

Thurrock: A place of opportunity, enterprise and excellence, where individuals, communities and businesses flourish

Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

The meeting will be held at **6.00 pm** on **22 November 2017**

Committee Room 4, Civic Offices, New Road, Grays, Essex, RM17 6SL

Membership:

- Committee A:** Mrs S Lawson, Free Church Christian Member
Mrs Shepherd, Roman Catholic Member
Miss A Ahmed, Muslim Member
Mr A Rashid, Muslim Member
Mr B Gill, Sikh Member
Mr A Kariyawasam, Buddhist Member
Dr O Soleye, Pentecostal Member
Mr P Anderson, Free Church Representative
Vacancy, Jewish Member
Vacancy, Hindu Member
- Committee B:** Rev. J Guest (Chair), Rev. D Bates, Fr J Hutchinson and 1
Vacancy - Church of England.
- Committee C:** Ms H Gillman and 5 Vacancies - Teachers' Associations.
- Committee D:** Councillors: Martin Kerin, Tunde Ojetola and Angela Sheridan -
Local Authority.
- Co-opted** Vacancy

Agenda

Open to Public and Press

Page

1 Apologies for Absence

2 Minutes 5 - 10

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education meeting held on 5 September 2017.

3 Items of Urgent Business

To receive additional items that the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency, in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972.

4 Declarations of Interest

5 Monitoring of Religious Education in Thurrock Schools 11 - 22

6 National Update on Religious Education 23 - 52

7 Any Other Business

Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:

Please contact Kenna-Victoria Martin, Senior Democratic Services Officer by sending an email to Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk

Agenda published on: **14 November 2017**

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DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Breaching those parts identified as a pecuniary interest is potentially a criminal offence

Helpful Reminders for Members

- *Is your register of interests up to date?*
- *In particular have you declared to the Monitoring Officer all disclosable pecuniary interests?*
- *Have you checked the register to ensure that they have been recorded correctly?*

When should you declare an interest *at a meeting*?

- **What matters are being discussed at the meeting?** (including Council, Cabinet, Committees, Subs, Joint Committees and Joint Subs); or
- If you are a Cabinet Member making decisions other than in Cabinet **what matter is before you for single member decision?**



Does the business to be transacted at the meeting

- relate to; or
- likely to affect

any of your registered interests and in particular any of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests?

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests shall include your interests or those of:

- your spouse or civil partner's
- a person you are living with as husband/ wife
- a person you are living with as if you were civil partners

where you are aware that this other person has the interest.

A detailed description of a disclosable pecuniary interest is included in the Members Code of Conduct at Chapter 7 of the Constitution. **Please seek advice from the Monitoring Officer about disclosable pecuniary interests.**

What is a Non-Pecuniary interest? – this is an interest which is not pecuniary (as defined) but is nonetheless so significant that a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard to be so significant that it would materially impact upon your judgement of the public interest.

Pecuniary

If the interest is not already in the register you must (unless the interest has been agreed by the Monitoring Officer to be sensitive) disclose the existence and nature of the interest to the meeting

If the Interest is not entered in the register and is not the subject of a pending notification you must within 28 days notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest for inclusion in the register

Unless you have received dispensation upon previous application from the Monitoring Officer, you must:

- Not participate or participate further in any discussion of the matter at a meeting;
- Not participate in any vote or further vote taken at the meeting; and
- leave the room while the item is being considered/voted upon

If you are a Cabinet Member you may make arrangements for the matter to be dealt with by a third person but take no further steps

Non- pecuniary

Declare the nature and extent of your interest including enough detail to allow a member of the public to understand its nature



You may participate and vote in the usual way but you should seek advice on Predetermination and Bias from the Monitoring Officer.

Vision: Thurrock: A place of **opportunity**, **enterprise** and **excellence**, where **individuals**, **communities** and **businesses** flourish.

To achieve our vision, we have identified five strategic priorities:

1. Create a great place for learning and opportunity

- Ensure that every place of learning is rated “Good” or better
- Raise levels of aspiration and attainment so that residents can take advantage of local job opportunities
- Support families to give children the best possible start in life

2. Encourage and promote job creation and economic prosperity

- Promote Thurrock and encourage inward investment to enable and sustain growth
- Support business and develop the local skilled workforce they require
- Work with partners to secure improved infrastructure and built environment

3. Build pride, responsibility and respect

- Create welcoming, safe, and resilient communities which value fairness
- Work in partnership with communities to help them take responsibility for shaping their quality of life
- Empower residents through choice and independence to improve their health and well-being

4. Improve health and well-being

- Ensure people stay healthy longer, adding years to life and life to years
- Reduce inequalities in health and well-being and safeguard the most vulnerable people with timely intervention and care accessed closer to home
- Enhance quality of life through improved housing, employment and opportunity

5. Promote and protect our clean and green environment

- Enhance access to Thurrock's river frontage, cultural assets and leisure opportunities
- Promote Thurrock's natural environment and biodiversity
- Inspire high quality design and standards in our buildings and public space

Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education held on 5 September 2017 at 6.00 pm

Present:

Committee A: Mrs S Lawson(arrived at 6.32), Mrs M Shepherd, Miss A Ahmend (left at 7.31) and Mr P Anderson (arrived at 6.20)

Committee B: Rev. J Guest and Rev. D Bates

Committee D: Councillor Angela Sheridan

Apologies: Mr A Kariyawasam, Rev. J Huntcherson, Ms A Jellicoe, Ms H Gillman, Dr Soley, Mrs M Taylor and Councillors Martin Kerin and Tunde Ojetola

In attendance: Deborah Weston, Associate Adviser for Religious Education
Kenna-Victoria Martin, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education held on the 19 April 2017 were approved as a correct record.

2. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared.

4. Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chairs

The Chair suggested that the current Chair and Vice-Chairs remain until the next meeting, as the Committee were not quorate.

RESOLVED:

That the Chair and Vice-Chair remain in place until the next meeting on 22 November 2017.

5. Monitoring of RE in Thurrock Schools

The Associate Adviser for Religious Education introduced the item explaining that following the previous meeting, Members had been visiting schools in the borough to monitor how RE was taught in Thurrock Schools.

Mrs Shepherd presented back to the Committee on the two schools she had visited, Benyon Primary School and Dilkes Primary Academy. Members heard how both schools addressed the subject and the following was highlighted:

Benyon Primary School

Why did your school become involved in Excellent RE? What are your aims?

Previously RE was taught sporadically but there was a feeling in school that it was 'getting squeezed out' by other subjects. The Headteacher was very supportive of the project and RE was placed on the timetable on a weekly basis with it being known that the Senior Leadership Team would expect to see it and did not want it to get 'squeezed'. This led to an increased volume of work and better coverage.

The school follows the Agreed Syllabus and because it is part of Catalyst, they were all following the scheme of work. They felt the Agreed Syllabus ensured steady progression. There had been no cross-school moderation of work but this was possible across the Trust in the future.

R.E. work was monitored in school via 'Learning Environment' checks; planned book looks and the collection of samples of work.

The audit, carried out as part of the project, included pupil conferencing and based on the feedback from this, changes were made and they were now conducting another audit to evaluate impact. For example, the children asked for more opportunities for drama work, which was implemented.

How many staff have been involved in Excellent RE in your school so far? How?

It has now increased to all staff. The 'gap exercise' from the course led to an initial 2 staff members being involved. Mrs Gostling helped an NQT with subject knowledge and supported staff with planning, giving ideas for activities.

What did you discover from GAP task 1? (Audit of RE and SMSC in school) What has changed?

The children wanted more drama opportunities in their RE lessons as they enjoyed this when it happened.

The project had encouraged the use of open-ended questions and research.

The Subject Leader had encouraged staff to use the SACRE website and has signposted them to other sources of information.

Mrs Gostling showed Mrs Shepherd several examples of work from across the school: EYFS work on Chinese New Year; KS1 designing Islamic prayer mats, creating a model of a mosque; work on Christmas.

Staff were now using a much wider range of resources; they are using actual artefacts eg Jewish replica artefacts.

The Subject Leader took the idea of using dolls from the course SACRE video.

What have you discovered from completing the GAP task 2?

Gap task 2 led to Mrs Gostling planning with the other 2 teachers, from KS1. They gave the children a day of activities using artefacts and 'hands-on' resources which the children absolutely loved. The children were able to dress up for religious role play and this really sparked children's curiosity, so much that the children still speak about it now. Mrs Gostling showed Mrs Shepherd some wonderful video footage as well as still photographs and the children's interest and enthusiasm was clearly evident. She told me that a particularly challenging pupil so enjoyed this work that it has improved his attitude; he thoroughly enjoyed the opportunities he was given through this work. The project encouraged staff and pupils to further develop cross curricular links and teachers are now sharing their own religious artefacts, from home, with the children.

How might SACRE help you to share what you have learnt, with other schools?

Mrs Gostling is happy for SACRE to pass on any of her work and comments to others.

Mrs Gostling would be interested in supporting other schools if they needed it. She has already done some 'team teaching' in her own school.

She would like to develop an RE Subject Leaders; group or forum and perhaps share work via a website.

Dilkes Primary Academy

Why did you school become involved in Excellent RE? What are your aims?

Ms Kular wanted to attend the training because she had previously attended another Julia Diamond course and it had inspired her through techniques to make R.E. vibrant. Ms Kular felt that it's very important, especially in an area

like Thurrock, to open the minds of children through learning about a variety of religions. The course also fitted the schools aims of making learning engaging: 'Dilkes' Best Methods'. It raised the profile of RE through the year and made it important in the 'year's agenda'.

How many staff have been involved in Excellent RE in your school so far? How?

5 teachers completed the initial survey on Survey Monkey and Ms Kular felt the survey was good because it was quick and simple, however not all children completed the survey.

8 teachers have now been involved and it has really supported Ms Kular's own development. She has already completed her subject action plan for next year and this will involve all staff.

What did you discover from GAP task 1? (Audit of RE and SMSC in school) What has changed?

The audit showed that some teachers found the Agreed Syllabus too detailed; they wanted ideas on how to teach the units through quicker, 'snappier' ways in line with Dilkes' Best Methods.

It also showed that teachers were questioning their own subject knowledge and there were resource issues- resources being unused, out-dated resources and resources which were not engaging.

What have you discovered from completing the GAP task 2?

Ms Kular chose areas from the survey to improve and decided to use the RE award framework to help with this; her improvement work ran concurrently with gathering the evidence for RE award.

She realised that art and other creative activities such as dance, were lacking from their RE teaching and learning. She also felt that cross-curricular writing was affecting what was being done in RE.

She combined the evidence she needed to collect from the RE Quality with the work for the Excellence in RE project and gave much more emphasis to different aspects of experiencing and recording RE, than just writing. She also encouraged more debate and discussion and felt that during the course of the project, children became more open minded and willing to engage in RE. She said that there was an increase in display work on RE across the school and children became more enthusiastic and readily engaged with the assessor for the Quality Mark.

Dilkes were awarded the Silver Quality Mark.

How might SACRE help you to share what you have learnt, with other schools?

Ms Kular is happy to share what she has learnt. She would like SACRE's help with creating a 'bank of people of different faiths who would be happy to visit schools to talk about their faith. She felt it was more powerful for the children when people they didn't know ie not their own teachers, spoke to them about their faith. She would be happy to visit other schools to talk about being a Sikh.

The Associate Adviser for Religious Education notified Members that SACRE had a legal duty to monitor provision for Religious Education in its local area where RE was delivered in accordance with the Local Agreed Syllabus.

She continued to explain Thurrock introduced a new Agreed Syllabus in 2016 and it would now seem timely to carry out a monitoring exercise to establish how effective the new syllabus had been in meeting its aim to raise standards of RE.

Members were spilt into groups to discuss the draft pro-forma at appendix 1. During discussions the following was raised:

- The form was straight forward and simple to answer;
- May require reformatting such as the layout, use of different fonts and the type of language used needed to be consistent;
- Answers may be different depending on whether the school was Primary or Secondary.

RESOLVED that SACRE Members:

- 1. Discussed the draft proforma at appendix 1 and suggested revisions.**
- 2. Authorised a pilot monitoring programme that might be reviewed in the summer term meeting**

6. Collective Worship

The Associate Adviser for Religious Education remarked SACRE had a legal duty to monitor provision for collective worship in schools in its local area.

Members were advised collective worship was an area which many schools found challenging both on practical and philosophical level. They were further notified the report aimed to stimulate a discussion between Members in the hope that some support might be offered to schools.

During discussions Members commented that many schools struggled to meet the need of collective worship every day and it lacked after primary school. It was discussed that schools required extra time to be able to do something meaningful

within collective worship, at the same time as it being different to RE.

It was commented that teachers were not trained to teach collective worship and so many of them were not sure how to offer collective worship to children. Members further stated that children needed an opportunity to worship and reflect if they wish too.

Members heard that Holy Cross Primary School had a pray garden, which was inspired by a school trip to Aylesford, where children completed the Rosary Walk. Following a trip with a Year 6 class the children asked if they could have their own peace garden.

The children created their garden with stones painted with word such as Love and Peace, running water, the sun, moon, stars to represent Gods garden a mission statement and benches with cushions. It was commented that the garden meant a lot to the children as it gave them somewhere to go and reflect.

The Committee continued their discussions by mentioning it was important for children to have time to reflect or to have time to sit and have a thought for the day within Schools. It was further commented that collective worship could be made enjoyable and not a subject that was durable.

RESOLVED that SACRE Members:

- 1. Discuss the issues raised by the NASACRE (National Association of SACREs) presentation**
- 2. Agreed on what support schools might need that SACRE might offer**

The meeting finished at 7.40 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**

22 November 2017	ITEM: 5
Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education	
Monitoring of 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: Roger Edwardson, Strategic Lead for School Improvement, Learning and Skills	
Accountable Director: Rory Patterson, 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 decided it would now seem timely to carry out a monitoring exercise to establish how effective the new syllabus has been in meeting its aim to raise standards of RE. At the last meeting on SACRE a mechanism by which SACRE might collect information to meet this monitoring requirement and this has updated following members’ instructions.

1. Recommendations that SACRE:

- 1.1 Discuss the revised proforma at Appendices 1 and 2 of the report;
- 1.2 Authorise a pilot monitoring programme that might be reviewed in the summer term meeting.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 It has been possible in the past for SACRE to carry out its monitoring function using a variety of methods:
 - a) School visits and lesson observations
 - b) The collation of comments on RE found in Ofsted inspection reports
 - c) Analysis of data

2.2 Smaller education budgets and less staff capacity mean that specific visits to schools by specialist advisers for RE are no longer possible for most local authorities, Ofsted no longer report on RE in particular and therefore SACREs around the country largely rely on data and information that schools are prepared to share from their own self-evaluative work.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 SACRE cannot require schools to respond to a request to complete a self-evaluation form however, all schools must evaluate their work. The draft questions on the survey encompass the areas that best practice would suggest are key areas of concern, so it is likely that many schools will respond albeit at different rates.

3.2 If this method of collecting information about RE in Thurrock schools is not successful then SACRE will need consider a different method or rely on data alone.

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: **Nilufa Begum**
Management Accountant 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: **Becky Price**
Community Development Officer

The aim of this exercise 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. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None

9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1 - RE School Self-Evaluation (Primary)
- Appendix 2 - RE School Self-Evaluation (Secondary)

Report Author:

Deborah Weston

Associate Adviser for RE

Appendix 1 RE School Self-Evaluation (Primary)

School:

School Type:

Thurrock SACRE has a statutory responsibility to monitor provision for Religious Education in the borough. SACRE can use this information to make recommendations to Thurrock Council about the strengths and weaknesses of that provision, how good practice might be shared and what support might be offered. Subject leaders are requested to complete this proforma and return it to the Associate Adviser; Deborah Weston - deborah@retoday.org.uk

School self-evaluation: key questions

1. What are the strengths of your current provision and practice?
2. Where are there weaknesses/areas for improvement?
3. Do you have an example of good practice you would like to share with others?
If so, please provide details below.
4. What are your priorities for development in RE? Please provide a list or attach your current development plan
5. Is there anything related to RE for which you would like external support?

Quality and standards of RE in the school

6. How does the school make a judgment on this?
(e.g. monitoring, lesson observation, work scrutiny, meeting with pupils, learning walks ...)
7. Overall, how would you grade the quality of RE provision (including quality and standards achieved by pupils) in your school?

Schools may wish to refer to one of the following sets of criteria to help with this judgement:

- a. <http://www.re-handbook.org.uk/section/managing/self-evaluation-in-re/effectiveness-of-provision/>
- b. <http://www.reqm.org/media/file/school-evidence-form-13-06-2016.doc>

Outstanding (1)

Good (2)

Requires Improvement(3)

Inadequate (4)

8. Why have you chosen this grade?

Continuing professional development in RE

9. What CPD has the subject leader taken part in (over the last year) and what was its impact?

10. What CPD have other teachers taken part in (over the last year) and what was its impact?

11. Do you have links with a local group of teachers in Thurrock?
(Yes: please list below/No/No but I'd like to know more)

Timetabling of RE

12. Is provision for RE combined with another subject e.g. PSHEe, Citizenship? (Yes (please explain below)/No)

13. How much time does each pupil spend on RE-related work each week on average?

EYFS:

KS1:

KS2:

14. Who delivers the RE in your school? Please describe any diversity between classes and year groups if appropriate

(Class teacher/HLTA/TA/PPA teacher/other please specify)

Agreed Syllabus

15. If your school is an Academy, have you chosen to adopt the Thurrock Agreed Syllabus?
<http://www.Thurrockrenet.co.uk/agreed.html>

Yes/No

16. If you answered 'No' to question 15 above, please tell SACRE which syllabus you have chosen to adopt or attach a copy of the syllabus you have devised which meets the same requirements as are expected of an Agreed Syllabus

17. Does your curriculum and provision meet the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus*
*This question relates to the SYLLABUS -not the scheme of work)?

Yes/No/Partly – If not yes, then please explain how you intend to address this.

Scheme of work (SoW)

18. Does the school use the Thurrock scheme of work? Yes/No/Partly (If Yes, go to question 22

19. If no, please explain whether the school scheme matches the requirements of the agreed syllabus? e.g. <http://www.Thurrockrenet.co.uk/agreed.html>

Fully/ Mostly/Not at all

If not fully, please explain how you intend to address this

20. Please attach a long-term plan/curriculum map that shows how you deliver RE across the school/school year?

21. How does the SoW ensure progression between the key stages?

a. In respect of subject knowledge?

b. In the development of skills?

Resources

22. Are the resources sufficient to support the RE programme? Yes/No

23. Are there any resources that you would recommend to other schools?

24. Are there any resources that you are lacking?

25. Please list below the contact details for any visitors you use to support RE that you'd recommend to others?

26. Please list below the contact details for any places you use to visit to support RE that you'd recommend to others?

Management and Organisation of RE

No. of students on roll

27. Name of subject leader:

28. How long as subject leader in this school:

1 year	2 years	3 years	4 years	5+ years
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29. Other comments/notes (*Continue overleaf if necessary*)

Appendix 2 - RE School Self-Evaluation (Secondary)

School:

School Type:

Thurrock SACRE has a statutory responsibility to monitor provision for Religious Education in the borough. SACRE can use this information to make recommendations to Thurrock Council about the strengths and weaknesses of that provision, how good practice might be shared and what support might be offered. Subject leaders are requested to complete this proforma and return it to the Associate Adviser; Deborah Weston - deborah@retoday.org.uk

School self-evaluation: key questions

1. What are the strengths of your current provision and practice?
2. Where are there weaknesses/areas for improvement?
3. Do you have an example of good practice you would like to share with others?
If so, please provide details below.
4. What are your priorities for development in RE? Please attach your current development plan
5. Is there anything related to RE for which you would like external support?

Quality and standards of RE in the school

6. How does the school make a judgment on this?
(e.g. monitoring, lesson observation, work scrutiny, meeting with pupils, learning walks ...)
7. Overall, how would you grade the quality of RE provision (including quality and standards achieved by pupils) in your school?

Schools may wish to refer to one of the following sets of criteria to help with this judgement:

- a. <http://www.re-handbook.org.uk/section/managing/self-evaluation-in-re/effectiveness-of-provision/>
- b. <http://www.reqm.org/media/file/school-evidence-form-13-06-2016.doc>

Outstanding (1)	Good (2)	Requires Improvement(3)	Inadequate (4)
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8. Why have you chosen this grade?

Continuing professional development in RE

9. What CPD has the subject leader taken part in (over the last year) and what was its impact?

10. What CPD have other teachers taken part in (over the last year) and what was its impact?

11. Do you have links with a local group of teachers in Thurrock?
(Yes: please list below/No/No but I'd like to know more)

Timetabling of RE

12. Is provision for RE combined with another subject e.g. PSHEe, Citizenship? (Yes (please explain below)/No)

13. How much time does each pupil spend on RE-related work each week?

Key Stage 3:

Key Stage 4:

Post-16:

14. Who delivers the RE in your school?

- a. How many individual teachers?
- b. How many teachers with post-A level qualifications in the subject?
- c. What proportion of the timetable is delivered by teachers who spend most of their timetable delivering another subject?

Agreed Syllabus

15. If your school is an Academy, have you chosen to adopt the Thurrock Agreed Syllabus
Yes/No <http://www.Thurrockrenet.co.uk/agreed.html>

16. If you answered 'No' to question 18 above, please tell SACRE which syllabus you have chosen to adopt or attach a copy of the syllabus you have devised which meets the same requirements as are expected of an Agreed Syllabus

17. Does your curriculum and provision meet the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus*
*This question relates to the SYLLABUS -not the scheme of work)?

Yes/No/Partly – If not yes, then please explain how you intend to address this.

18. If you answered 'No' to question 18 above, please tell SACRE which syllabus you have chosen to adopt or attach a copy of the syllabus you have devised which meets the same requirements as are expected of an Agreed Syllabus

Scheme of work (SoW)

19. When was the current SoW drawn up or revised?

20. To what extent does it match the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus you have adopted?
E.g. <http://www.Thurrockrenet.co.uk/agreed.html> Fully/ Mostly/Not at all

If not fully explain how you intend to address this

21. Please attach a long-term plan/curriculum map that shows how you deliver RE across the school/school year?

22. How does the SoW ensure progression between the key stages?

a. In respect of subject knowledge?

b. In the development of skills?

Resources

23. Are the resources sufficient to support the RE programme? Yes/No

24. Are there any resources that you would recommend to other schools?

25. Are there any resources that you are lacking?

26. Please list below the contact details for any visitors you use to support RE that you'd recommend to others?

27. Please list below the contact details for any places you use to visit to support RE that you'd recommend to others?

Management and Organisation of RE

No. of students on roll

28. Name of subject leader:

29. How long as subject leader in this school:

1 year	2 years	3 years	4 years	5+ years
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30. Other comments/notes (*Continue overleaf if necessary*)

22 November 2017		ITEM: 6
Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education		
National Update on Religious Education		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key	
Report of: Deborah Weston, Associate Adviser for Religious Education		
Accountable Assistant Director: Roger Edwardson, Strategic Lead for School Improvement, Learning and Skills		
Accountable Director: Rory Patterson, Director of Children’s Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

The executive summaries of the following reports are attached as appendices to this report:

1. The Commission on RE – Interim Report
2. The State of the Nation

1. Recommendations that SACRE:

1.1 Discuss the recommendations of each report

1.2 Consider responding to the Commission on RE interim report using the online form

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Commission on RE

The Commission on Religious Education has been established to review the legal, education, and policy frameworks for religious education (RE). This review will be a wide-ranging, inclusive and evidence-based process designed to inform policy makers. The ultimate aim will be to improve the quality and rigour of religious education and its capacity to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.

2.2 Remit of the Commission:

1. To consider the nature, purposes, and scope of religious education.
2. To identify the enabling factors that currently promote high quality RE, and the barriers that currently limit it.
3. To identify what changes are needed to ensure the highest quality provision of RE.
4. To ensure that recommendations focus on realistic and specific proposals aimed at both immediate and long-term implementation in the context of continuing educational reform.

2.3 In considering the above four tasks, the REC has identified the following areas for the Commission to consider:

- a) The quality of teaching and learning in RE
- b) The legal and structural arrangements
- c) The public and professional profile of the subject
- d) Recruitment, Initial Teacher Education and Continuous Professional Development
- e) The range of school settings in which RE should be required
- f) The age range for which RE should be required
- g) The right to withdraw (parents or carers, pupils and teachers)
- h) Whether or not there should be a common entitlement in RE, and if so what the entitlement should be

The REC expects the Commission to make explicit the evidence base for the recommendations they make, and ensure the conceptual clarity of any key terms used.

2.4 **State of the Nation**

In order to support the work of the Commission, the National Association of Teachers of RE worked together to collect evidence to present a report that set out the current level of provision for RE in English schools; a 'state of the nation' The aim of this State of the Nation report is to draw together existing data sets, and supplement them with new survey material, in order to demonstrate the current levels of provision of RE across the country. The report focuses exclusively on secondary school provision.

The State of the Nation Report's findings are based on three data sets.

- a) A school survey
- b) School Workforce Census data for 2010-2015
- c) GCSE Religious Studies entries 2014-16

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The Commission on RE has just produced its interim report. A discussion at the November meeting of SACRE will allow members to contribute to the Commission before a final report is produced.
- 3.2 Thurrock SACRE regularly discusses the second two of the sources used in the State of the Nation report and the publication of the State of the Nation report allows members to assess whether the patterns of provision in Thurrock are similar to those found nationally.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The findings of the Commission on RE are likely to have a significant impact on the future direction of RE in England, not least on the work of SACREs. For this reason, it is vital that SACRE members make their views known.

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.

These two reports include material that is pertinent to all three aims of this programme.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Nilufa Begum**
Management Accountant Corporate Finance

There are no financial implications to this report.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lucinda Bell**
Education Lawyer

This report is for consideration by the committee who are asked to consider responding to the report. No decision is required to be made. There are no legal implications other than the general statutory framework relating to SACRE and its purpose.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Becky Price**
Community Development Officer

The State of the Nation Report aims to highlight some of the challenges schools face in meeting their legal/contractual requirements in relation to RE but also to encourage them to do better. If the levels and the quality of provision for RE improves then SACRE believes schools will be better equipped 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. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

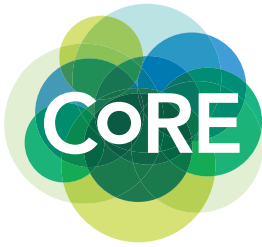
- None

9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1 - Commission on RE -Interim Report
- Appendix 2 - State of the Nation Report

Report Author:

Deborah Weston
Associate Adviser for RE



Commission on
Religious Education

INTERIM REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR ALL

SEPTEMBER 2017



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This interim report is published with the intention of creating an opportunity for as many people and organisations as possible to engage with the Commission on Religious Education (CoRE) about our developing thoughts on RE in schools in England. The interim report explores a number of issues which have emerged during our deliberations on the evidence presented to us during the initial consultation, at the evidence gathering sessions held around the country and in written submissions received during the 2016/17 academic year. It sets out initial recommendations alongside a range of issues on which we are seeking to consult further before drawing any conclusions. We hope that there will be a full and vigorous consultation on the content of this interim report, and that this will help to inform the final report of the Commission, due to be published in 2018.

RE remains a vital academic subject for education in the 21st century. Studying RE gives young people the knowledge, understanding and motivation they need to understand important aspects of human experience, including the religious, spiritual, and moral. It gives insights into the arts, literature, history, and contemporary local and global social and political issues. It provides them with a space in the curriculum to reflect on their own worldview and to engage with others whose worldview may be different. The young people that we have spoken to have told us that RE enables them to have better friendships and to develop greater respect and empathy for others. RE is highly valued by many employers, who increasingly understand that in a globalised world, understanding others' worldviews and their impact on people's lives is essential to success.

The knowledge gained through studying RE is central to good local, national and global citizenship. It enables young people to have a nuanced and informed understanding of key political and social issues that they will need to face as they grow up in an increasingly globalised world. RE helps pupils to deal positively with controversial issues, to manage strongly held differences of belief, and to challenge stereotypes.

As local and global demographics have changed, including patterns of affiliation to religious and non-religious worldviews, today's students will encounter people with a much more diverse range of beliefs, lifestyles and backgrounds than did the previous generations. Understanding religious and non-religious worldviews, and their impact on individuals, communities and wider society, has never been more essential to good citizenship than it is now. For these reasons, we argue throughout the report that all pupils, regardless of background or the type of school they attend, are entitled to high quality RE which enables them to develop the nuanced and informed

understanding of worldviews that they will need as citizens.

We were impressed by the evidence of high quality and innovative approaches to RE that were presented during our consultations.¹ At its best, the subject offers great educational benefit for pupils and the British model of RE is highly regarded and has earned international esteem. Of particular note has been the appearance in recent years of local and national support networks for teachers and also the high level of examination entry at GCSE and A level.

Having said that, we are unanimous in the view that RE faces a perilous future without strategic, urgent intervention. Examination entries fell for the first time in 2017, and many who gave evidence saw this as a sign of further decline in years to come. Amongst the many challenges the subject faces, the following are identified as particularly significant:

- The changed patterns of religious and non-religious belief from the time when the current system was enacted in 1944 present a requirement to ensure that RE's structures reflect the realities of contemporary society. The religious landscape in the UK has diversified with fewer people identifying as Anglican and more identifying with other Christian denominations or other religious traditions. Moreover, the number of people identifying as non-religious has increased: in 2017, 53% of the population described themselves as not having a religion.² The global religious landscape has also been undergoing rapid change, where religion is highly significant in many societies.
- There is inconsistency in the quality and provision of RE, with increasing numbers of schools not even meeting the basic legal requirement. Pupils are experiencing a lottery in their access to high quality RE. Evidence presented to the Commission made clear the impact that the type of school had on the extent to which RE is provided: while 6.5% of schools that follow an RE curriculum determined by their religious character devote no part of their curriculum time to RE at key stage 4, the figure is 20.7% for schools required to follow a locally agreed syllabus for RE and 43.7% for academies without a religious character.³ This inequality of provision means that many children are being disadvantaged by being denied RE.
- As more schools become academies, leaving ever fewer under local authority control, the current framework of determination of RE via local authorities and agreed syllabuses is ceasing to be fit for purpose. A decrease in local authority funding has exacerbated this problem.

¹ Please see Appendix 1: Evidence received by the Commission for details of how we collected evidence.

² NATCEN (2017). *British Social Attitudes Survey*.
<http://www.natcen.ac.uk/media/1469605/BSA-religion.pdf>

³ RE Council & National Association of Teachers of RE (2017, forthcoming). *The State of the Nation*.

Moreover, evidence submitted to the Commission makes clear that the current approach of relying on the requirements of academy funding agreements is not sufficient for ensuring the proper provision of RE across all academies. If no action is taken, there is a serious risk of increasing numbers of pupils leaving school with an inadequate level of knowledge and understanding of religious and non-religious worldviews at precisely the time when such understanding is becoming more important.

- RE has suffered from a policy environment that has not encouraged headteachers to regard it as a high-status subject. This environment includes insufficient processes to hold schools to account for their provision of RE and the omission of RE from key performance indicators published by DfE.
- There has been diminishing access to adequate training and support for teachers. This is particularly acute at primary level where the Commission heard that on average a primary trainee receives less than three hours of RE-specific training during a one-year PGCE or School Direct course.⁴
- The quality of RE is variable across schools. Low standards predominate across too many schools, including schools with and without a religious

character. Teachers are not always clear on the purpose of the subject and many lack the subject knowledge necessary to teach about sensitive and crucial issues with skill and nuance. Locally agreed syllabuses are also variable in quality. One

issue that we have noted is the fact that religion is often presented in an essentialist mode that fails to help pupils understand the complexity, diversity and historicity of religious ideas, institutions and practices. This was most often mentioned in relation to the Dharmic traditions (i.e. Hindu, Buddhist and Sikh traditions) in the written and oral evidence but affects the presentation of all religions and worldviews in resources and in the classroom.

The Commissioners have therefore made initial recommendations in four areas:

⁴ *Fiona Moss, oral evidence submitted to the Commission. See also NATRE (2016). An analysis of the provision for RE in primary schools. www.natre.org.uk%2Fuploads%2FAdditional%2520Documents%2FNATRE%2520Primary%2520Survey%25202016%2520final.docx&usg=AFQjCNFDWLUicovE8LOQEgZiiuHF7fFcAA*

1. **A national entitlement for RE.** This would set out clearly the aims and purpose(s) of RE and what pupils should experience in the course of their study of the subject. This national entitlement should be for all pupils at all state-funded schools and we seek to consult with independent schools about whether they should adopt it. We are advocating RE for all not because children belong to religious traditions or not, but because in our age a nuanced understanding of the role of worldviews must be a part of citizens' intellectual make-up. It is to do with their ability to function effectively as citizens and as human beings. This is as important an aspect of education for pupils in schools of a religious character as it is in those without a religious character. It should be introduced through non-statutory guidance as early as possible with a view to it ultimately becoming statutory, either to supplement or replace the current legislation on agreed syllabuses. This national entitlement provides a reinvigorated vision for RE for all pupils in the future, drawing on the very best of the RE that we know happens in some schools. It seeks to be a basic statement of what all pupils are entitled to, but is not a national syllabus or curriculum. We hope that the flexibility of the proposed national entitlement will ensure that a diversity of high quality approaches will emerge and that this will best suit the landscape of a school-led system. We recognise that schools will need guidance and support to translate this entitlement into curriculum planning and we are reviewing where this guidance and support should come from.
2. **Holding schools to account for the provision and quality of RE.** The evidence presented to us indicates that at present too many schools are not being held to account for failing to provide adequate RE. Schools should be required to publish details on their website of how they meet the national entitlement for RE. Inspection frameworks should be revised to ensure that inspectors monitor whether schools meet the national entitlement for RE. The Commission has also given thought to how schools should provide for those Key Stage 4 pupils who are not taking the GCSE in Religious Studies and would like to consult on the possibility of a revised qualification for these pupils to ensure that their work can be accredited.
3. **A National Plan to improve teaching and learning in RE.** The Commission would like to develop a National Plan for developing teaching and learning in RE, along the lines of the National Plan for Music Education. The National Plan will bring together the Commission's recommendations for improving teacher subject knowledge and confidence and we seek to consult on how this can best be achieved.
4. **A renewed and expanded role for Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs).** The evidence we have received suggests that SACREs can have an important role in promoting and supporting RE and in promoting good community relations more broadly, but that their capacity to deliver this role fully has been diminishing in many local authorities. The Commission's suggested recommendations, which are

consultative at this stage, call for consideration to be given to adding the promotion of improved community relations to the remit of SACREs and make proposals for the securing of resources for their work. There are also recommendations that seek consideration of the composition of SACREs with a call to ensure that they are fully representative, with representatives of non-religious worldviews as full members.

The full recommendations are set out on pages 8 to 12.

In addition, the Commissioners are seeking to undertake further consultation in these areas and have set out the issues that they are particularly interested in exploring. These areas for consultation are set out on pages 12 to 14.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

A NATIONAL ENTITLEMENT FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- a. There should be a national entitlement statement for RE which sets out clearly the aims and purpose of RE and what pupils should experience in the course of their study of the subject. A draft statement for consultation is overleaf.
- b. This entitlement should become normative through non-statutory guidance as early as possible, and should ultimately become statutory, either to supplement or to replace current legislation on agreed syllabuses.
- c. The national entitlement should apply to all state-funded schools including academies, free schools and schools of a religious character.
- d. Independent schools should consider adopting the entitlement as an undertaking of good practice.

The National Entitlement for Religious Education

Overleaf is the draft text of the proposed national entitlement for RE. This draft is for consultation. We welcome comments on and refinements to the text.

A National Entitlement for RE

RE in schools should enable students to engage in an intelligent and informed way with the ideas, practices and contemporary manifestations of a diversity of religious and non-religious worldviews. It should enable them to understand how worldviews are inextricably woven into, influence and are influenced by, all dimensions of human experience. It should prepare pupils for life in modern Britain by enabling them to engage respectfully with people with worldviews different from their own. RE should equip pupils to develop their own beliefs, practices, values and identity in the light of their reflections on the worldviews they have studied.

Through their study of worldviews, pupils should develop a lifelong motivation to enquire into questions of meaning and purpose, and investigate others' worldviews and what they mean for individuals, communities and society. All of this will enable them to become responsible citizens and members of diverse and changing local, national and global communities.

Throughout their period of compulsory schooling, pupils should learn about, understand and engage with:

- a. The diversity of religious and non-religious worldviews and ways of life that exist locally, nationally and globally.
- b. The ways in which communities and individuals holding different worldviews interact, change and maintain continuity in different times and contexts and as the surrounding culture changes.
- c. The different ways that people interpret and respond to texts and other sources of authority.
- d. The ways that people communicate their beliefs, experiences, values and identities through verbal and non-verbal means (eg prose, story, poetry, art, music, dance, ritual, architecture).
- e. How people seek moral guidance from religious and non-religious worldviews and how they interpret this guidance in their lives.
- f. The importance of experience, including extra-ordinary experiences, in shaping people's worldviews and how worldviews are used to interpret experience.

- g. The role of religious and non-religious rituals and practices in both creating and expressing experience, beliefs, values and commitments.
- h. The relationship between people's worldview and their thinking and actions concerning political, public, social and cultural life.
- i. Both the positive and negative exercise of power and influence resulting from people's worldviews.
- j. The important role that worldviews play in providing people with a way of making sense of their lives and in forming their identity.*

As part of a balanced programme aimed at meeting this provision, it is expected that pupils will:

1. Experience meeting and visiting people from their local community from a range of worldviews including those different from their own and that of the school.
2. Develop core skills for researching the beliefs, values and practices of individuals and groups in society.
3. Experience a range of approaches to the study of religions (e.g. phenomenology, philosophy, sociology, textual studies, theology).
4. Engage with questions of meaning and purpose and of the nature of reality raised by the worldviews that they study.
5. Think through and develop a reflective approach to their own personal responses and developing identity and learn to articulate these clearly and coherently while respecting the right of others to differ.
6. Develop the core skills and dispositions of careful listening, critical thinking, self-reflection, empathy and open-mindedness required for making wise judgments.
7. Learn to discuss controversial issues and work with others (including those that they disagree with) with the intention of securing a healthy and peaceful society in the context of significant diversity.

** We are indebted to Barbara Wintersgill, who presented her project on Big Ideas in RE. Her work has informed much of the content of this list.*

HOLDING SCHOOLS TO ACCOUNT FOR THE PROVISION AND QUALITY OF RE

- a. Schools should be required to publish on their website details of how they meet the national entitlement for RE.
- b. Inspection frameworks should be revised to ensure that inspectors monitor whether or not schools meet the national entitlement for RE, in the light of schools' duty to provide a broad and balanced curriculum.
- c. The DfE should either monitor, or give SACREs or other approved bodies the power and resources to monitor, the provision and quality of RE in all schools, including free schools, academies and schools of a religious character.
- d. The government should consider the impact of school performance measures, including the exclusion of RS GCSE from the EBacc, on GCSE entries and on the provision and quality of RE, and consider reviewing performance measures in the light of the evidence.

A RENEWED AND EXPANDED ROLE FOR SACRES

We seek to consult on all our recommendations relating to SACREs. (See page 12)

A NATIONAL PLAN FOR IMPROVING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RE

We are considering developing a National Plan for developing teaching and learning in RE, along the lines of the National Plan for Music Education. This plan is likely to include the following recommendations:

- a. A minimum of 12 hours should be devoted to RE in all primary Initial Teacher Education (ITE) courses.
- b. Leading primary schools for RE should be identified and all primary trainees should be given the opportunity to observe RE teaching in such a school.
- c. Include under the Teachers' Standards, part 1, section 3 (Demonstrate good subject and curriculum knowledge), the requirement that teachers 'demonstrate a good understanding of and take responsibility for the sensitive handling of controversial issues, including thoughtful discussion of religious and non-religious worldviews where necessary.'
- d. Restore funded Subject Knowledge Enhancement (SKE) courses for those applying to teach RE and for serving teachers of RE without a relevant post A-level qualification in the subject.
- e. Restore parity of bursaries for RE with those for other shortage subjects.

- f. The government and relevant funding bodies should consider how funding of grassroots teacher networks can be made more sustainable.
- g. SACREs and local authorities should review existing good practice in developing and sustaining these grassroots networks and start their own if such a network does not exist in their local area.
- h. University performance measures should be updated to credit universities for their engagement with schools, including the provision of continuing professional development (CPD) and resource materials.
- i. University staff conducting research in areas related to RE should be encouraged to contribute to grassroots networks, lead teacher development days, develop resource materials or become SACRE members. This may provide opportunities for them to demonstrate the impact of their research or increase student recruitment.

LIST OF AREAS FOR CONSULTATION

A NATIONAL ENTITLEMENT FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

1. The entitlement is not a national syllabus or curriculum. It is a basic statement of what all pupils are entitled to, whatever type of school they attend. Many schools will need guidance and support to translate this entitlement into curriculum planning, particularly in relation to progression. We are still reviewing where this guidance and support will come from. We seek input on what bodies would be best placed to translate the entitlement into detailed programmes of study and how best to support schools to plan their curriculum in line with the entitlement. Several possibilities have been discussed by the Commission so far:
 - a. Removing the requirement for local authorities to hold Agreed Syllabus Conferences (ASCs). In a context where every school will eventually become an academy, this requirement is no longer proportionate for many local authorities and will become even less so over time. However, it might be possible for programmes of study to be developed at regional levels. It would also be possible to include regional universities on this model. A regional system might not provide sufficient support to academies unless they were explicitly included. If the requirement for local authorities to develop a locally agreed syllabus were to be removed, it would not preclude those local authorities that had the resource and expertise from convening ASCs and developing programmes of study that could be adopted by those schools that chose to, within or outside that local authority.
 - b. Recommending the development of a national set of programmes of study compliant with the entitlement. This may or may not be government-funded. This has the advantage of providing consistency

across localities, which was requested by some teachers in the written and oral evidence. However, there are a number of potential difficulties with it. First, there is the vexed question of who develops programmes of study. Second, there is the justified criticism that in the era of a school-led system a nationally agreed set of programmes of study is too rigid and leaves schools insufficient freedom to undertake RE that is appropriate for their pupils and immediate community. Third, there is the question of how to ensure that the syllabus is appropriately independent of political interference. Many of those who gave oral and written evidence were concerned about excessive political interference in the scope and content of RE.

- c. Leaving the market open for schools, groups of schools, dioceses, SACREs, commercial providers and other relevant groups to write their own programmes of study. This would allow maximum freedom for schools but might not resolve the inequality in provision and quality discussed above. Non-statutory guidance or a range of model programmes of study might also be developed to support relevant groups in writing their own programmes of study.
2. There is likely to be a range of possibilities within these broad categories and other possibilities that we have not yet considered. We seek views on what would be most helpful to support schools with curriculum planning and ensure that all schools can meet the entitlement effectively.
3. The question also remains as to whether the entitlement statement should replace or supplement the current legislation on agreed syllabuses, which requires that they must 'reflect the fact that religious traditions in Britain are in the main Christian, whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain' (UK Parliament, Education Act 1996, Section 375.2). This legislative statement remains a statement of historical and social fact. Of those who identify themselves as having a religion, the majority are Christian, and Christianity has played a particular role in the history of Great Britain. However, the statement in and of itself does not specify how much time should be spent on any worldview. It also does not include non-religious worldviews. We seek views on whether the entitlement should specify a number and range of worldviews, or a minimum time to be spent on one worldview.
4. We have also discussed whether the name of the subject should be changed, to signify the renewed vision for the subject. It is difficult to find an alternative name that appropriately captures the breadth and depth of the subject as outlined in the entitlement statement. We have discussed a number of options. A small majority of the Commission preferred to call the subject Religion and Ethics (or Religions and Ethics) while others wished either to preserve the current name, or to change its name to Religions and Worldviews or Religion, Philosophy and Ethics (or Philosophy, Religion and Ethics). We seek views on which of these options best captures the nature of the subject outlined in the entitlement. We

also seek suggestions on alternative names which fit the entitlement and the renewed vision for the subject.

HOLDING SCHOOLS TO ACCOUNT FOR THE PROVISION AND QUALITY OF RE

1. We seek views on the most appropriate mechanisms for holding schools to account for the provision and quality of RE at both primary and secondary level.
2. We are considering recommending that a revised qualification at Key Stage 4, for those not taking Full Course GCSE RS, be developed. This would need to meet the requirements of the national entitlement for RE and have currency in school performance measures. This qualification would not be compulsory but would count in school performance measures and in individuals' applications for work or further study. We seek views on how effective this would be and what demand there would be for such a qualification.

A RENEWED AND EXPANDED ROLE FOR SACRES

1. We seek views on the following recommendations on the role of SACREs:
 - a. The Government should publicly highlight and reaffirm the important role of SACREs in supporting and resourcing RE.
 - b. The Government should consider whether the role of SACREs should be expanded to include a duty to advise on all matters relating to religion and belief in schools.
 - c. The Government should consider ways of securing funding to resource SACREs adequately. Options for this may include:
 - i. Ring-fenced funding for SACREs.
 - ii. Funding for SACREs from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport or the Department of Communities and Local Government.
 - iii. Specifying a minimum amount of funding (perhaps per school or per pupil) to which local authorities must adhere.
 - d. The Government should consider the composition of SACREs and the law should be changed to include representatives of non-religious worldviews as full members.
 - e. The Government should publish all SACRE annual reports publicly on a dedicated website.
2. We seek views on what the duties of SACREs should be in relation to promoting good community relations, beyond matters relating to religion

and belief in schools.

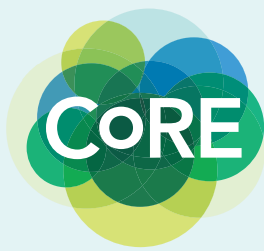
3. We are still considering how the composition of SACREs should be adapted to be fit for purpose in a changed social and educational landscape. In particular, we are considering whether the committee structure should be changed or abolished. We seek views and evidence on this.
4. We seek views on which groups and organisations should be represented on SACREs.

THE RIGHT OF WITHDRAWAL

1. We seek further evidence on the number of pupils being withdrawn from RE, and the reasons given, where these are given, as well as whether the number of cases and reasons given have been changing over time.
2. We seek views on the most effective ways to manage the right of withdrawal in practice.
3. We seek views on whether it is desirable to look to adopt an overall approach to the design of the RE curriculum in every school so that it is sufficiently 'objective, critical and pluralistic' as to render it capable of being compulsory without the right of withdrawal.

A NATIONAL PLAN FOR IMPROVING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RE

1. We seek views on what should be included in the National Plan for RE, beyond the recommendations set out above.
2. We seek views on how the National Plan might best be implemented.
3. There are increasing expectations of teachers to be engaged with research, by keeping up to date with published research at minimum, and where possible by engaging in action research, lesson study and other forms of practitioner research. We seek views on the kinds of research which would be most helpful for RE teachers to engage with, and what mechanisms would support this.



Commission on Religious Education

Report drafter: Amira Chilvers
Report produced for the Commission on Religious Education
by NCVO-CES

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The State of the Nation: A report on Religious Education provision within secondary schools in England

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Executive Summary



Religious Education (RE) is a vibrant, academically rigorous subject which covers multiple religious and non-religious worldviews. RE challenges young people to explore religion and belief in a way that enhances their transferable skills of literacy and reasoning in the classroom and allows them to gain a better understanding of the world around them. With the continued importance of religion and belief in public life, and substantial media coverage of issues relating to religion and belief, whether debates about ethical issues or coverage of conflicts with religious elements, it is crucial to ensure that all young people are religiously literate and

able to understand and question the accuracy of claims about different belief systems, regardless of whether they are themselves religious or not.

The importance of this subject is reflected in its legal standing. All state-funded schools, including academies and free schools, are legally required to provide Religious Education as part of a balanced curriculum.

Key findings of the State of the Nation

The State of the Nation report looks at the extent to which schools in England meet their statutory requirements to teach RE. It provides a comparison between schools where the RE curriculum is determined in three different ways:

- 1) Schools, including some academies, following an RE curriculum determined by their religious character;
- 2) Academies and other schools such as Free Schools where the RE is determined by their funding agreements;
- 3) Schools where a locally agreed RE syllabus must be followed.

The report argues that it is vital that students receive high quality RE. It is neither educationally, morally or legally justifiable for schools to provide minimal time on the school timetable for RE, or to expect teachers with insufficient training or expertise to deliver the subject. Neither is it acceptable for any young person to leave school without the knowledge and skills delivered through RE which will allow them to understand the beliefs and values of our diverse British society, without which they will be ill equipped to take their place in the modern world.

Findings from this report include:

- **28% of secondary schools told the Department for Education that they gave no dedicated curriculum time to RE.** It is estimated that this equates to 800,000 pupils being deprived of their legal right to learn about major religions and beliefs, leaving them without the religious literacy they need for life in modern multi-faith Britain.¹
- **The level of provision of RE is largely dependent on the type of school pupils attend,** leading to widespread variation across the country.
- **Schools with a religious character typically provide a higher level of provision of RE,** suggesting that these schools place a higher priority on the subject than other types of school. 96% of schools with a religious character offer RE at KS4.² 90% dedicate at least 3% of their timetables (around 40 minutes a week) to RE at KS4.³ In addition, 90% of these schools say that over half of their RE lessons are taught by a teacher with a relevant post A-Level qualification.⁴
- **Academies are the least likely type of school to offer RE at KS4,** with just 73% of schools reporting that they offer RE at this level⁵, and just 27% providing more than 3% of curriculum time to

RE.⁶ Just 66% of academies said that over half of their RE lessons are taught by a teacher with a relevant post A-Level qualification.⁷

- **Schools following a locally agreed syllabus for RE tend to have higher levels of provision than academies, but lower than schools of a religious character.** At KS4, 45% dedicate 3% or more of their timetables to RE.⁸ As these schools convert to academy status and are no longer required to follow their locally agreed syllabus, there is a real concern that their level of RE provision may drop.
- Full course Religious Studies GCSE students should receive 10% curriculum time (more than two hours per week) of RE lessons and pupils taking the short course GCSE should spend 5% of curriculum time (one hour) on this subject.⁹ This standard is very rarely met, meaning that **RS is not being treated fairly in comparison with other GCSE subjects and students across the country are not receiving the level of provision they deserve.**
- A worrying number of **schools are teaching RE full course on short course hours.** Almost half (42%) of academies and agreed syllabus schools (43%) reported that students taking the full course GCSE receive just one hour or less per week.¹⁰
- **Non-examined RE is often not sufficient to meet the aims of the subject and leads to schools simply not teaching it,** which fails pupils. Of the schools claiming to offer non-examined RE to Year 11 pupils, 83% admitted their students receive zero minutes of teaching per week.¹¹ It may be that offering RE is done as a tick-box exercise with schools claiming not to be resourced effectively in terms of trained or qualified staff or funding to deliver appropriate teaching.
- **The number of schools removing GCSE RS from their curriculum entirely has risen steadily between 2014 and 2016 (3% overall).**¹² Schools with a religious character are least likely to not enter any pupils for GCSE RS but more than 14% of academies do not enter a single pupil for any GCSE in RS.¹³
- **Only 47% of academies have at least 75% of their RE lessons taught by a fully qualified specialist.** This compared to 58% of agreed syllabus schools. Once again schools with religious character perform best, with 77% of respondents reporting this standard.¹⁴
- **Students at schools with religious character are significantly more likely to be taught RE** by a teacher with a relevant post A-Level qualification than

students in an academy, meaning that once again, academy students are missing out.

- **The number of schools entering between 90 and 100% of their year 11 cohort has fallen steadily from 49% in 2014 to 45% in 2016.**¹⁵ This reflects

a move away from entering whole cohorts for either the short course of the full course, almost certainly prompted by the removal of the short course from accountability measures.¹⁶

Summary of recommendations

The Department for Education should:

1	Hold schools to account for the level of provision and standards of teaching of RE.
2	Encourage ministers to speak about the importance of RE in the curriculum and about its impact on wider educational outcomes, including on society at large.
3	Issue a clear public statement that it is not acceptable in any circumstances for a school to be failing to provide RE at any Key Stage as part of its broad and balanced curriculum.
4	Publish data about RE provision routinely in an accessible format (without the need to issue Freedom of Information requests) to allow local Standing Advisory Councils for RE (SACREs) and other bodies to more easily fulfil their duty to monitor provision for RE in their local area. This data should include school workforce data and GCSE entries.
5	Clarify and strengthen the mechanisms by which complaints can be made about schools failing to provide pupils with their entitlement to high quality RE.
6	Ensure that it is a condition of the successful completion of teacher training that there is evidence that newly qualified RE teachers have an appropriate level of RE knowledge, understanding and skills to take up their first post.

School leaders including headteachers and governors should:

7	Review the specific requirements for RE provision and ensure that they can demonstrate that each pupil on the school roll is receiving their entitlement to RE in each school year.
8	Review the specific content requirements (in particular where they include being taught an accredited course at Key Stage 4 if that is what is required in the syllabus).
9	Ensure that all specialist and non-specialist teachers who provide RE have access to subject specific CPD throughout their career.
10	Ensure that all non-specialist RE teachers who teach RE receive high quality subject specific training, such as the Teach RE course, before they commence teaching RE.

Ofsted should:

11	Ensure that the level of provision for RE is monitored during routine inspections with an expectation that the curriculum cannot be considered 'broad and balanced' unless RE is provided.
12	Ensure that all those teaching RE are suitably qualified and/or trained to do so.
13	Review the training of inspectors so that they are aware of specific requirements for RE in each school that is inspected and can differentiate between strong and weak provision.
14	Carry out an investigation into the impact of different levels and quality of RE provision on wider pupil outcomes.

Parents/Carers should:

15	Request information about the programme of RE taught at their child's school (this should be published on the school website). If RE is not mentioned, or if the practice does not seem to match the published plan, ask questions or complain if necessary.
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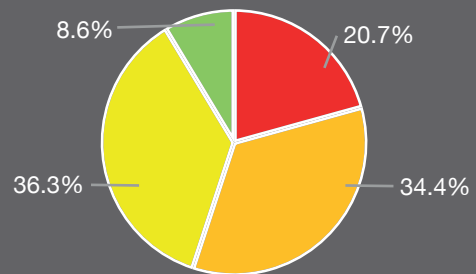
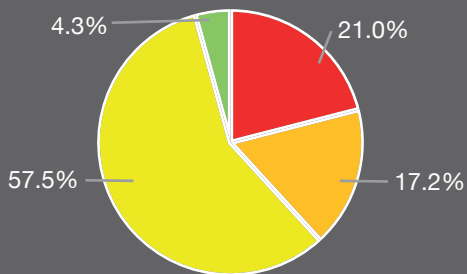
At Key Stage 3 the 5% standard is **MET OR EXCEEDED** in 64% of all state funded schools.

At Key Stage 4 the 5% standard is **MET OR EXCEEDED** in 50% of all state funded schools.

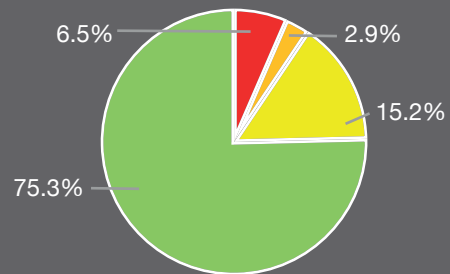
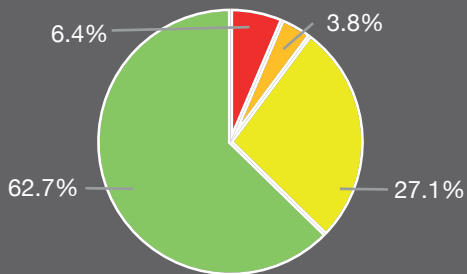
Percentage of curriculum time spent on RE in KS3

Percentage of curriculum time spent on RE in KS4

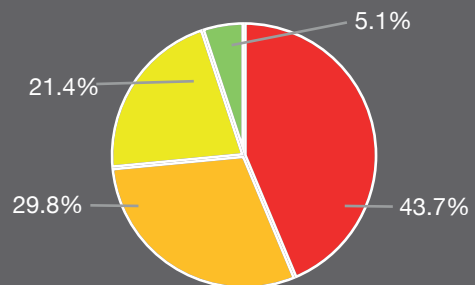
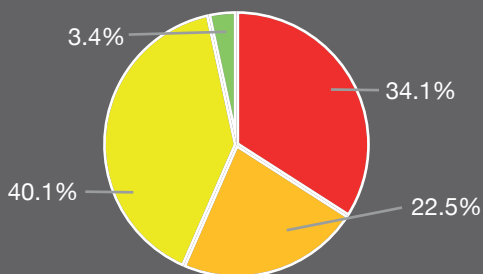
Schools where an Agreed Syllabus applies



Schools with a Religious Character



Academies



■ No RE at all
 ■ Between 0% and 3%
 ■ Between 3% and 6%
 ■ More than 6%

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