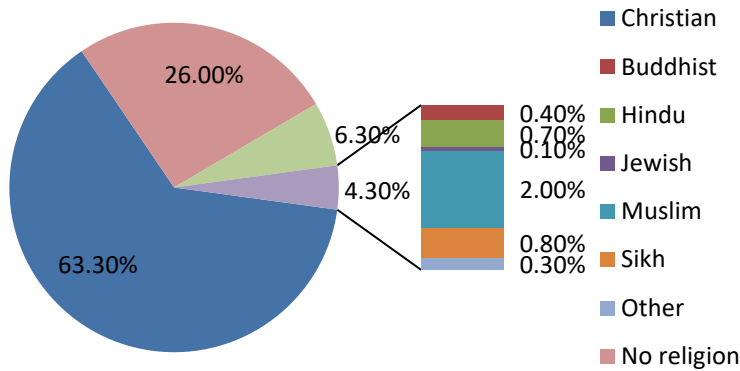
- holding monthly meetings with guest speakers covering different youth issues
- carrying out surveys to get young people's views
- campaigning on matters affecting youth
- attending and organising events

Communities of Faith and Belief in Thurrock

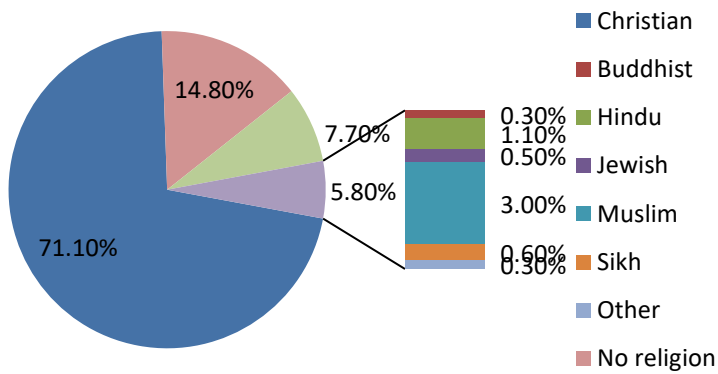
The population of Thurrock has become more religiously diverse over time. The graphs below compare the 2001 and 2011 census data for the borough.



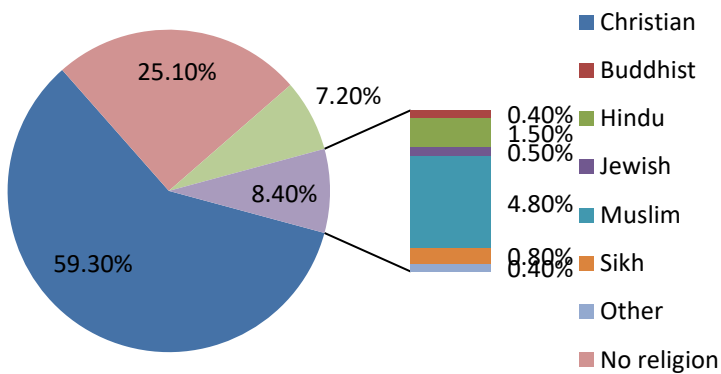
Thurrock 2011 census



UK 2001



UK 2011



Government Policy

Under the terms of section 78 of the Education Act 2002, schools are required to promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and **tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs**. One aspect of this work involves:

“an acceptance that other people having different faiths or beliefs to oneself (or having none) should be accepted and tolerated, and should not be the cause of prejudicial or discriminatory behaviour; and an understanding of the importance of identifying and combatting discrimination.”

The focus of this report is therefore to prompt a discussion between members about RE in Thurrock and particularly about the these requirements.

It should be noted that comprehensive academic research by Glasgow University¹ and others has shown that simply teaching RE does not necessarily help reduce prejudice and discrimination.

However, according to the All Party Parliamentary (APPG) report on RE and Positive Community relations²:

RE can be a strong contributor to good community relations through enabling students to:

- Acquire systematic knowledge and conceptual understanding of religions and worldviews
- Learn from visits and visitors through personal encounters
- Learn about religion and belief in local, national and global contexts
- Consider a range of viewpoints on religious, ethical and philosophical issues
- Articulate their own opinions while respecting the right of others to differ
- Develop their own beliefs, values and identities
- Participate with confidence and openness in dialogue
- Recognise and challenge ill-informed or prejudiced viewpoints, including those in the media
- Ask questions and address contentious issues in a safe space
- Explore reasons why misconceptions exist about some groups
- Evaluate attitudes and actions and how they impact on the community
- Be informed, active citizens and potential leaders.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 Thurrock will begin the process of reviewing its Agreed Syllabus for RE later in 2021 and this discussion will inform that process.

3.2 This discussion will help members to agree the stakeholders it needs to consult to inform the Agreed Syllabus Review and to strengthen its monitoring role.

¹ Conroy, J et al, “Does RE Work” University of Glasgow, 2013.

² Miller, J et al https://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/APPG_report_RE_and_good_community_re.pdf

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 Monitoring of provision for RE and reviewing the Agreed Syllabus are key elements of the remit of SACRE and its Agreed Syllabus Conference.

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**
Strategic Lead Finance

There are no financial implications to this report since the actions recommended in this report, if approved 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 section 391 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. This report initiates a discussion and asks for recommendation of stakeholders to consult. No other decision is required.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement and Project
Monitoring Officer

SACRE will continue to dedicate time for the discussion of the way in which religious education can help improve the level of community cohesion in Thurrock. The Agreed Syllabus is specific about the expected outcomes of teaching of religious education in this respect. The teaching of RE should 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. **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – Questions for SACRE Members and the Youth Cabinet.

Report Author:

Deborah Weston

Associate Adviser for RE

Appendix 1

Questions for SACRE members to ask each other

- a) What links are there between schools and communities of religion and belief in Thurrock?
- b) What could *schools* do to be more engaged with communities of religion and belief?
- c) What could *communities of religion and belief* do to be more engaged with schools?
- d) What would you say are the main aims of RE?
- e) What is the role of school RE for children that come from families who are belong to a particular religious or non-religious tradition?
- f) How far do you recognise the religious or non-religious beliefs of your own family in the content of RE in Thurrock?
- g) Do you believe that Religious Education is comprehensive enough in Thurrock to provide a good understanding of different faiths and beliefs? Explain your answer.
- h) Do you believe that Religious Education is comprehensive enough in Thurrock to promote tolerance and respect for people from different faiths and beliefs? Explain your answer.

Questions for SACRE to ask Thurrock Youth Cabinet

1. How has your experience of RE differed between your primary and secondary school?
2. Describe your best and worst RE lesson
3. Does learning about beliefs that are different from yours change anything for you personally? If so how? If not, why?
4. What do you think the aims of RE should be?
5. The UK is becoming less religious, but the world is becoming more religious. Does that make any difference to the value of RE?
6. Has your learning in RE, complemented your learning in other subjects? If so how? If not, what should be changed?
7. In what jobs would you say, you could use your learning in RE?
8. To what extent do your religious or non-religious beliefs impact on your identity?
9. To what extent do you recognise the religious or non-religious beliefs of your own family in the teaching you receive in RE?
10. If you were in charge of the RE curriculum, what would you change?

Schedule 2020/21		
Date of meeting	Subject	Objective (note – objectives 1 and 2 apply to all meetings)
Autumn 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National developments - update • Monitoring provision via school workforce data • Review of membership and attendance • Evaluation of work plan • Review of provision via school website - proposed template 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 • 7 • 2 • 6 6
Spring 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring provision via GCSE and A level results • Annual report approval • Relationships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Schools and Academies ○ the Council ○ Governors ○ Communities of religion and belief ○ Thurrock work on Community Integration ○ NASACRE ○ Youth Cabinet ○ Regional Schools Commissioners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 • 3 • 4+5
Summer 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards and Achievements in RE in schools • Review of SACRE website • Review of Collective Worship and right of withdrawal • Review of SACRE Youth Conference • Annual report including GCSE results • Ofsted Framework on RE – latest reports [postponed from autumn term] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 • 6 • 6 • 5 • 4 • 7

