

6 January 2021		ITEM: 7
Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education		
Update on National Developments and Opportunities		
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 details the key national developments that impact on Religious Education with suggestions for actions by SACRE.

1. Recommendation(s):

1.1 That SACRE members

- **Review the information collected (Appendix 1)**
- **Evaluate the relevance of each section for RE in Thurrock**
- **Consider the suggested actions**

2. Introduction and Background

In the period since the last SACRE meeting, a number of developments have taken place such as the launch of a number of consultations by the government. These are presented to SACRE for consideration in support of the duties of SACRE and in accordance with the work plan.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 Schools need to be informed about national developments and opportunities available to them but it is important not to overload them with information.
- 3.2 Likewise, SACRE needs to be aware of the national context for information they receive that applies just to Thurrock.

3.3 SACRE needs therefore to decide on which information to share with schools and which reports and national data is most relevant to the situation in Thurrock.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 According to the non-statutory guidance – RE in English Schools (2010), SACRE should provide advice and support on the effective teaching of RE. This advice and support includes keeping stakeholders include SACRE members and schools informed about current developments that impact on the subject.

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, Corporate 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 s391 of the Education Act 1996. The main one is to advise the local authority on such matters connected with (1) the religious worship in community schools or in foundation schools without a religious character and (2) the religious education to be given in accordance with an agreed or other syllabus, as the authority may refer to the advisory council, or as the council may see fit.

This report is for review and consideration. No decision is required.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

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

The aim of this report is to provide information about issues that support 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. Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Government launches review into Faith Engagement

Report Author:

Deborah Weston

Associate Adviser for RE

Appendix 1

Government launches review into Faith Engagement

From Gov.uk website:

On 10 October 2019, the government announced that Colin Bloom had been appointed as the Faith Engagement Adviser at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

As Faith Engagement Adviser, Colin is leading a review into how best the government should engage with faith groups in England. He will make recommendations to the Communities Secretary about how the government can best celebrate and support the contribution of faith groups, break down barriers and promote acceptance between faiths, and promote shared values while tackling cultures and practices that are harmful.

Colin Bloom's initial proposal is to structure the review around 4 main sections:

- the first section asks the question, "Are faith groups, places of worship and people of faith a force for good in society?"
- the second section explores the extent to which government and its agencies have sufficient faith literacy and considers the partnership between faith groups and the State
- the third section looks at some aspects where harm might be caused through religious or faith-based practices and a review of the government's role in tackling them
- the fourth and final section will be a set of recommendations for the government to consider and respond to

This survey closed on 11th December 2020 SACRE will receive an update on the next steps in due course.

Ofqual – consultation on proposed changes to GCSE and A level examinations 2021

Also before Christmas, Ofqual launched a consultation to seek views on proposed changes to GCSE and A level examinations. The introduction to this consultation explained that students' education had been disrupted this year by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. To make exams in 2021 less daunting for GCSE, AS and A level students, for many subjects it was proposed that they would be told in advance some of the topics that will or won't be on the papers, helping them to manage their revision.

For some subjects, students will be given support material in the exams, such as formulae and equations. The exact approach will vary by subject.

Independent Evaluation of the Understanding Christianity Resource

This report was published on 11th December. It presents findings and analysis from a study that examines the impact of Understanding Christianity in schools across England. The study, conducted by Dr Rachael Shillitoe at the University of Birmingham, seeks to evaluate the impact of RE Today's Understanding Christianity teaching resources amongst pupils and teachers across primary and secondary schools, with a particular focus on schools without a religious character.

This study aims to find out the extent to which the resource has 'made a difference' to teaching and learning about Christianity in RE.

The full report can be viewed on the [Understanding Christianity](#) website, [available here](#).

Conversations about religious literacy: creativity and the classroom

The Lincoln Diocesan Board of Education (LDBE) is curating and working with the support of Culham St Gabriel's to deliver a national arts and RE symposium to be held virtually on the **23 February 2021**.

The Symposium is the first of its kind in the UK to bring RE teachers, creatives and policy makers together to specifically focus on the potential impact of creative processes on the development of religious and worldviews literacy. It has at its heart the experiences of LDBE, whose devising and delivery of the [REConnecting Lincolnshire](#) project over the past four years resulted from the identified need to address significant concerns and frustrations from schools and their wider communities in relation to religious and worldview literacy.

Those engaged in research, teaching and supporting schools to deliver effective RE will have a voice as part of the discussions that will take place during the Symposium.

The details of the event can be found [here](#); Zoom login details will be sent through when you have confirmed your booking. Please do feel free to share this information with colleagues and within your networks.

If you are able to attend the Symposium, please emailing David Lambert at david@culturalsolutions.co.uk by the 5th February 2021. For any further information about the project and its impact, please email Gillian Georgiou at gillian.georgiou@lincoln.anglican.org.

Subject knowledge Enhancement

Following the disappointing news that bursaries had been cut for most subjects including RE, it was really good news that Religious Education had been selected for funded subject knowledge enhancement courses. The funding will be available from April 2021 but hopefully will help support those people wishing to apply to teach RE who do not have a first degree in the subject. This decision follows intensive lobbying to make the point that about 84% of trainee secondary RE teachers do not have a degree in Theology or Religious Studies and therefore need support in developing their subject knowledge.

<https://getintoteaching.education.gov.uk/explore-my-options/teacher-training-routes/subject-knowledge-enhancement-ske-courses>