

Thurrock - An ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future

## Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

The meeting will be held at **6.30 pm** on **2 October 2024**

This meeting will take place via Microsoft Teams

### Group A:

Miss R Saul, Diocese of Brentwood, Roman Catholic Member  
Ms H Kaur Takhtar, Sikh Member  
Mr T Ojetola, Pentecostal Member  
Mr L Trup, Jewish Member  
Revd David R Coaker, Grays United Reformed Church Member  
Ms A Sharma, Hindu Member  
Mr R Badaloo, Muslim Member  
X3 Vacancies

### Group B:

Mr P Anderson, Church of England Member  
Mrs L Fry, Church of England Member  
Ms L Olajide, Church of England Member  
Mrs R Everett, Church of England Member

### Group C:

Ms J Culloty, Teachers' Associations  
Ms A Thompson, Teachers' Associations  
Mrs C Pumfrey, Teachers' Associations  
Ms R Shina, Teachers' Associations  
X2 Vacancies

### Group D:

Councillor Qaisar Abbas, Local Authority  
Councillor Daniel Chukwu, Local Authority  
Councillor Kairen Raper, Local Authority

## Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education meeting held 17 January 2024.	

### **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 Appointment of Chair**

### **6 Appointment of Vice Chair**

### **7 Membership Criteria for SACRE Group A 9 - 14**

### **8 Work Plan 2024-2025 15 - 22**

### **9 National Update 23 - 30**

### **10 Any other business**

#### **Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:**

Please contact Jenny Shade, Principal Democratic Services Officer by sending an email to [Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk)

Agenda published on: **20 September 2024**

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- You should connect to TBC-GUEST
- Enter the password Thurrock to connect to/join the Wi-Fi network.
- A Terms & Conditions page should appear and you have to accept these before you can begin using Wi-Fi. Some devices require you to access your browser to bring up the Terms & Conditions page, which you must accept.

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Members of the Council should ensure that their device is sufficiently charged, although a limited number of charging points will be available in Members Services.

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- Access the modern.gov app
- Enter your username and password

# 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

### Non-pecuniary

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

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.



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

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.

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## Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education held on 17 January 2024 at 6.30 pm

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<b>Present:</b>	Committee A – Mr L Trup, Jewish Member Reverend David Coaker
	Committee B – Mr P Anderson, Church of England Member Mrs R Everett, Church of England Member
	Committee C – Ms J Culloty, Teachers' Associations Ms Sarah Barlow
	Committee D – Councillors Qaisar Abbas, Daniel Chukwu and James Thandi
	Tunde Ojetola
<b>Apologies:</b>	Miss R Saul, Diocese of Brentwood, Roman Catholic Member Ms H Kaur Takhtar, Sikh Member Ms A Thompson, Teachers' Associations Mrs C Pumfrey, Teachers' Associations
<b>In attendance:</b>	Deborah Weston, Associate Adviser for Religious Education Andrea Winstone - Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness and SEND Yasmine Pieri, NIoT@Harris Initial Teacher Education Jenny Shade, Principal Democratic Services Officer

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### 32. Minutes

Members were taken through the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education minutes from the 12 September 2023 to which members approved as a correct record.

The clerk to add in the resolved recommendations into the 1 November 2023 minutes and republish.

Following this change the minutes of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education meeting held on the 1 November 2023 were approved a correct record.

Andrea Winstone provided an update on her action point from any other business in regard to the monitoring of awareness any impact the Israel/Gaza was having on community relations within Thurrock. The community safety team had been contacted and had not heard of anything of any significance

and that she was planning on meeting the police, hate crime commissioner on a regular basis. Once the first meeting had been arranged she would report back to committee.

Ruth Everett provided members with an overview of the schools and education “Together for Humanity”.

### **33. Items of Urgent Business**

There were no urgent items of business.

### **34. Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

### **35. Teacher Recruitment, Retention and Training - Verbal Update**

Yasmine Pieri provided members with a PowerPoint that covered the following subjects:

- An introduction to the Initial Teacher Education.
- What was the National Institute of Teaching.
- What the benefits were of training with the National Institute of Teaching.
- Course overview.
- Support provided.
- Course length, funding and eligibility.
- Bursaries that are available.
- The application process.

The slides can be viewed from the following link:

[democracy.thurrock.gov.uk/documents/b20031/NIoT ITE Information webinar 2024-25 cohort 17th-Jan-2024 18.30 Standing Advisory Council on Relig.pdf?T=9](https://democracy.thurrock.gov.uk/documents/b20031/NIoT ITE Information webinar 2024-25 cohort 17th-Jan-2024 18.30 Standing Advisory Council on Relig.pdf?T=9)

The following points were raised:

- Councillor Chukwu questioned the success rate, of which there was a 70% success rate from interview to offer and offer to acceptance was 72%.
- Currently there were 60 people on the course for secondary across all subjects.
- With 36 trainees accepted onto the course ready to start in September 2024.
- Councillor Abbas referred to costings and questioned whether this was a factor due to the shortage of teachers and questioned how members could help to promote. Yasmine Pieri agreed to send flyers, posters and social media content that members could use. ACTION – Yasmine Pieri to send out.



- Deborah Weston stated Thurrock had one of the highest rejection rates for people coming onto teacher training which she had raised with higher education institution colleagues.
- Yasmine Pieri asked members to let her know of any degrees that may have been overlooked or obscure items.
- Tunde Ojetola questioned whether there was any specific data on the number of joiners, leavers and gender to which Andrea Winstone stated the workforce surveys were undertaken by schools. ACTION – Deborah Weston to investigate the DFE statistics site for a local authority or regional breakdown.
- Councillor Thandi stated that religious education at schools was not taken quite so seriously as it had in the past and questioned what the average time was allocated to children to have religious education studies. Deborah Weston stated the recommendation was about 5% of the curriculum time, just over an hour for key stages 1 and 2 and around an hour in key stages 3 and 4. Thurrock was lowest in the country.
- Members agreed to add an item on the agenda on a discussion on how to get positive stories out to residents.

*Sarah Barlow left the meeting at 7.15pm*

### **36. Annual Report 2022-2023 Thurrock SACRE**

The Annual Report was presented to members for approval. The following points were raised:

- Members welcomed and accepted the report.
- Councillor Abbas referred to the GCSE intake and how Thurrock had fallen from to 100 out of the 151 on the league table and this was matter of concern. Deborah Weston stated that during this academic year Thurrock had fallen to the bottom of the table.
- Members acknowledged those schools that had done well and agreed for the chair to write to those schools to congratulate them. ACTION – Phil Anderson
- Louis Trup questioned whether comparison data was available as to whether for those students going through GCSEs in school of religious character that then we are likely to be lowered down the list compared to local authorities that have a higher percentage of children going through GCSEs in a school of religious character. Deborah Weston agreed to look at this data but stated she thought this would not make that much difference in the ranking. ACTION – Deborah Weston to collate data.
- Andrea Winstone stated there could be reasons why religious education was not being taught at the moment even though it should be. This could be the lack of teachers to teach that subject.
- Andrea Winstone stated to be mindful of those schools who were in trouble and not to add additional pressure, to be there to encourage and support them where possible.
- Deborah Weston noted the new entries of those schools provided the religious education provision.

- Andrea Winstone stated there were schools who did not offer GCSE and those should be encouraged to offer the subject.
- Tunda Ojetola suggested the material being sent by Yasmine Pieri be circulated to schools.
- Louis Trup commended the chair, Phil Anderson, for his foreword of the report.
- Deborah Weston thanked members for their comments and stated once the report had been approved it would be sent to the DfE Minister, add to the website, sent to schools and to the National Association of SACRE for publication on to their website.
- Councillor Chukwu abstained from the vote as he had not had an opportunity to read the report.

### **37. The REC's National Content Standards for RE (2023)**

The report presented was that the National Content Standard (NCS) for RE was published by the Religious Education Council of England and Wales in October 2023. The NCS was a non-statutory document that aims to provide a benchmark for high quality RE in the style of a National Curriculum Programme of Study.

*Phil Anderson arrived at the meeting at 7.47pm  
Jacqui Culloty left the meeting at 7.48pm*

Members discussed the appendix and in particular the exemplar of content that would meet this standard. Members agreed to defer the report recommendation until further information was provided and would discuss at the next meeting.

ACTION - Deborah Weston agreed to explore further in personal worldviews and report back at the next committee.

### **38. Any other business**

No other business was discussed.

**The meeting finished at 8.02 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](mailto:Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk)

<b>2 October 2024</b>	<b>ITEM: 7</b>
<b>Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education</b>	
<b>Membership criteria for SACRE Group A</b>	
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Non-Key
<b>Report of:</b> Associate Adviser for Religious Education	
<b>Accountable Head of Service:</b> Michele Lucas, Assistant Director Education and Children’s Commissioning	
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Sheila Murphy, Executive Director of Children’s Services	
<b>This report is Public</b>	

## Executive Summary

This report proposes a revision of the criteria for membership of Group A to be recommended to the council.

### 1. Recommendation(s) that SACRE:

#### 1.1 Advise the Council to adopt the following criteria for the identification of the appropriate groups to be included in Group A.

### Proposed criteria

Based on the above advice, it is proposed that the following criteria should be adopted as the basis for making appointments to Group A of Thurrock SACRE:

	Criterion	Indicators
1	Suitability of the religion or belief to be represented on SACRE.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cogency: the belief systems is compelling and persuasive in nature.</li> <li>• Seriousness: the belief system is earnest and sincere in character and possesses gravitas.</li> <li>• Cohesion: the belief system and its adherents are integrated and unified (organisationally and/or conceptually).</li> <li>• Importance: the belief system is of significance and standing in society.</li> <li>• The belief system is widely represented on other SACREs or is otherwise recognised by similar statutory bodies.</li> </ul>

2	Reflects the principal religious traditions of Thurrock and their proportionate strength.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 0.3% of Thurrock residents (~500) self-identify as adherents of the religion or belief system in census data and/or other demographic data.</li> <li>• Membership or attendance records show the presence of a local community of faith or belief of proportionate size to the other principal religious and non-religious traditions in Thurrock.</li> <li>• There is an active and locally engaged presence of recognised leaders, teachers, clergy, celebrants, or similar individuals present in Thurrock.</li> </ul>
3	Availability of a suitable representative.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proposed individual is able to represent the religion or belief by virtue of their knowledge and experience.</li> <li>• The proposed individual holds a position of responsibility within the religion or belief.</li> <li>• A representative organisation exists which is capable of providing a nomination and vouching for the suitability of the individual.</li> <li>• The proposed individual understands and accepts the aims and objectives of Thurrock SACRE.</li> </ul>

The criteria should be considered in the order shown. So, for example, if it is determined that the religion or belief is not suitable to be represented on a SACRE (criterion 1) it is not necessary to consider the other criteria.

The indicators should be used to aid an assessment of whether the criterion is met, but none of them are to be regarded as prescriptive in and of themselves. The fact that a particular indicator is not met does not automatically mean that an appointment should not be made. Each case should be considered on overall merit when determining whether SACRE should advise the Local Authority to make an appointment.

## **2. Introduction and Background**

### **2.1 Background**

Thurrock SACRE last considered criteria for membership of Group A (representatives of religions other than the Church of England) in July 2014. At that time SACRE agreed a set of criteria to determine whether a representative of any particular religion or belief should be invited to join Group A. The criteria agreed were:

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.

There have been no significant changes to the relevant legislation since 2014. There have however been legal cases which have clarified how the law should be interpreted and applied. There have also been ongoing demographic changes within the Borough of Thurrock, evidenced by the 2021 Census which was considered by SACRE in January 2023, which continue to affect the local 'landscape' of religion and belief. With these changes in mind, it is now considered appropriate to review the criteria for membership of Group A to ensure that they remain current and relevant.

## 2.2 Legal Advice

The Chair of SACRE and the RE Advisor received legal advice from Daniel Longe of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Legal Services team on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024. The main points of advice were as follows:

- The decision to appoint members to SACRE is made by the Local Authority. SACRE may provide advice or recommendations to the Authority in this regard.
- The membership of SACRE should reflect the principle religious traditions in the area, and their proportionate strength [Education Act sections 390(4)(a) and 390(6)].
- Non-religious beliefs may be represented on SACRE if they are 'analogous to a religious belief'. The test for this is one of 'cogency, seriousness, cohesion, and importance' [Case law, *Bowen vs Kent Council*].
- The appointee to SACRE must represent the belief system [Education Act section 392].
- It would be *Wednesbury Unreasonable*<sup>1</sup> for a Local Authority to fetter its discretion in regard to appointments. Rules should be clear, but they must leave room for exceptions and for decisions to be made on a case-by-case basis.
- Application of principles such as proportionality must be consistent with the efficient discharge of the functions of the group.
- If the above principles are followed, the Local Authority is free to make its own decisions regarding appointments and challenges to this would be very unlikely to succeed.

As a local authority, Thurrock is required by law to have a Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE). The origins of SACREs go back to the Education Act of 1944 and were strengthened their place in local authorities

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### <sup>1</sup> **Wednesbury unreasonableness**

A standard of unreasonableness used in assessing an application for [judicial review](#) of a public authority's decision. A reasoning or decision is *Wednesbury unreasonable* (or irrational) if it is so unreasonable that no reasonable person acting reasonably could have made it (*Associated Provincial Picture Houses Ltd v Wednesbury Corporation (1948) 1 KB 223*). The test is a different (and stricter) test than merely showing that the decision was unreasonable. Source: [Thomson Reuters Practical Law](#)

by the Education Reform Act 1988 and the Education Act 1996. The responsibilities of the SACRE are to:

- Provide advice to the Council on all aspects of its provision for religious education (RE) in its schools (not including voluntary aided schools).
- Decide whether the Council's agreed syllabus for RE needs to be reviewed and to ensure we do so.
- Provide advice to the Council on collective worship in its schools (not including voluntary aided or voluntary controlled schools).
- Consider any requests from headteachers to hold collective worship that is not of a broadly Christian character.
- Advise on matters relating to training for teachers in RE and collective worship.

### **3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options**

Members are requested to accept, amend or reject the recommendations of this report

### **4. Reasons for Recommendation**

(a) The legal advice provided to us makes clear that it is appropriate for SACRE to advise the council in this way.

(b) The 2021 census provides evidence that the proportion of people who identify with named religious and non-religious beliefs is changing over time, both nationally and locally

### **5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)**

Not applicable

### **6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact**

- 6.1 One of the responsibilities of Thurrock Council is to comply with [the Equalities Duty](#). This duty includes religion and belief as one of the 'protected characteristics' listed in the Equality Act 2010. The recommendation in this report focuses on ensuring that people with different religious and non-religious beliefs are treated fairly.

## **7. Implications**

### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **David May**  
**Head of Finance**

There are no financial implications for this report. The annual budget for the work of SACRE is funded through the Dedicated Schools Grant.

### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Georgina Foster**  
**Legal**

See section entitled Legal Advice on the previous page The advice above is ratified by Legal as of 17.09.2024.

### **7.3 Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Becky Lee**  
**Team Manager, Community Development and Equalities**

This report includes advice to the council on updating the membership of SACRE to ensure that it appropriate reflects the diversity of the area. It also considers legal advice on ensuring that people with different religious and non-religious beliefs are treated fairly.

### **7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder and Looked After Children**

Not applicable.

#### **Report Author:**

Deborah Weston, OBE

Associate Adviser for RE

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<b>2 October 2024</b>		<b>ITEM: 8</b>
<b>Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education</b>		
<b>Work Plan 2024-2025</b>		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Non-Key	
<b>Report of:</b> Associate Adviser for Religious Education		
<b>Accountable Assistant Director:</b> Michele Lucas, Assistant Director Education and Children's Commissioning		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Sheila Murphy, Executive Director of Children's Services		
<b>This report is Public</b>		

## Executive Summary

The work plan for SACRE in 2023-24 was agreed at the Autumn Term meeting in 2023. This report proposes a review of that plan and some suggestions for 2024-25

### 1. Recommendation(s) that SACRE:

#### 1.1 Review the workplan for 2023-24 and consider recommendations for work in 2024-25

### 2. Introduction and Background

2.1 This workplan sets out a list of objectives for SACRE based on the responsibilities for SACRE described in the non-statutory guidance – Religious education (RE) and collective worship in academies and free schools published 18 December 2012. For each of these responsibilities, there follows a set of actions and success criteria.

### 3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 The scope of work plan must take account of the current SACRE budget which comes from the CSSB (central schools services block) of funding which is allocated to each local authority.

3.2 National and local developments in RE or in education more generally may require SACRE to edit the plan during the year.

### 4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 A well designed workplan specifies objectives for a **committee**, actions to meet the objective, criteria to evaluate the success of the actions and timelines for completion of the goals.

**5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)**

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.

6.2 This exercise falls under all three elements of this programme.

**7. Implications**

**7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **David May**  
**Head of Finance**

There are no financial implications to this report since the actions recommended in this report, if approved will be conducted by the Associate RE Adviser as part of her work.

**7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Georgina Foster**  
**Legal**

The legal duties on the advisory council are set out in section 391 Education Act 1996. The main one is to advise the local authority on such matters connected with the religious worship in community schools or in foundation schools which do not have a religious character and the religious education to be given in accordance with an agreed or other syllabus as the authority may refer to the council or as the council may see fit.

As a local authority, Thurrock Council is required by law to have a Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE). The origins of SACREs go back to the Education Act of 1944 and were strengthened their place in

local authorities by the Education Reform Act 1988 and the Education Act 1996. The responsibilities of the SACRE are to:

- Provide advice to the Council on all aspects of its provision for religious education (RE) in its schools (not including voluntary aided schools).
- Decide whether the Council's agreed syllabus for RE needs to be reviewed and to ensure we do so.
- Provide advice to the Council on collective worship in its schools (not including voluntary aided or voluntary controlled schools).
- Consider any requests from headteachers to hold collective worship that is not of a broadly Christian character.
- Advise on matters relating to training for teachers in RE and collective worship.

This report asks that the workplan is reviewed and recommendations are considered. No other decision is required.

### 7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Becky Lee**

**Team Manager, Community Development and Equalities**

SACRE will continue to dedicate time for the discussion of the way in which religious education can help improve the level of community cohesion in Thurrock. The Agreed Syllabus is specific about the expected outcomes of teaching of religious education in this respect. The teaching of RE should help schools to fulfil their statutory duty to promote community cohesion and to encourage better respect and tolerance for those with different religions and beliefs.

### 7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder and Looked After Children

Not applicable.

### **Report Author:**

Deborah Weston, OBE

Associate Adviser for RE



Engage with local schools and Academy Trusts to understand how Religious Education and Collective Worship are provided in Thurrock	<p>Arrange visits to schools to gather information about the use of the Agreed Syllabus 2022-27</p> <p>Publicise the RE Quality Mark and encourage schools to share their submissions with SACRE as a means of self-evaluation</p> <p>Members to hold discussions with subject leaders using prepared template</p>	(SACRE members at least one per year)	Up to 4 school visits - 2 per term Suggested schedule	Meaningful evaluation visits or discussion completed, and reports discussed at SACRE meetings.
Provide information on the RE curriculum to schools including through training	<p>Update a mailing list for RE leads in primary and secondary schools to facilitate briefings.</p> <p>Update schools on current developments in RE (NATRE and other material requested by SACRE)</p>	<p>Adviser</p> <p>Adviser and RE Today</p>	<p>Termly</p> <p>Annually -Summer Term subject to funding</p>	<p>Schools in receipt of material</p> <p>Teachers respond to material received</p> <p>Teachers raise questions to the adviser</p>
Monitor provision for RE and Collective Worship	<p>Source and present national and local data as follows:</p> <p>GCSE validated and unvalidated results and entries (local and national)</p> <p>School workforce data (local and national)</p> <p>Surveys of provision and of issues such as withdrawal, use of agreed syllabus, who teaches RE etc (local)</p> <p>Review school websites</p> <p>Write to schools about findings</p> <p>Sample collective worship policies</p>	<p>Adviser</p> <p>All SACRE members</p> <p>LA representative</p>	Annually	<p>LA respond to advice offered on strengths of RE and collective worship, and areas in need of development</p> <p>Schools respond to feedback on their websites and policies</p>
Evaluate SACRE work and establish priorities	Item at autumn term meeting	All SACRE members	Autumn term meeting	Evaluation identified success criteria are met

<b>Schedule 2024/25</b>		
<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Objective (note – objectives 1 and 2 apply to all meetings)</b>
<b>Autumn 2024</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National developments - update</li> <li>• Review of membership and attendance (including review of membership criteria)</li> <li>• Evaluation of work plan 2023-24</li> <li>• Agreement of workplan for 2024-25</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6</li> <li>• 7</li> <li>• 2</li> <li>• 6</li> <li>• 4</li> </ul>
<b>Spring 2025</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring provision via school workforce data and GCSE and A level results (if available)</li> <li>• Annual report approval/ using new template</li> <li>• Relationships e.g: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Schools and Academies</li> <li>○ Teaching School Hubs</li> <li>○ the Council</li> <li>○ Governors</li> <li>○ Communities of religion and belief</li> <li>○ Thurrock work on Community Integration</li> <li>○ NASACRE</li> <li>○ Youth Cabinet</li> <li>○ Regional Schools Commissioners</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6</li> <li>• 3</li> <li>• 4+5</li> </ul>
<b>Summer 2025</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standards and Achievements in RE in schools</li> <li>• Review of SACRE website</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6</li> <li>• 6</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of Collective Worship and right of withdrawal</li><li>• Ofsted Framework on RE – latest reports</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 6</li><li>• 5</li><li>• 4</li></ul>
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## National RE Updates for SACRE from RE Today Autumn 2024 for Thurrock SACRE

### Calls for a National Plan for Religious Education

The number of students taking full course Religious Studies in England and Wales at GCSE has remained stable at 233,288 following a 0.5% rise in entries from 2023 making it one of the most widely studied humanities at GCSE.

223,034 students took RS GCSE (full course) in England, an increase of 0.3%. In Wales 10,254 students took the subject, an increase of 6.4%. For the third year running, the number of students taking a GCSE short course rose in England, this year by 9.5% to 20,627. In Wales however, entries fell by 27.1% to 2,201.

This is despite an ongoing challenge in recruiting specialist teachers amidst a gulf in government funding. Recruitment targets were missed in 11 of the last 12 years during which time school workforce data show that 51% of those teaching RE mainly teach another subject and also that the number of teachers of RE has remained roughly the same since 2011, despite the number of entries growing.

The Religious Education Council of England and Wales (REC) and the National Association for Teachers of RE (NATRE) have now called on the new Education Secretary, Bridget Phillipson MP, to introduce a National Plan for RE that provides a fair allocation of resources and prioritises the subject as part of Labour's plans to recruit more specialist teachers.

RE has recently seen a restoration of the teacher training bursary, but a shortage of specialism in schools remains a challenge given the long-term growth of the subject. The number of those recorded as teaching RE has remained roughly the same since 2011 at 16,200, while those delivering Geography and History lessons has risen by 1,700.

### A Level Religious Studies steady in England but a decrease in Wales

The overall trend in A level entries for Religious Studies over the last 5 years has been steeply downward in Wales but fairly stable in England.

Since 2020 entries in Wales have fallen by 37% from 1126 to 702. During the same period, entries in England, remained fairly stable with a fall of just under 0.5% from 14,564 to 14,499.

Even though the trend for entries in England is downwards, this is within a context where most Humanities subjects have experienced a fall in entries and most science, technology, engineering and maths subjects have seen an increase. It is worth noting that financial incentives for schools will have boosted these entries including the advanced maths premium scheme and a number of schemes established to boost science learning in schools.

Of the Humanities, Religious Studies in England was one of the smallest decreases between 2023 and 2024 at 1.3%

## RE Teaching in English Secondary Schools

The school workforce data is sourced from the annual school census which is submitted by schools in England to the DfE in November. Not every school completes the census each year however the data demonstrates who teaches RE in schools.

44% of teachers of RE have a post A Level qualification in the subject, compared to 80.3% for English, 76.6% for mathematics and 78.5% for History.

There has been an increase in the number of teachers of the other humanities subjects, history and geography between 2011 and 2023, however, the number of teachers of RE has remained static in the same period.

In response to a parliamentary question about how many RE lessons were taught by a teacher with another specialism, 51% of RE lessons were taught by teachers with another specialism, compared to 27% for history and 28% for geography.

## Interfaith Week 2024

**Interfaith Week** will be taking place from 10th – 17th November 2024.

A consortium of organisations, former members of the IFN, are working in partnership to ensure that the week can run this year. Further partners will be engaging as the week becomes nearer and more detail will be available in the autumn term. In the meantime, colleagues from the consortium suggest schools and SACREs plan to raise the profile and celebrate the importance of Interfaith dialogue. The suggested theme educational establishments might use is ‘sharing my story – building our future’.

Further information can be seen [here](#).

## Religious Studies remains a popular GCSE despite specialist teacher recruitment challenge

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This is despite an ongoing challenge in recruiting specialist teachers amidst a gulf in government funding. Recruitment targets were missed in 11 of the last 12 years during which time school workforce data show that 51% of those teaching RE mainly teach another subject and also that the number of teachers of RE has remained roughly the same since 2011, despite the number of entries growing.

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RE has recently seen a restoration of the teacher training bursary, but a shortage of specialism in schools remains a challenge given the long-term growth of the subject. The number of those recorded as teaching RE has remained roughly the same since 2011 at 16,200, while those delivering Geography and History lessons has risen by 1,700.

Deborah Weston OBE, Chair of the RE Policy Unit, said:

“Poor quality, tokenistic RE taught by non-specialists without subject training, has a knock-on effect on not just our communities, but the depth and quality of a young person’s education. Properly taught, GCSE RS provides invaluable academic and life skills that enables young people to think meaningfully about life’s big questions in relation to their own beliefs and those of others. On average, pupils studying the subject at GCSE do significantly better on the Attainment 8 school performance measure, with disadvantaged pupils scoring a full 9 points higher than those who do not take GCSE RS. “If the Labour government is serious about breaking down barriers to opportunities, a national plan for RE that provides a fairer allocation of resources is vital. It would build on the brilliant RE practice that already exists, deliver a new generation of specialist teachers and ensure all students receive their entitlement to an academically rigorous programme of RE.”

Katie Freeman, Chair of the National Association for Teachers of RE (NATRE), said:

“These results are a testament to the incredible hard work of RE teachers up and down the country. RE teachers are a vital asset to their schools, their community, and most importantly the young people who they inspire and educate.” But with the burden growing on specialist RE teachers, there is a limit to what the teaching community can do. To safeguard the subject and its future, the new Labour government must provide a fairer allocation of resources to the subject, prioritise RE in its plans to recruit specialist teachers, and give young people the head start in life they deserve.”

Sarah Lane Cawte, Chair of the REC, said:

“Now is the time for action to safeguard the subject and meet the demand for high-quality RE in our schools and communities. The Religious Education Council recently launched a suite of resources including a National Content Standard, advocating a contemporary approach to the subject and offering a benchmark of quality to help schools deliver academic, personally enriching, and inspiring RE. A national plan would support schools in rolling this out, extend the teacher training bursary, and deliver ongoing specialist support to existing and aspiring teachers.”

## **OCR Review – Striking the Balance: A Review of 11 – 16 curriculum and assessment in England**

Oxford, Cambridge and RSA have published a report into the content of the curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 and the role and form of assessment including SATs and GCSE qualifications. The review was chaired by Charles Clarke and draws focus to four key areas

- Reducing the assessment burden
- Digital assessment and learning
- English and maths at 11–16

– Curriculum evolution at 11–16

The research was undertaken with over 2000 teachers and students at a variety of events as well as working with education specialists to draw the conclusions for each of the four areas.

Commentary in the section of the report on curriculum evolution points to an over-crowded curriculum in which some subjects have been overlooked due to a focus on EBacc subjects, there is reference not only to the creative subject, but also physical education and the following comment is made in relation to religious education

*‘Another important aspect of the evolution of the curriculum is the teaching of religion and belief in schools. This remains a statutory requirement often honoured, outside faith schools, in the breach rather than the observance.’ – page 74*

It is made clear in the report that although it is not necessary for all pupils in a school to follow the subjects contained within the EBacc there is a strong move within schools for pupils to study these as EBacc uptake is an accountability measure of school performance. The review calls for an independent curriculum authority to oversee the changes to the sector and to ease the examination burdens placed on students in Year 11 through a wholesale review of the processes and purposes of assessment in the education sector.

A copy of the review can be found here: [717919-striking-the-balance.pdf \(ocr.org.uk\)](#)

## RExChange

RExChange is being held on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> October as an online conference which is free to attend. A wide variety of sessions are available covering all aspects of RE, including, What do we mean by knowledge in RE with Trevor Cooling, Teaching of religious attitudes to same sex relationships with Helena Moore and the religion and worldviews approach and handbook with Stephen Pett and Gillian Georgiou.

Follow this link to request a place [RExChange 2024 Registration - RE:ONLINE \(reonline.org.uk\)](#)

## Open University Religion, Belief and Worldviews Hub

The Open University Religion, Belief and Worldviews Hub can be accessed by all interested parties [Religion, belief and worldviews hub | OpenLearn - Open University](#). The Hub provides resources for schools and educational settings to support the delivery of RE in classrooms from Early Years through to post 16 education. The focus of the Hub is ‘Religion and Belief’ as a protected characteristic in UK legislation. Materials on the Hub have been provided by colleagues from The Open University, with classroom resources and online CPD opportunities for leaders and teachers of RE.

## Strictly RE 2025

The annual NATRE conference for all RE professionals returns on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2025 and will be face to face following recent online conferences. This has become the annual date in the diaries of those within RE and will be held at Leonardo Hotel in Birmingham. Click on the link to register interest in attending Strictly RE 2025. [NATRE Strictly RE 2025: National Religious Education Conference](#)

## NASACRE News

### Webinar Programme

The next in the series of NASACRE's training has been announced for the Autumn Term 2024.

**24th September 2024, 6:30-8pm:** So, you've joined your local SACRE... Free session for any SACREs to attend specifically for new members of SACRE

**3rd October 2024, 7-8pm:** Funding for SACREs to work with pupils in RE - applying for and gaining a Westhill/NASACRE award Free session for any SACRE to attend

**17th October 2024, 7-8pm:** How can SACREs make strategic use of the Deep & Meaningful Ofsted RE Report (May 2024) in their work? Free to SACREs who have bought the annual webinar package; £25 for a subscribed SACRE and £35 for a non-subscribed SACRE

## The Ethics Cup

Saint Andrew's University are offering secondary schools the opportunity to participate in The Ethics Cup. Unlike traditional debating tournaments, pupils are asked to prepare to simply discuss a particular case with the other competing teams on the day of competition. The cases are not presented in a resolution format, there is no requirement for the teams to disagree with each other, and the competition is not won by proving the other team wrong. Each team is instead asked to craft its own position with as much nuance as judged appropriate. It is a collaborative discussion with a panel of three judges awarding points for insight, thoughtfulness, and civility. This allows the pupils to put forward their own genuine beliefs, formed through prolonged thought and investigation, rather than a constructed polemic prescribed by the competition.

Schools can access information about The Ethics Cup here [The Ethics Cup – University of St Andrews Centre for Ethics, Philosophy and Public Affairs \(st-andrews.ac.uk\)](https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/centre-for-ethics-philosophy-and-public-affairs/)

## New Director for the National Association of Teachers of RE

After over a decade of dedicated service to NATRE as CEO, Fiona Moss has taken a new position at Culham St Gabriel's Trust (CSTG) as Education and Programmes Manager. Fiona has made significant contributions to NATRE and the world of RE during her time as CEO, whether it be lobbying political parties and government through to enabling the high-quality resources delivered by the NATRE Executive for its members.

Katie Freeman, the Chair of NATRE expressed these sentiments

*All of us at NATRE would like to congratulate our wonderful Fiona Moss on her new role at CSTG. Fiona is a Powerhouse of RE and so many of us have stories about how she has inspired and supported us in our journeys within the RE community. Quite honestly NATRE won't be the same without her but we know that she will continue her important work in her new role and will be a vital part of the new CSTG team. She will be hugely missed but we look forward to continuing to work with her in new ways. Congratulations Fiona on your new role and thank you for all that you have done for NATRE members past and present!*

Angela Hill, National RE Adviser and Editor of RE Today magazine has now taken over the role as Director of NATRE following Fiona's departure. Angela commented stated

*I am honoured to take on the role at such a pivotal time for the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education. I look forward to working with the newly formed NATRE executive team to continue advancing the vital work of supporting and empowering all teachers, teaching the subject. Together, we will build on the strong foundation laid by Fiona and strive to create even greater opportunities for all teachers of religious education.*

In welcoming Angela to her new role, Katie Freeman stated

*NATRE are excited to welcome Angela Hill to her role working with and supporting the executive. Angela knows NATRE well as she has been working with us in her role as RE today's editor and we are looking forward to working with her more closely. She is a talented and knowledgeable adviser who will be able to support us with our existing projects as well as planning new ones. Congratulations Angela on your new role, we are so excited to see you develop your new role and we can't wait to work with you.*

## Upcoming RE Today Courses for the Autumn Term

For more details on any of these courses, click here: <https://www.natre.org.uk/courses-events/upcoming-courses-events/?page=1>

### PRIMARY PHASE

#### RE Today Roadshow with Lat Blaylock



#### RE Today Roadshow (South – Reading – 18th October 2024) – Lat Blaylock and Ian Nicholson

This face-to-face CPD event will focus on 'Challenge and Inspiration in RE', including religious and non-religious worldviews, diverse teaching methods, and the latest Ofsted requirements.

#### Festival Spotlight: Christmas – Julia Diamond-Conway

**08/10/2024**

Why and how do people celebrate Christmas. Subject knowledge and effective lesson ideas. A practical dip into Christmas using a sociological and a theological lens. Suitable for ECTs, Teachers, HLTAs and subject leaders.

#### cREative primary RE – Julia Diamond-Conway

**20/11/2024**

How can I ensure children are engaged in RE lessons? What strategies can I use to make sure pupils are inspired during RE? This session is packed full of ready-to-use ideas for anyone who

wants to engage pupils more fully in RE sessions. There will be a focus on the Spirited Arts competition 2024. Perfect for all primary practitioners who teach RE including Early Career Teachers, Subject Leaders and Teaching Assistants; with a wide range of practical classroom ideas for primary RE, there is sure to be something for everyone.

### **Primary - Understanding Christianity**

**11/11/2024**

Get the confidence and subject knowledge to teach about Christianity: Text Impact Connections through this tried and tested course which is supported by a substantial whole school teachers handbook. Many locally agreed syllabuses include requirements for teaching Christianity that are directly supported by this resource. This resource supports good quality teaching about Christianity and can be used within the requirements of your syllabus guidelines.

### **SECONDARY PHASE RE**

#### **Statutory non-examined sixth form RE – Ian Nicholson**

**22/10/2024**

RE continues to be a legal requirement for all sixth forms. This webinar will provide teachers of RE with a range of very fantastic ideas about how to meet these requirements, in imaginative ways by setting high standards. There will be discussion opportunities until 5.30 PM. This webinar is suitable for: all types of schools and academies including Catholic and Anglican.

#### **Understanding Christianity - Secondary (Online) – Stephen Pett**

**05/12/2024**

This course will help you with the implementation and delivery of Understanding Christianity - a substantial resource for teaching Christianity for 11-14s.

### **Cross PHASE RE**

#### **NEW! Introducing a Religion and Worldviews approach**

**22/10/2024**

What is a religion and worldviews approach? How is it different from current RE practice? What are the benefits to teachers and pupils? A practical introduction, drawing on the new RE Council Handbook and Frameworks, including resources and strategies, to show how to enrich and deepen pupils' understanding of religious and non-religious worldviews.

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