

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:

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