

SACRE ANNUAL REPORT

Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (RE) Annual Report 2023-2024

Southend-on-Sea City Council

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SECTION 1: CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

I am delighted, as Chair of Southend City's Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE), to introduce this report as we reflect on another year. I would like to offer my thanks to our SACRE members, as well as the teachers and key stakeholders who have worked so hard to support Religious Education (RE) across Southend City Council in the year 2023/24 covered by this report.

As we have launched our new Agreed Syllabus this year, I am pleased to commend it to our schools as it provides a robust framework for teaching RE. It ensures high standards of learning and fosters pupils' full potential in the subject. By incorporating RE into the basic curriculum, it reaffirms its essential role in shaping well-rounded education for all learners. The RE Syllabus is vitally important to prepare children and young people in the city of Southend for life in a twenty-first century world, and understanding religious and non-religious worldviews plays a central role in local and global affairs.

Religious Education supports our pupils in exploring matters of faith and belief, but also ethical and philosophical positions within religious and non-religious views. The study of RE allows the learner to use and develop analytical skills, criticism and summation of texts, critical thinking skills, moral evaluation of contemporary issues, and the application of philosophical thinking. It also develops broader reading, writing and oral debating skills, leading to improved literacy levels. Lower ability candidates do better in RE GCSE than their overall subject averages. Students of all abilities, who study RE and have a broad curriculum, show improvement in overall individual results, as borne out by exam data analysis. Religious Education not only supports overall increased attainment but also informs a world view in an increasingly global age. This New Agreed Syllabus for RE sets out what should be studied in RE and offers clear advice and guidance on how this can be done so that pupils can develop a coherent understanding of religions and non-religious beliefs, and world views.

Against our positive background for RE, it is disappointing to note that entries into public examinations in some settings are lower than the national average. Also of concern is the reduced number of RE specialists entering the teaching profession and the reduction in school RE staffing. The amount of curriculum time within school timetables devoted to RE is not, in some cases, providing pupils with the depth and breadth of knowledge they need to live in a complex world. These are the challenges that SACRE, schools and key stakeholders will continue to address.

I would like to thank the retiring RE Advisor Frances Neil for her work over the last number of years and acknowledge in particular her support of school RE subject leaders and teachers through her teachers' training network.

I look forward, on behalf of SACRE, to working with our advisors from RE Today during the forthcoming academic year as they undertake the role of leading Religious Education on behalf of Southend City Council. They will be guiding us through the development of our locally Agreed Syllabus as we take on the challenge of ensuring all pupils across Southend on Sea continue to have access to a rigorous and challenging RE curriculum.

Kevin Ryan, Chair, Southend-on-Sea SACRE

INFORMATION ABOUT SACRE

1.1 Duty to establish a SACRE

Since the Education Reform Act of 1988, all Local Authorities (LAs) have been required by law to constitute a Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) within their local area (1).

1.2 What does a SACRE do?

SACRE is a unique body; it is set up by the LA but is independent of it, with the role to give advice to that LA. The law states that Religious Education must be taught in all maintained schools (2) and a SACRE's role is to advise what needs to be done to improve religious education (RE) and collective worship for schools in its area. The main purpose of the annual report is to hold the LA to account, by informing the Secretary of State and key partners what advice SACRE gave the LA during the year and how the LA responded to that advice. This includes advice on Religious Education and Collective Worship in those schools for which the LA has responsibility.

1.3 Composition of SACRE

The composition is shown, as below:

Composition of the Southend-on-Sea SACRE Group	Membership
A. The Church of England Nominated by the Diocese of Chelmsford	5
B. Other Faiths	
Representatives of the Free Churches Nominated by the Free Churches Council	3
Representatives of the Roman Catholic Church Nominated by the Diocese of Brentwood	2
A representative of the Jewish Community	1
A representative of the Hindu Community	1
A representative of the Muslim Community	1
A representative of the Salvation Army	1
C. Associations representing Teachers Nominated by the recognised Teachers' Associations	5
D. Southend-on-Sea LEA Elected Members of the City Council	6
Total	27

1.4 Membership of SACRE

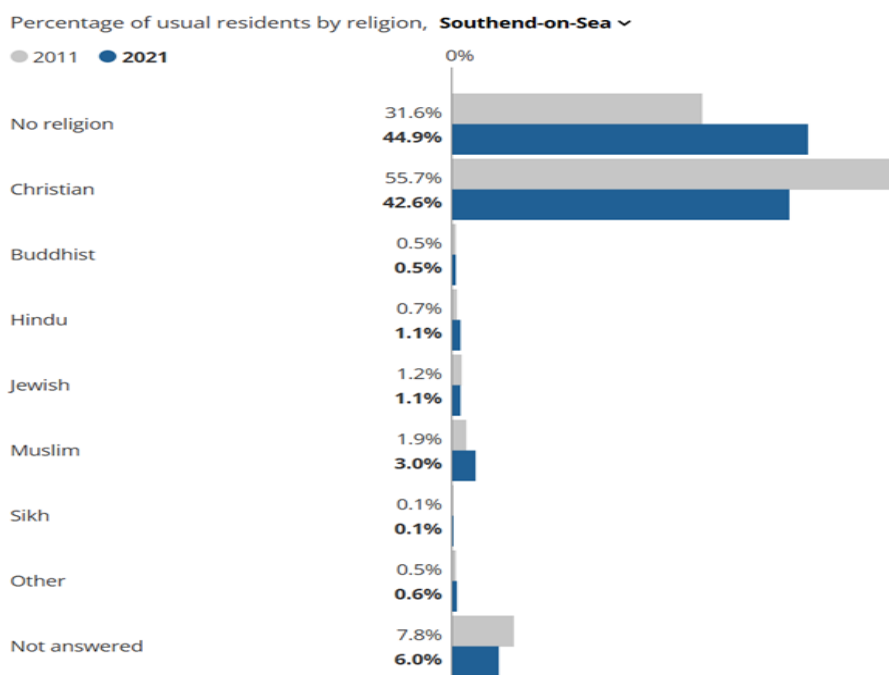
The names of the SACRE members and the religious denominations can be found at Appendix A.

1.5 SACRE Functions

- To advise the LA on collective worship and the Religious Education to be given in accordance with the agreed syllabus including methods of teaching, advice on materials and the provision of training for teachers
- To consider whether to recommend to the LA that its current agreed syllabus should be reviewed by convening an Agreed Syllabus Conference.
- To consider whether the requirement that religious worship in a county school should be 'broadly Christian in nature' should be varied (determinations).
- To report to the LA and the Department for Education (DfE) on its activities on an annual basis.

1.6 Census data

The data for Southend-on-Sea 2021 shows that:



Population statistics for Southend-on-Sea and the region

The 2021 census information sets the demographic context for our city and surrounding areas. We do not intend to educate pupils only for their current life, in one area of the Essex, but also for a plural nation and a diverse world.

	Population	Christian	Buddhist	Hindu	Jewish	Muslim	Sikh	Other religion	Humanist	No religion	Religion not stated
Southend-on-Sea	180,686	76,884	953	2,057	2,057	5,461	203	1,128	30	81,157	10,756
%		42.6%	0.5%	1.1%	1.1%	3.0%	0.1%	0.6%	0.017%	44.9%	6.0%
Chelmsford	181,523	87,181	878	3,084	387	3,666	284	757	No data	74,741	10,545
%		48.3%	0.5%	1.7%	0.2%	2.0%	0.2%	0.4%		41.2%	5.8%
Basildon	187,571	87,239	556	2,326	403	3,381	355	733	No data	82,780	9,798
%		46.5%	0.3%	1.2%	0.2%	1.8%	0.2%	0.4%		44.1%	5.2%
Rochford	85,661	40,777	206	367	293	415	44	332	No data	38,497	4,730
%		47.6%	0.2%	0.4%	0.3%	0.5%	0.1%	0.4%		44.9%	5.5%
Thurrock	175,999	90,940	703	2,376	225	8,586	2,030	901	7	61,035	9,196
%		51.7%	0.4%	1.4%	0.1%	4.9%	1.2%	0.51%	0.0%	34.7%	5.2%
England	56,490,038	26,167,904	262,437	1,020,539	269,295	3,801,182	520,090	231,470	9,575	20,706,073	3,400,553
%		46.3%	0.5%	1.8%	0.5%	6.7%	0.9%	0.4%	0.02%	36.7%	6.0%

Pupils will benefit greatly from a clear and accurate understanding of these demographics.

Detailed 2021 Census maps are available: www.ons.gov.uk/census/maps/choropleth/identity/religion/religion-tb/no-religion

Note that the findings of the British Social Attitudes Survey 2018 (National Centre for Social Research), a national survey of around 3,000 adults, indicates a greater percentage of people (52%) identifying as having no religion. More information is available here: www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/media/39293/1_bsa36_religion.pdf

Among young people, aged 16-29, the percentage rises to 70% saying they have no religion: see the report into Europe's Young Adults and Religion by Stephen Bullivant www.stmarys.ac.uk/research/centres/benedict-xvi/docs/2018-mar-europe-young-people-report-eng.pdf

The latest census data can be found here:
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E06000033/>

1.7 Meetings and attendance

SACRE met during the academic year 2023-2024:

- Thursday, 23rd November, 2023. At Committee Room 2 - Civic Suite, Civic Centre
- Tuesday 24th January 2024 at 2pm – Southend Agreed Syllabus Conference

During 2023-2024, there were difficulties around meetings taking place on a termly basis, for example around being quorate. This has now been addressed through the review of the SACRE Constitution and Membership, as outlined below.

Minutes of all SACRE meeting and the current membership are available from the Southend-on-Sea City Council website.

Key priorities for SACRE included:

- A review of the SACRE Constitution and Membership be undertaken, including a review of the latest census data, with a view to providing a refreshed and revised Constitution and membership to a future meeting for consideration.
- Completion of the SACRE Self-Assessment Tool aimed at supporting SACREs with a focus on the areas outlined below. The SACRE Self-Assessment Tool is endorsed and used as the basis to evaluate its needs and priorities and areas of development for the 2023/24 academic year:
 1. Management of the SACRE.
 2. Promoting improvement in the standards, the quality of teaching and provision in RE.
 3. Evaluating the effectiveness of the locally agreed syllabus.
 4. Promoting improvement in the provision and quality of collective worship. Public Document Pack

5. Contributing to cohesion across the community and the promotion of social and racial harmony.

The SACRE discussed and commented on each of the key areas of assessment and broadly supported the proposed ratings and the evidence set out against each key area.

- Review, production and launch of the new syllabus for RE

SECTION 2: STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN 2023/24

2.1 Activities undertaken by SACRE

SACRE monitors the quality of provision for religious education in a number of ways:

- RE Lead network meetings delivered by the RE Lead
- Review of Ofsted reports by the Head of School Performance and Provision and her team
- Website monitoring
- Engagement by schools in networking, learning and development opportunities
- GCSE results analysis
- Recruitment and vacancies for RE through for example 'Southend Jobs in Schools'
- Evidence around any withdrawals from RE and Collective Worship and freedom of information requests.

The RE Adviser reports to SACRE on a termly basis, and to the Services to Schools Team Manager.

2.2 Monitoring of School Provision and meeting learning and development needs

During this period, the RE Lead met at least termly with school RE leaders from across the city. Most work was focussed on the new syllabus to ensure a smooth and successful roll out. All schools irrespective of designation requested a licence and a copy of the new syllabus from RE today on behalf of SACRE. This included: 36 academy schools, 1 Free School, 9 LA maintained schools. The RE Lead acted as the first point of contact for schools around RE questions and support; this came from across the key stages and settings. The main focus has been support for subject leads. The RE lead has delivered learning and development to Governors through the Governance Leadership Programme on the new syllabus, importance of RE and key national updates. The duties of schools regarding RE are promoted through strong relationships with the authority's school performance service.

2.3 GCSE Religious Studies examination results for the 2023-2024 cohort

		2023/24
Total pupil entries	Number of pupils achieving the grade	1,060
	Percentage of pupils achieving the grade	2
9 to 4	Number of pupils achieving the grade	859
	Percentage of pupils achieving the grade	81%
9 to 5	Number of pupils achieving the grade	777
	Percentage of pupils achieving the grade	73%

SECTION 3: COMPLAINTS ABOUT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

SACRE has received no formal complaints about religious education in the past year.

SECTION 4: STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Support is available to schools around Collective Worship (CW) through the RE Lead. Information is shared from credible sources such as RE Today with RE leads at network, learning and development opportunities.

Monitoring Collective Worship

This is through RE Lead network structures and monitoring for example of Ofsted reports. For example, these may reference collective worship in relation to evidencing that a school is promoting children's development, skills and wellbeing.

SECTION 5: COMPLAINTS

There have been no complaints about Collective Worship in schools submitted to SACRE.

SECTION 6: DETERMINATIONS

No requests for determination have been submitted to SACRE and there are no current determinations for review.

SECTION 7: LINKS WITH OTHER BODIES

- The SACRE Advisor has close relationships with schools and settings
- Some SACRE members have well established links with NASACRE
- Some of the SACRE members have hosted school visits to their places of worship throughout the year and engaged with visits to external places of worship.

7.1 Links with other Authorities and SACREs

The RE Adviser retains strong links with peers in wider authorities and SACREs through RE Today and NASACRE opportunities.

7.2 NASACRE

- Southend SACRE is a member of NASACRE and NASACRE bulletins are circulated to all SACRE members by the Clerk. These bulletins are also shared with RE Leads and information shared in the council's 'Education Newsletter'.

- Some SACRE members have attended a NASACRE learning and development events during the year.

SECTION 8: SACRE'S CONTRIBUTION TO SUPPORTING SCHOOLS THROUGH EVENTS AND TRAINING

SACRE continues to be responsive to the needs of teachers and RE leads across in Southend. This is outlined above, led by the RE Adviser. It has included offers to teachers and school leaders. A bespoke session was around the launch of the new curriculum took place in the summer term and was well attended by schools with positive feedback. This was a joint delivery model between the RE Adviser, School Performance Adviser and RE Today. It also served as a smooth handover between provider for the RE lead transition.

SECTION 9: SACRE'S OWN ARRANGEMENTS

- During this period SACRE has reviewed and updated the constitution.
- For this there was consultation with members from each group of SACRE, and any recommendations were approved by the full SACRE.

Appendix A: The names of the SACRE members and the religious denominations

Group A: Representatives of the Church of England (5)

Ms R Everett

Mr M Buckley

3 vacancies

Group B: Other Faith Group Representatives:

Free Churches (3):

Andrew Palmer

Vacancies x 2

Roman Catholic (2):

Vacancies X 2

Jewish Community

Rabbi G Hymen

Hindu Community

Krishna Chakkirala

Muslim Community

Krishna Kumar

Salvation Army

Vacancy

Sikh Community

Tej Bharj

Humanist Community

Vacancy

Buddhist Community

Vacancy

Group C: Representatives of the Teachers' Associations: 5

NASUWT - Mr K Ryan - (Chair)

VOICE (formerly referred to as PAT) – vacancy

NAHT – vacancy

NEU/ATL - vacancy

NEU/NUT – vacancy

Group D: Representatives of the LA: Appointed at Council annually.

Appendix B: List of Organisations receiving this report

Copies will be sent electronically to the following relevant bodies:

- Director of Education, Early Years and Inclusion, Southend City Council
- All members of SACRE
- The Department for Education (Central Government)
- NASACRE (National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education)
- Headteachers and the Chair of Governors of all Southend Schools and Alternative Provision

This report will be available on the Local Authority and NASACRE websites for interested parties to download.

Footnotes:

1 Education Act 1996 Section 390:1

2 School and Standards Framework Act 1998 Section 69