

SACRE ANNUAL REPORT

Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (RE) Annual Report

Report for periods 2020 - 2022

Southend-on-Sea City Council

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1) Overview of SACRE

This report is combined for periods 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 because of the Covid-19 pandemic. There were no meetings of SACRE between early 2020 and October 2021 due to the pandemic. SACRE meetings resumed for the 2021 to 2022 academic year with the initial post COVID SACRE meeting taking place on 11th October 2021 at The Tickfield Centre, Southend on Sea.

SACRE Membership

A SACRE meeting took place on the 11th October 2021, but which was not quorate. An action by the SACRE was for this issue to be addressed by the Clerk and the RE Adviser. Civic elections took place in May 2022 and subsequently Councillors appointed to SACRE.

SACRE Self Evaluation Tool (SET)

The draft Self Evaluation meets the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (NASACRE, July 2021) requirements. It provides a discussion document for SACRE Members to evaluate SACRE needs and priorities moving ahead.

The main document from NASACRE's AGM "Still Standing – A report on future directions for SACREs: A report on the joint REC/NASACRE LAN Pilot project 2020-21 (Clinton, C. (November 2021) Religious Education Council of England and Wales; National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on religious Education) is shared. Pages 1-16 is of particular interest to members of SACRE.

2) Statutory Responsibilities: Religious Education

Monitoring of Schools

A school survey for Religious Education (RE) and Collective Worship (CoWo) was conducted over the two terms and across all schools (academies, maintained, independent and special settings of all phases) by the RE Adviser. 31 schools responded (out of 55).

Key information is provided in this report with more detailed findings to be shared with SACRE in due course. This is in line with the extended deadline by the DfE for the submission of data.

An analysis was carried out of all school websites across Southend to capture key themes around the schools that did not submit a response to the survey. The findings will be shared in the full report presented to SACRE.

The Locally Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education (LAS) and Survey of Schools

The Locally Agreed Syllabus (LAS) is widely used by all schools across Southend; by academies and maintained schools of all phases. It is also used within two independent schools (one an independent primary Church of England School and one a secondary school). The Church of England Voluntary Aided School have purchased the LAS, as it was highly recommended to them by the Diocese of Chelmsford.

9 out of the 31 schools who responded to the survey indicated that they do not follow the LAS. Of these, 4 are secondary schools, one is an independent school, and four are Catholic Primary schools who all follow the Catholic Syllabus “Come and See” in line with the Brentwood Diocese.

Feedback on the LAS continues to be very positive. Feedback from the survey include:

- “Staff have had training on this delivered by our RE lead. The enquiry approach is liked by staff and children and has been successfully implemented”.
- “The syllabus a well-rounded [sic] approach to RE, covering a variety of religions and beliefs. It is key to look carefully at each year group in the school to check the learning in being built upon and not purely overlapping and teaching the same lesson/religious stories.
- “I feel confident following the guidance of a syllabus to ensure we are covering everything that we need to. I like the 'learning about' and 'learning from' elements. When the syllabus was introduced, we met as a MAT to discuss changes/how we would use in our schools.”

There are some excellent views on widening the scope of the Southend LAS to embrace RE and Worldviews in a future LAS. This is to be welcomed as this is highly recommended by current RE thinking and policy.

Teacher Training and Professional Development

Support to schools by the RE Adviser continued virtually during the pandemic and around transitioning to the ‘new normal’. This included making available resources to RE Leads. This included access to online museum visits, specialist online speakers, signposting to reliable sources of support, teaching resources for access to a varied, high-quality menu of lessons and subjects. Feedback indicated that this information was well received and used by teachers.

RE and Lead RE Teachers’ Networks

A Teachers’ Network meeting take place each school term, typically in October, January, and June each year. Currently, these are aimed mostly at primary schools. The virtual network meetings across the timescale of this report had good attendance. Based on feedback and engagement, the intention is to continue to offer virtual network meetings.

Teachers have expressed the wish for a virtual delivery model format to support good attendance (mitigating the need for travel by RE Leads and associated issues around the release from schools. The online network meetings by RE leads and teachers are better attended than the historic face-to-face meetings.

Key priority areas included:

- RE and worldviews
- What is meant by and how to prepare your own responses and leadership to lead and manage an OFSTED “Deep Dive” into RE during an Inspection
- Working with National Advisors of RE from the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE).
- Opportunity for fully funded training for teachers to attend NATRE’s research based “Excellent RE” Course from which feedback has been excellent. Information about the course is appended to this document “RE Today project for Excellent RE / Religion and worldviews in the Primary School”.

Examination Results Years 2019 to 2020 and 2020-2021

There are no formal examination results for GCSE, AS or A level examinations to include in this report. Department of Education (DFE) statement:

“Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, most exams and assessments did not take place in the 2019 to 2020, or 2020 to 2021 academic years.

The government announced that it would not publish school or college level results data on compare school and college performance compare school and college performance (also commonly referred to as school and college performance tables) in autumn 2020 or autumn 2021, and that this data would not be used to hold schools and colleges to account. Results from data from 2020, and the 2020 to 2021 academic year, will not be used in school and college level performance measures in future years.

Further information on school and college accountability for the 2020 to 2021 academic year was set out: Department of Education (19th July 2021) Policy Paper: School and college accountability: academic year 2021 to 2022 available from School and college accountability: 2021 to 2022 academic year - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) (accessed 13 June 2022).

Examinations for the Current Academic Year 2021- 2022

The DfE informed schools that examinations resume. The DFE advice in their Policy Paper (see above) noted that any conclusions and comparisons need to be considered in line with variability of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The DfE did not publish any subject level data for Local Authorities in 2021-2022.

Successes in achieving the Religious Education Quality Mark (REQM)

Edwards Hall Primary school achieved a “Silver standard” within REQM Virtual Assessment recently with the assessor recommending the silver standard with elements of Gold Standard was achieved.

Support is provided to the Independent Church of England School, St Michael’s, within the City who have now embarked upon the REQM assessment process compiling their evidence and reporting to the assessors.

Complaints regarding RE:

SACRE has received no complaints with regards to Religious Education in 2020 to 2021 or 2021 to 2022.

3) Withdrawal from Religious Education and Collective Worship (CoWo)

At the time of the survey approximately 20 pupils are withdrawn from RE across the city with the numbers in individual schools being very small. Similarly in Collective Worship the numbers of withdrawal are small (12 across the city). One larger secondary school report that to up to 15 pupils across the year depending upon a range of variables (such as time of the year or content) may be withdrawn.

Findings from the RE and CoWo survey and scrutiny of school websites schools provide an insight into provision. A variety of provision is made for pupils, such as joining a class studying another subject, area, topic, or continuing self-study for older students or providing a room to work, encouraging the pupils to study their own religion if this is appropriate to the child’s circumstances or encouraging a project or self-study on an area of interested chosen by the child or young person.

Determinations regarding Collective Worship

SACRE have received no applications for determinations in the years 2020 to 2021 and 2021 to 2022.

Complaints regarding Collective Worship

SACRE has received no complaints regarding Collective Worship in 2020 to 2021 nor in 2021 to 2022 (as of the date of this report).

4) SACRE’s links with other bodies.

SACRE is a member of The National Association of Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education (NASACRE), and members can now access the portal to support them in their duties. The RE Lead has engaged with the Brentwood Diocese and the RE Adviser who (jointly) advises Essex County Council and the Chelmsford Diocesan Director of Education.

5) SACRE Involvement locally

The RE Advisor during the school closure periods attended virtual Faith and Belief Network meetings to extend her understanding of additional sources of support to schools. This was reported to SACRE. The Network delivered an online “Faith and Belief Festival”. Encouragement of teachers to engage with this this successful pilot event took place to support online learning in RE lessons.

6) SACRE’s own arrangements to fulfil its Statutory Responsibilities

SACRE is provided with:

- Clerk, Mr Robert Harris, Principal Democratic Services Officer
- an independent RE Adviser, Mrs Frances Neil.
- the Chair of this SACRE, Mr Kevin Ryan, with Mrs Neil and Mr Harris attended the NASACRE AGM and Training Day, including additional courses as offered throughout June.

The Local Authority provide a venue, documentation, and allocation of a budget to enable SACRE Meetings to take place.

Appendices (submitted at the time of reporting to SACRE):

- a) SACRE’s NASACRE Draft Self Evaluation Tool
- b) RE Today project for Excellent RE / Religion and worldviews in the Primary School
- c) NASACRE report on SACRE’s “Still Standing

Information supplied by: F Neil, RE Adviser, on behalf of Southend City Council

Data provided by the Data Team, Southend City Council.