

Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education held on 18 January 2023 at 6.30 pm

- Committee A:** Miss Saul, Ms H Kaur Takhtar and Mr L Trup
- Committee B:** Mr P Anderson and Mrs R Everett
- Committee C:** Ms J Culloty and Ms R Shina
- Committee D:** Councillors Q Abbas and J Thandi (left at 7.00pm)
- Apologies:** Ms C Pumfrey, Mr A Kariyawasam, Ms A Thompson, Mrs L Lyn, Mr T Ojetola and Councillor D Chukwu
- In attendance:** Deborah Weston, Associate Advisor for Religious Education
Andrea Winstone, Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness and SEND
Kenna-Victoria Healey, Senior Democratic Services Officer
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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.

17. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2022 and 2 November 2022 were approved as a true and correct record.

18. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

19. Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared.

20. Collective Worship

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education presented the report at pages 15 to 38 of the agenda.

Mr Trup thanked the Associate Advisor for Religious Education for the report and commented he felt that page 30 within the agenda was incredibly helpful and sought if it was possible to send it to schools for relevant subject leads for information.

Miss Saul stated the document was very thorough and would be very useful to schools.

The Chair of SACRE thanked the Associate Advisor for Religious Education for the report. He continued by saying he thought schools would welcome the guidance, which was very clear and explained how schools offered Religious Education within the Law.

RESOLVED that SACRE:

- 1. Notes the sample of collective worship policies from Thurrock schools.**
- 2. Requests that the Associate Advisor for religious Education sends out a copy of the updated guidance on Collective Worship to schools in Thurrock**

21. Monitoring Provision for RE in Thurrock Schools

The report at pages 39 to 48 of the agenda was introduced by the Associate Advisor for Religious Education.

Members were then entered into 5 small groups to each discuss the SACRE survey of provision for Religious Education in Thurrock November 2022 at Appendix 1 of the report, the following observations were made:

- Question 1 - Teachers and subject leads may not know about up to date CPD.
- Questions 1/4 - How can we advertise CPD for teachers/schools? Perhaps poster/post?
- Questions 1/4 - Local school RE leads need to meet - use the old Thurrock Secondary School meetings once a term.
- Question 5 (Primary) - It was good to see Reception and EYFS accessing the Thurrock Agreed Syllabus to deliver RE
- Question 5 (Primary) - It was nice to see that the majority of schools are dedicating a minimum of an hour to RE which shows that it is a valued subject.
- Question 5 (Primary) - I can see consistency in the approach towards the delivery of RE in our Trust schools
- Question 5 (Secondary) – Do the very low curriculum times (1-30 mins) provide enough time to deliver the Thurrock Agreed Syllabus?
- Question 5 (Secondary) - Some schools are not providing the statutory minimum (EITHER a core entitlement OR an exam course) at KS4
- Question 5 (Secondary) - 5 out of 12 responses indicate that the statutory minimum is not being met.
- Questions 6-9 - The majority of responders are using Agreed Syllabus either partly or fully which demonstrates its worth and ensures children get a varied and lawful curriculum.
- Questions 6-9 - There appears to be a reliance on PPA and supply teachers teaching RE. Quality and importance may be an issue?

- Question 10 - 73% said Yes or mostly to resource allocation.
- Question 10 - Mostly teachers say they have enough resources, though this may show that people have low expectations.
- Question 11 - 2/3s have or will have visited a place of worship. Great!
- Question 11 - I wonder if people have got out of the habit of visiting due to covid.
- Question 12 - 36% of subject leaders have 5+ years and 25% of subject leaders are brand new.
- Question 12 – In light of this observed distribution, how do we ensure experienced subject leads support newer colleagues?

RESOLVED that SACRE:

- 1 Notes the survey report in Appendix 1,**
- 2 Requests the LA officer to include the following information in conversations with schools where relevant:**
 - **Where good practice is identified.**
 - **Where there is no evidence that the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus are met.**
 - **Where there are reports of limited or no provision.**

22. Census 2021 and its implications for SACRE

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education presented the report detailed at pages 49 to 62 of the agenda.

During discussions it was highlighted that SACRE had vacancies which required filling, these were for Committee A – Faith Groups Muslim Representative, Hindu Representative, Buddhist Representative and Free Church Representative.

Members discussed the possibility of having smaller religious groups represented on SACRE in light of the census results for Thurrock. It was noted that there were very few self-identifying Humanists in Thurrock, but the number of self-identifying Pagans (broadly defined) significant exceeds the national average. It was noted that SACRE had previously resolved to adopt the following guidelines when considering adding representatives of smaller religions and beliefs to Committee A:

In order to nominate a representative to Thurrock SACRE, a religion or belief should have:

- a) A minimum of 500 self-identified adherents (0.3%) in the Thurrock area;*
- b) A recognisable local group meeting regularly within the Thurrock area;*
- c) A representative organisation capable of providing nominations which is willing to confirm its acceptance of and support for the aims and objectives of Thurrock SACRE.*

It was agreed by Members to request that the Associate Advisor for Religious Education reach out to the Pagan Federation to ask whether there is a Pagan faith community meeting in Thurrock which SACRE would be able to contact to explore opportunities for further engagement.

RESOLVED that SACRE:

- 1 Notes the data from the census as it applies to Thurrock.**
- 2 Will contact local Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and Free Church groups to seek new SACRE representatives.**
- 3 Requests that the Associate Advisor for Religious Education reach out to the Pagan Federation to ask whether there is a Pagan faith community meeting in Thurrock which SACRE would be able to contact to explore opportunities for further engagement**

23. Annual Report 2021-2022 Thurrock SACRE

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education introduced the report found at pages 63 to 84 of the agenda. It that in order for SACRE to fulfil its statutory duty, they were to publish an Annual Report and to advise the Local Authority on RE given in accordance with the agreed syllabus.

The Chair of SACRE commented that in previous years the report had been presented to elected Members at Full Council and sought if any of the Councillors present would be happy to do so this year. Councillor Abbas confirmed he was happy to liaise with Democratic Services to have the Annual Report presented at the next available Full Council Meeting.

RESOLVED that SACRE:

- 1 Accepts this report as an accurate record of its work for the period September 2021 – July 2022**
- 2 Requests that the Assistant Director Education and Skills continues to include discussions about RE provision in the scheduled discussions with senior leadership teams**
- 3 Requests that the school effectiveness team include a review of schools' provision for RE and Collective Worship as part of their annual conversations. Specifically, that they consider:**
 - whether the level and quality of provision in academy schools is similar in breadth and ambition to that provided in LA maintained schools (i.e. through compliance with the Thurrock Agreed Syllabus including the knowledge, understanding specified and the standards for each key stage). This is the expectation of the DfE and Ofsted.**

- If timetabling of RE in secondary schools ensures that those delivering RE are suitably trained/qualified to do so.
- Whether RE is treated differently from other subjects on the secondary curriculum, such as being offered in tutor time, drop down days, taught by teachers who mainly teach other subjects etc.
- the impact on pupil outcomes of the combination of subjects such as RE, RSE, Citizenship and PSHE.
- the level of training provided to those teaching RE in all phases especially when they have no previous experience of teaching the subject.
- the impact on pupil attainment of pupils being entered for a GCSE at the end of year 10.

24. Any Other Business

Members agreed that the June/July 2023 meeting will be held as a hybrid meeting (in person and online).

The meeting finished at 8.06 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