

**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE THURROCK
STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE) FOR
THE PERIOD**

September 2014 - July 2016

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Introduction

Since 1988, it has been a requirement that every local authority (LA) has a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE).

Though legislation sets out both the structure and the remit of a local SACRE - principally, overseeing religious education (RE) and collective worship - in practice every SACRE has developed its own particular style and character.

Thurrock SACRE has over the years developed its own particular style and character as this report will testify.

It is a legislative requirement that each SACRE produces an annual report of its work and that this is published, sent the local authority, to local schools and to other interested parties.

Thurrock SACRE has customarily discussed its annual report in the summer term meeting following publication of validated GCSE data after the spring meeting. It had been previously agreed that publishing invalidated data might be considered inappropriate by schools in case there were errors that misrepresented their provision. Over time, SACRE has reached the conclusion that this practice was problematic since by the time the report reached schools, the validated data was almost a year old.

This report therefore covers two academic years and includes invalidated GCSE data in order that the advice to Thurrock Council and to its schools can be as immediately relevant as possible.

Foreword by the Chair of SACRE – Rev. John Guest

It has been my privilege and pleasure to serve as Chair of Thurrock SACRE for the past three years and to be so ably supported by our team of teachers, church leaders, councillors and advisers, not least of which has been Deborah Weston, our Associate Adviser, and the compiler of this report.

Despite a perceived decline in spirituality across the country, the role of SACRE is still a vital one in encouraging religious education in schools. As can be seen from the report, it also has a clear role in supporting teaching staff and their training and in ensuring that RE is properly and professionally delivered across the borough.

My own interest and specialism has always been in the area of Collective Worship and this still, I'm pleased to say, has an important place in the school schedule of activities. As this report states, what is often seen as a declining interest in the metaphysical is more a movement away from organised religion. Young people are still keen to explore spiritual matters and I am pleased to say that our local and national authority still want to encourage this.

With this in mind, Thurrock SACRE was eager to launch its new Agreed Syllabus last year and, as a participant in at least part of the launch event in June, I was pleasantly surprised to see the enthusiasm of local teachers and their engagement with the programme. It was a clear success and our fervent hope is that the 2016 Thurrock Agreed Syllabus (TAS) will add to the existing body of resources that enables best practice in the delivery of good religious education across our borough's schools.

I commend this report to your scrutiny and the goodwill and hard work of all our local teachers.

John Guest

The membership of Thurrock SACRE 2014-16

Committee A

Mrs S Lawson – Free Church Member

Mrs Shepherd – Roman Catholic Member

Vacancy – Jewish Member

M A Rashid – Muslim Member

Ms A Ahmed – Muslim Member

Mr B Gill – Sikh Member

Vacancy – Hindu Member

Mr P Anderson – House Church Member

Dr O Soley – Pentecostal Member

Vacancy – Buddhist Member

Committee B

Rev. John Guest – Chair (from July 2014) Church of England Member

Mrs Mary Taylor – Church of England Member

David Bates – Church of England Member

Committee C

Angela Jellicoe – Teacher representative

Paul Griffiths – Headteacher representative

Richard Epps – Headteacher representative

Hayley Gillman - Teacher representative

Nicola Fawell - Teacher representative

Committee D

Councillor Kerin

Councillor Gupta

Councillor Ojetola

SACRE Meetings Held

The following SACRE meetings were held during the two year period:

15/10/2014

15/1/2015

15/7/2015

14/10/2015

2/12/2015

3/2/2016

22/3/2016

18/4/2016

National Items Discussed By SACRE

National Religious Education Review (October 2014)

Members discussed draft documentation related to the review and shared their comments with the Religious Education Council of England and Wales.

Report on the Inquiry into the Supply of and Support of Teachers of RE in England. All Party Parliamentary Group on RE (October 2014)

Following a discussion on the supply of and support for teachers of religious education, SACRE determined to carry out its own research into the practice of using teaching assistants rather than teachers to deliver the RE curriculum in primary schools.

They were informed by a Headteacher colleague member of SACRE that within Catholic primary schools all teachers are expected to teach RE, training is offered and paid for by the school.

The OFSTED Report - Realising the Potential

SACRE was disappointed to learn that the extent to which RE was not being taught well, especially in secondary schools. They decided to share this report with schools and to publicise its findings in the Headteacher's briefing.

A New Settlement: Religion and Beliefs in Schools

During the Committee's discussion the following points were highlighted:

- It was felt that organised religion appeared to be less important, with an increase in interest in matters of spirituality;
- The Chair informed the Committee that he was to have a meeting with the Headteachers within his area of the borough to discuss Collective Worship and would report back to the council;
- The associate adviser pointed out that the research of Professor Linda Woodhead had demonstrated that because a person reported themselves as having no religion on the census did not make them atheist, it meant that they did not consider themselves to be part of an organised religion;
- The Chair suggested that it seemed that collective worship was a normal part of daily life within schools but once it was made compulsory it appeared to decline;
- A teacher representative on the council, stated that collective worship still took place within schools as thoughts, prayers and reflection, and that this was usually undertaken during assemblies. It was felt that by doing collective worship in this way it wouldn't offend anyone with or without a faith.

Judicial Review R (Fox) v Secretary of State for Education [2015] EWHC 3404

This judicial review was held in the High Court of Justice following a challenge to the legality of the Department for Education's GCSE Subject Content for Religious Studies. In his judgment, Justice Warby upheld the claim that a section of the content contained an error of law.

The judge found that the section of the content might mislead those responsible for the provision for RE in schools without a religious character into believing that irrespective of which specification they chose or route through that specification, they would automatically be fulfilling their legal requirements in relation to Religious Education and that this was not necessarily true.

During discussions, it was agreed to share the outcome of the judicial review with schools in Thurrock

Review of the Thurrock Agreed Syllabus 2009

SACRE carried out its statutory duty to review the agreed syllabus.

Members considered their options for carrying out this review: (i) to revise their current syllabus, (ii) to adopt a neighbouring authority's syllabus. (iii) to adopt the RE Today Model Syllabus.

After consulting with all schools SACRE invited a RE Today adviser to make a presentation about the RE Today model syllabus and subsequently decided to adopt it for Thurrock Schools. It was agreed that if local Academies agreed to formally adopt the syllabus, that the Council would pay for a licence for these schools too on the basis that good RE would benefit all the children in the area and therefore the local community. All Academies were consulted and it was discovered that 80% of these had chosen to adopt the local agreed syllabus.

Almost all the secondary and many of the primary schools in Thurrock had become academies which meant that although making provision for RE was a contractual responsibility, these schools were not obliged to follow the Thurrock Agreed Syllabus. SACRE decided to conduct some research to determine whether or not the syllabus was commonly used. The results were that 70% of schools who were not obliged to follow the agreed syllabus chose to do so. This information led to the decision to invite all academies to be involved in the review of the Agreed Syllabus.

Details of which syllabus schools had chosen to use as of December 2014 can be found on the following page.

Syllabus Choices of Thurrock Schools	
Abbots Hall Primary Academy	TAS
Arthur Bugler Primary School	TAS
Aveley Primary	TAS
Beacon Hill Academy	Own syllabus
Belmont Castle Academy	TAS
Benyon Primary School	TAS
Bonnygate Primary	TAS
Bulphan C of E Academy	TAS
Chadwell St Mary Primary	TAS
Corringham Primary	TAS
Deneholm Primary	TAS
Dilkes Academy	TAS
East Tilbury Primary School	TAS
Gable Hall school	TAS
Gateway Academy	TAS
Giffards Primary	TAS
GLC Academy	TAS
Graham James Primary Academy	Own syllabus
Harris Academy Chafford Hundred	TAS
Harris Primary Academy Chafford Hundred	TAS
Hassenbrook Academy	TAS
Hathaway Academy	TAS
Herringham Primary Academy	TAS
Horndon on the Hill CofE Primary	TAS
Kenningtons Primary Academy	TAS
Lansdowne Academy	TAS
Little Thurrock Primary	TAS
Ockendon Academy	TAS
Ormiston Park Academy	TAS
Orsett C of E Primary	TAS
Purfleet Primary Academy	TAS
Quarry Hill Academy	TAS
Shaw Primary Academy	TAS
Somer's Heath Primary	TAS
St Clere's School	TAS
Stanford le Hope Primary School	TAS
Stifford Clays Primary	TAS
Thameside Primary School	TAS
Tilbury Pioneer Academy	TAS
Tudor Court Primary	TAS
Treetops	TAS
Warren Primary	Own syllabus
West Thurrock Academy	TAS
William Edwards Academy	TAS
Woodside Academy	TAS

School Workforce Data – Who Teaches RE in Thurrock

SACRE continued its practice of reviewing all forms of data that might help them to monitor provision for RE by examining the number and characteristics of teachers, teaching assistants and other non-classroom-based school support staff, collected through the annual school workforce census.

The statistics include:

- the curriculum subject taught
- whether teachers have qualifications in the subjects they teach
- the hours spent teaching by subject

SACRE noted that although in some cases non-specialist teachers were teaching RE within schools, these teachers would become specialists in RE through experience of teaching the subject. They were nonetheless concerned at the high proportion of lessons being taught by teachers whose main specialism and timetable focused on a different area and also that the data appeared to show that some secondary academies did not appear to be fulfilling the terms of their funding agreement to make RE provision for all pupils on the roll. SACRE wrote to schools where there were concerns to ask for further information and explanation about why they are not making provision for all pupils and to draw attention to OfSTED's findings on the impact of over use of non-specialists and to ask for their comments.

In December 2014 SACRE examined the results of a survey showing who, at that time, was teaching RE in Thurrock Primary Schools. See the following page for tabulated results

Who delivers RE in Thurrock Primary Schools?	Teachers	General Teaching Assistants	PPA Cover Teachers	Higher Level Teaching Assistants
1. Abbots Hall Primary				
2. Arthur Bugler				
3. Aveley Primary	✓			
4. Beacon Hill Academy	✓			
5. Belmont Castle	50%	33% by teachers+HLTA	16%	
6. Benyon	✓	✓ (during PPA cover or in the teacher's absence)		
7. Bonnygate	✓		✓	
8. Bulphan C of E	✓			
9. Chadwell St Mary				
10. Chafford Hundred				
11. Corringham	✓			
12. Deneholm				
13. Dilkes Academy	✓			
14. East Tilbury				
15. Gateway	✓			
16. Giffaids				
17. Graham James				
18. Herringham Primary	✓			✓(4)
19. Holy Cross	✓			
20. Horndon on the Hill				
21. Kenningtons				
22. Landsdowne	✓			
23. Little Thurrock				
24. Manor				
25. Orsett	✓			

26. Olive AP Academy	✓			
27. Quarry Hill				
28. Shaw Primary	✓			✓
29. Somers Heath				
30. St Joseph's Catholic Primary	✓			
31. St Mary's	✓			
32. St Thomas'	✓			
33. Stanford le Hope	✓			
34. Stifford Clays	✓			✓
35. Thameside	✓			
36. Treetops	✓			
37. Tudor Court	✓			
38. Warren	✓			
39. West Thurrock Academy	✓			
40. Woodside	✓			✓ 2 classes out of 18 for 1 term for PPA

Thurrock SACRE Youth Conference

Funding from the Culham St Gabriel's Trust allowed Thurrock to offer a free youth conference during Interfaith Week in 2015. The event was well attended and the visiting Ambassadors from Redbridge Sixth Forms were well received. Many students had opportunities to talk to young people from Protestant and Catholic traditions of Christianity, Islam, Sikh, Hindu, Pagan as well as atheists.

The Youth Conference took place on Thursday 10th December and was held at the Culver Centre.

Standards in RE in Thurrock

GCSE and GCE A Level Results

The tables below indicate the entries and results for the exams held in 2015 and 2016.

Comments on results and entries:

At the time of writing no A Level results have been provided.

Entries

The first table below indicates entries for the exams held in 2015 and 2016. According to the data provided, Gable Hall, Hassenbrook Academy and William Edwards School entered no pupils for either Full Course or Short Course RE in 2016.

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With the exception of the Gateway Academy, who entered 58% of pupils in the cohort for RE in 2016 up from 26% in 2015, all other schools reduced their GCSE entries, in the case of Hathaway and St Clere's by very significant amounts. In 2016 only 28% of Thurrock pupils took an RE GCSE, the national average figure is 51%.

Results

The second table below illustrates that no A*-C grades were returned from the minimal number of Short Course entries. For Full Course it is notable that the two schools where A*-C attainment increased in 2016, St Clere's and Hathaway, are those where entries fell very sharply. The latter now entering only 13% of the cohort compared to 96% in the previous year. All other schools also demonstrated a decline in Full Course attainment this year.

GCSE ENTRIES	2014 Short Course % Roll Entry	2014 Full Course % Roll Entry	2015 Short Course % Roll Entry	2015 Full Course % Roll Entry	2016 Short Course % Roll Entry	2016 Full Course % Roll Entry	Combined Entry 2016	Change Combined Entry 15 to 16
Gable Hall School		6%		6%				-6%
Grays Convent High School	9%	87%	3%	94%	3%	95%	98%	1%
Harris Academy Chafford Hundred		14%		24%		17%	17%	-7%
Hassenbrook Academy	1%	8%		9%				-9%
Hathaway Academy	1%	74%		96%		13%	13%	-83%
Ormiston Park Academy		8%		7%		1%	1%	-6%
St. Clere's School	92%	86%		54%	1%	12%	12%	-42%
The Gateway Academy		7%		26%		58%	58%	32%
The Ockendon Academy	1%	99%		100%		99%	99%	-1%
William Edwards School	7%	10%		9%				-9%

GCSE RESULTS	2014 Short Course A* - C	2014 Full Course A* - C	2015 Full Course A* - C	2016 Full Course A* - C	Change 2015-2016
National Average		72%	72%	72%	-1%
Thurrock Average		67%	65%	62%	-3%
Gable Hall School		93%	64%		
Grays Convent High School	60%	81%	88%	78%	-11%
Harris Academy Chafford Hundred		96%	93%	83%	-10%
Hassenbrook Academy	0%	42%	58%		
Hathaway Academy	0%	62%	47%	78%	31%
Ormiston Park Academy		57%	67%		
St. Clere's School	28%	44%	51%	96%	45%
The Gateway Academy		92%	67%	42%	-25%
The Ockendon Academy	0%	65%	55%	54%	-1%
William Edwards School	25%	42%	57%		