

15 October 2014		ITEM: 10
Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education		
Secondary Religious Education		
Report of: Deborah Weston, RE Consultant		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-key	
Accountable Head of Service: Mike Peters (Interim Strategic Lead) School Improvement, Learning & Skills		
Accountable Director: Carmel Littleton, Director of Children's Services		
This report is public.		

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents detailed evidence gathered from a range of sources that the children and young people attending the secondary schools in Thurrock may not all be receiving their entitlement to Religious Education and that where provision is being made, some academies are not employing specialists and this is having a negative impact on standards in RE.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That SACRE:

- 1.1 Receives this background paper and discusses the different sets of data.**
- 1.2 Writes to the principal/headteacher of each of the academies concerned to:**
 - (i) Ask for further information and explanation about why they are not making provision for all pupils.**
 - (ii) Draw attention to OfSTED's findings on the impact of over use of non-specialists and to ask for their comments.**
 - (iii) Recommend that where non-specialists are being used to teach RE that those teachers be directed to attend subject specialist training.**

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

- 2.1 One of the key aims of SACREs around the country is to ensure that children and young people in their area are properly educated in Religious Education. Academies must make provision for RE for all their students according to their funding agreements and it is within the legal remit of a SACRE to agenda any matter concerned with RE.

The model funding agreement which forms the basis of almost all non-faith Academies legal contract states the following:

- a) subject to clause 27, the Academy Trust shall ensure that provision shall be made for religious education to be given to all pupils at the Academy` in accordance with the requirements for agreed syllabuses in section 375(3) of the Education Act 1996 and paragraph 2(5) of Schedule 19 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, [and having regard to the requirements of the QCDA's national framework for religious education in schools]
- 2.2 The Department of Education have been consulted on the interpretation of this section of the paragraph and they were pleased to inform us that it means that ALL students in ALL year groups must be taught Religious Education. This means that all students must study RE at KS4 also.

3. ISSUES, OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS:

3.1 Level of provision in relation to timetable time:

The provision for RE in some of the Academies in Thurrock appears to be low in relation to the amount of timetable time dedicated to the subject. See data from the last Annual Report in Appendix C. If students are not receiving their legal entitlement to Religious Education, what impact might this have on the degree to which they are able to take their place in a plural society?

According to this data, the academy schools highlighted are not making provision for RE for all pupils as required by their funding agreement.

RE teaching in Thurrock local authority area academies in a typical week in November 2012, hours taught by year group.								
	Year Group							Total
	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Hours
Gable Hall School	7	6	3	3	0	0	0	19
Gateway	No data received							
Grays Convent	8	8	8	12.5	12.5	0.0	0	49
Harris Academy Chafford Hundred	0	0	2	0	4	6	6	17
Hassenbrook School								
Specialist Technology College	6	0	0	3	3	0	0	11
The Hathaway	No data received							

The Ockendon Academy	13	12	10	13	10	0	0	58
Ormiston Park	No data received							
St Clere's School	6	6	0	0	0	0	0	12
William Edwards School	0	9	9	6	10	0	0	34
Source: School Workforce Census 2012								

3.2 Level of provision in relation to specialist staffing

According to the recently published OfSTED report on Religious Education, the over use of non-specialist teachers to teach RE is having a negative impact on standards in the subject.

44% of the hours of RE taught in in Thurrock in the secondary phase are being taught by teachers with no post A level qualification in the subject.

In some cases this will be teachers who have become specialists in RE through experience and further professional development and who teach RE for most of their timetable.

In other cases, these will be teachers who spend most of their timetable teaching another subject and where they have further capacity, they are filled with RE lessons.

Total hours taught in Religious Education, academies,¹ in Thurrock local authority area, by year group and post A level qualification in the subject, November 2013,².									
	Year Group								Total
	7	8	9	10	11	12	13		
Level of qualification									
Degree or Higher	29%	38%	40%	53%	54%	61%	38%		64
B'Ed	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%		0
PGCE, ³	20%	10%	24%	0%	20%	39%	62%		27
Certificate in Education	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%		0
Other Post A level qualification	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%		0
Non UK qualification	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%		0
No post A level qualification recorded in Religious Education	44%	49%	37%	47%	27%	0%	0%		58
Unknown ⁴	6%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%		3
Total	32	33	24	24	26	6	6		152

Information available on staffing levels for RE in academies is as follows:

Name of Academy	How many teaching staff teach RE for most of their timetable?	How many teaching staff at the Academy teach RE in total?
Gable Hall	1	4*
The Gateway Academy	1	7
Grays Convent	No data received to date	
Harris Academy Chafford Hundred	No data received to date	
Hassenbrook School Specialist Technology College	No data received to date	
Hathaway Academy	4	5
Ockendon Academy	3	7
Ormiston Park	No data received to date	
St Cleres	2	8**
William Edwards	2	4

* "2 teachers really teach RE. The 2 other teachers share a class with me."

** 1 staff member is an experienced teacher of RE with some specialism whereas the other main teacher is a teacher of CPD who focuses on KS3 RE. GCSE RE is taught by the head of RE and 5 other non-specialist teachers

3.3 According to the data received to date, it would appear that with the exception of the Hathaway, schools in Thurrock are not giving sufficient priority to employing specialist RE teachers. The OfSTED report, "Meeting the potential" 2013, warns schools against the overuse of non-specialists whose main teaching time is in another subject as their evidence suggests that it reduces the effectiveness of RE and leads to lower standards than might otherwise be the case.

4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION:

4.1 The recommendations are made in order to fulfil the responsibility of a SACRE to monitor provision for RE.

5. CONSULTATION (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

5.1 Not applicable.

6. IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

6.1 None.

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Kay goodacre**
Telephone and email: **01375 652466**
kgoodacre@thurrock.gov.uk

There are no additional direct financial implications arising out of this report.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lucinda Bell**
Telephone and email: **Lucinda.bell@BDTLegal.org.uk**

There are no further legal comments to make to this report. The basis on which there is a requirement for academies to teach RE is explained within the report.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Samson DeAlyn**
Telephone and email: **01375652472**
Sdealyn@thurrock.gov.uk

This report has implications for the Council's approach to Diversity and Equality. If, as the data suggests, a number of local schools are not making provision for Religious Education for all of its students, there is a risk that children and young people leaving school in Thurrock may not have sufficient knowledge and understanding of religion and belief to be fully equipped to take their place in a diverse society.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental

None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- OfSTED report on Religious Education 2013: Realising the potential
- A survey of the provision of RE in Thurrock Academy conducted by the associate adviser between September and November 2013 using an online survey tool
- The School Workforce Survey 2013: Published by the Department for Education

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