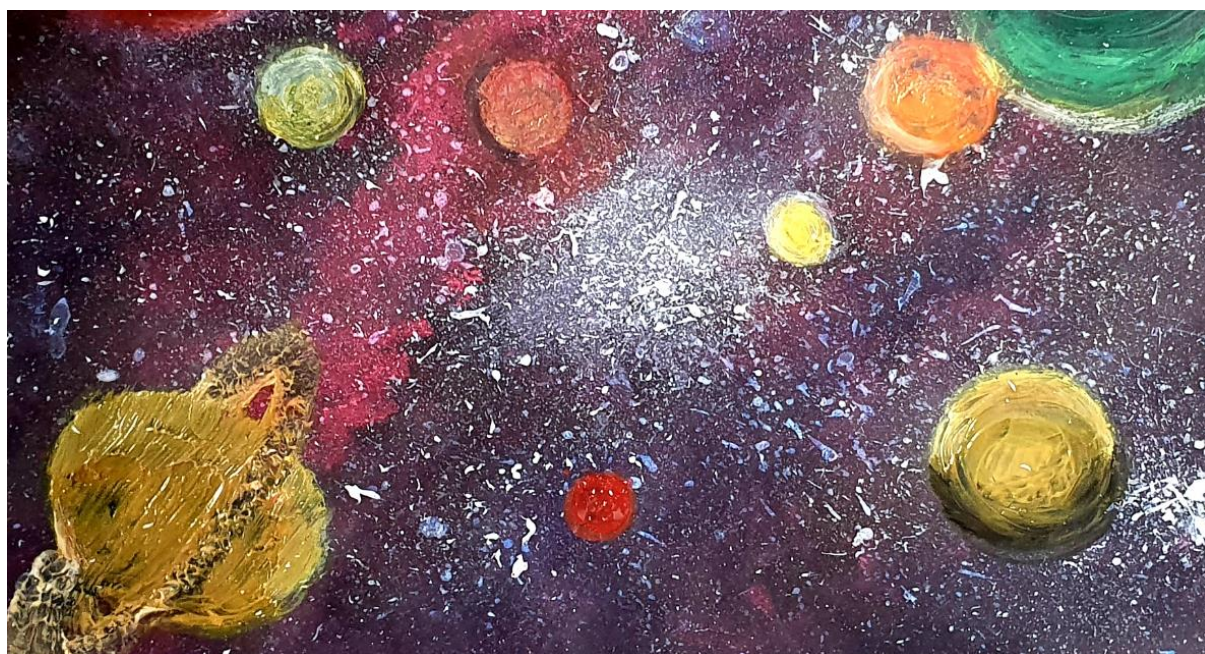


ANNUAL REPORT OF THE THURROCK STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE) FOR 2021 – 2022



This artwork by David O (Quarry Hill Academy Key Stage 2) was inspired by Psalm 19:1
“The heavens declare the glory of God. The skies proclaim the work of His hands.”

David was one of the prize winners in the Thurrock Spirited Arts Competition.

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Foreword by the Chair of SACRE – Mr Phil Anderson	4
Membership of Thurrock Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education 2021-2022	6
SACRE Meetings Held	9
Membership and attendance	9
Work Plan 2021-22	9
Monitoring and Evaluation	9
Standards in Thurrock Schools.	9
School websites	9
School Workforce Data (Secondary)	10
GCSE Entries and Results	10
SACRE discussion of National Developments in RE	13
Other matters discussed that fall under the remit of SACRE	13
Agreed Syllabus review	13
Teacher Education	13
Appendix A Workplan 2021-2022	15
Appendix B - Provision for RE as reported in the workforce census -November 2021	19

Introduction

Since 1988, it has been a requirement that every local authority (LA) has a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE).

Though legislation sets out both the structure and the remit of a local SACRE - principally, overseeing religious education (RE) and collective worship - in practice every SACRE has developed its own particular style and character.

Thurrock SACRE developed its own particular style and character has over the years, as this report will testify.

It is a legislative requirement that each SACRE produces an annual report of its work and that this is published, sent to the local authority, to local schools and to other interested parties. One important element of the report is performance data and an analysis of the extent to which schools are meeting their legal duties in relation to RE. Validated GCSE data was not available until this month, hence the delay in the publication of the report. More recently, other datasets have been made available by the DfE, most significantly the school workforce data that supports the monitoring of the level of provision in secondary schools.

Foreword by the Chair of SACRE – Mr Phil Anderson

Welcome to the 2021-2022 SACRE annual report.

One of SACRE's most important duties is to produce a Local Agreed Syllabus for RE. This ensures that what our children are taught about Religion and Belief reflects a pragmatic blend of national good practice and sensitivity to local circumstances. The Thurrock Agreed Syllabus was due for renewal in 2022, and reviewing it has been a significant part of SACRE's work this year.

Unlike Local Authority Maintained schools which have to follow the Agreed Syllabus, Academies have a choice in what RE syllabus they follow. The fact that most of our local Academy schools choose to use the Thurrock SACRE syllabus is therefore a tribute to the quality of the resource and the trust that it has built up over the years.

After reviewing the material and listening to views of teachers, only small incremental changes have been made to the syllabus this year. Members of SACRE recognised the significant burden on teachers that would come from implementing an entirely new syllabus, and in general felt that 'if it ain't broke don't fix it'. We agreed to include two new modules on race and the environment to recognise the particular current interest in these topics. In doing so we have tried to emphasise learning from the great faith traditions and seeking new perspectives rather than merely co-opting them into the social and cultural agendas of the day.

I would like to thank all of those involved in reviewing and launching the new Agreed Syllabus for RE in Thurrock. This includes colleagues in SACRE who comprise representatives from local faith groups, elected Councillors, and the teaching profession. We are ably supported by Officers from Thurrock Council and our specialist external RE Advisor, without whom this work would not be possible.

However, SACRE is not just about a syllabus. It is also about promoting great RE in our borough. In an age where schools are relentlessly scrutinised against targets, we know that it can be tempting to 'squeeze' RE for curriculum time. This is particularly visible in Thurrock at GCSE level, where both entry rates and results achieved have fallen. It is concerning because recent national data reviewed by SACRE shows that schools which deliver more RE do better on other metrics too. The evidence is that emphasising RE doesn't distract from other disciplines, it helps students develop the well-rounded skills needed to excel at them.

RE is a subject that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to engage with and perform well at. It provides a framework to help young people navigate the complex world of values, beliefs, and identities which they increasingly find themselves caught up in. It provides a vital balance to the 90% of the curriculum that is implicitly based on materialism and subjective truth as world views. It helps students to engage with complex moral and cultural issues and to explore the luminal and the transcendent in life.

With this in mind, SACRE has continued with our task of scrutinising how local schools provide RE, and advising on how they can improve. Our work has ranged from the statistical (analysing exam results and curriculum time data) to the practical (developing new guidance on collective worship in schools). Our engagement with schools is based on a deep respect for the difficult job they do and a desire for genuine partnership, but like all good friends we are also occasionally willing to ask challenging questions where necessary!

Wishing you peace and hope in 2023,

Phil Anderson

Phil Anderson

Chair of Thurrock SACRE

Membership of Thurrock Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education 2021-2022						
Committee	Representing	Nominating Body	No. of Reps	Names of Reps.	Date Appointed	Date due for re-election
A	Christian Denominations & other RE Denominations		9			
A	Free Church Christian	Free Church Federal Council	2	Mrs S Lawson	June 2019	May 2023
A		Free Church Federal Council		Mr P Anderson	June 2019	May 2023
A	Roman Catholic	Diocese of Brentwood	1	Mrs R Saul	March 2020	May 2024
A	Muslim	Thurrock Islamic Education & Cultural Association	2	Mr J Hussein	October 2019	September 2023
A		Thurrock Islamic Education & Cultural Association		Vacancy	Vacancy	Vacancy
A	Sikh	Local Sikh Guru Gudwara Committee.	1	Ms H Kaur Takhtar	May 2018	June 2022
A	Pentecostal		1	Mr T Ojetola	July 2018	June 2022
A	Buddhist	Buddhist Society	1	Mr A Kariyawasam	June 2019	May 2023
A	Jewish	Board of Deputies of British Jews	1	Ms S Perlmutter	June 2019	May 2023
A	Hindu	Vacancy	1	Vacancy	Vacancy	Vacancy

Committee	Representing	Nominating Body	No. of Reps	Names of Reps.	Date Appointed	Date due for re-election
B	Church of England		4			
B	Church of England	Diocese of Chelmsford		Mr P Anderson	June 2019	May 2023
B	Church of England	Diocese of Chelmsford		Mrs L Fry	March 2020	February 2024
B	Church of England	Diocese of Chelmsford		Ms L Olajide	2021	2025
B	Church of England	Diocese of Chelmsford		Vacancy	Vacancy	Vacancy

Committee	Representing	Nominating Body	No. of Reps	Names of Reps.	Date Appointed	Date due for re-election
C	Teachers' Associations (pref. Primary, Secondary & Special Schools)		6			
C	Teachers' Associations Primary	Professional Associations Group		Ms J Culloty	May 2022	June 2026
C	Teachers' Associations, Primary	Professional Associations Group		Mrs C Pumfrey	March 2020	February 2024
C	Teachers' Associations, Secondary	Professional Associations Group		Ms A Jellicoe	May 2021	May 2024
C	Teachers' Associations Secondary	Professional Associations Group		Vacancy	Vacancy	Vacancy

C	Teachers' Associations	Professional Associations Group		Vacancy	Vacancy	Vacancy
C	Teachers' Associations	Professional Associations Group		Vacancy	Vacancy	Vacancy

Committee	Representing	Nominating Body	No. of Reps	Names of Reps.	Date Appointed	Date due for re-election
D	Local Education Authority		3			
D	Local Education Authority	Thurrock Council		Councillor M Kerin	May 2018	May 2022
D	Local Education Authority	Thurrock Council		Councillor G Collins	May 2019	May 2023
D	Local Education Authority	Thurrock Council		Vacancy	Vacancy	Vacancy

Committee	Representing	Nominating Body	No. of Reps	Names of Reps.	Date Appointed	Date due for re-election
(non-voting)	Co-opted Member		1			
	Vacancy	SACRE		Vacancy	Vacancy	Vacancy

SACRE Meetings Held

The following SACRE meetings were held during the reporting period:

3rd November 2021

5th January 2022

8th June 2022

All meetings were held remotely on Microsoft Teams and were quorate.

Membership and attendance

SACRE are pleased to report that attendance at SACRE has improved during the pandemic. It appears that remote meetings are easier for people to attend than face to face. SACRE have agreed to meet remotely for the Autumn and Spring meetings and face to face or hybrid in the Summer.

ADVICE:

SACRE wishes to thank officers for their support in ensuring places on all four committees of SACRE are filled.

Work Plan 2021-22

The work plan for 2021-2022 is reported as Appendix A

Monitoring and Evaluation

Standards in Thurrock Schools.

SACRE undertakes a number of activities annually to fulfil its responsibilities including the monitoring of:

School websites

Schools are required to publish their curriculum for each subject for each school year. This includes Religious Education, “even when it is called something else.” SACRE investigated school websites in order to learn more about how RE, including the Thurrock Agreed Syllabus was being used. Some schools published a comprehensive RE programme and were clearly using the Agreed Syllabus and accompanying scheme of work. Others failed to publish information on RE or reported a curriculum that did not appear to comply either with the Agreed Syllabus or, in the case of some academies, their academy funding agreement.

SACRE Advice: SACRE has advised the council to carry out an investigation into these cases.

School Workforce Data (Secondary)

Schools complete the school workforce census every November and this allows SACRE to discuss the number of teaching hours each secondary school reports for RE. Although not all schools appear to complete the census accurately, it appears that more schools are reporting RE and there are fewer incidents of a mismatch between different sources of data on the same school i.e. a website check, GCSE entry data and school workforce figures.. SACRE is pleased that steps to encourage schools to report their provision for RE accurately are having a positive effect.

Appendix B below sets out the data schools reported to the Department for Education.

SACRE advice: SACRE has advised the council to remind four schools that they appear not to be reporting their provision for RE accurately and should try to rectify that situation when completing the next census. We have also asked the council to discuss provision for RE in three schools where the available data might indicate that they are not providing RE for all pupils in accordance with their funding agreement.

GCSE Entries and Results

The Thurrock Agreed Syllabus requires that all students in all schools follow a course in Religious Education leading to a GCSE qualification. The publication of results therefore is another tool that helps us monitor levels and quality of provision. However, during the pandemic, DfE made a decision from the summer of 2020 to Summer 2021 that because qualifications such as GCSE and A were awarded based on school assessment, it would not be reasonable to use them in national performance tables. This means that 2022 is the first time that SACRE has had a chance to monitor GCSE entry and performance in three years.

SACRE noted that in 2019 74% of Thurrock children entered for GCSE RS were achieving a grade of 9-4, the national average was 78%. In 2022, only 55% of Thurrock students were achieving this grade. One explanation for this rapid fall might be that in some schools the recommended time for GCSE of 120-140 guided learning hours is not being offered and in others, entry appears to be made at the end of year 10 instead of year 11.

It was highlighted that Thurrock's position in a ranked list of local authorities by rate of entry for GCSE had fallen from 120 to 138 out of 151 local authorities when ranked according to entries for GCSE Religious Studies. This is because only 19% of pupils (down from 25%) completing year 11 are entered for GCSE in Thurrock. Members were disappointed by this figure. The highest ranked authority entered 87% and the lowest 14%.

SACRE ADVICE

SACRE wishes to advise the council of its agreed view that where SACRE has identified strengths or areas for development in relation to Religious Education in specific schools, the subject should form part of the annual conversations conducted by the School Effectiveness Team. This we believe is consistent with School Support Strategy 2019 and

the aim that by 2022, there will be an effective process to 'challenge and support all schools to increase quality and standards of education'.¹

Acts of Worship

Following a review of a small number of school policies for collective worship, SACRE resolved to provide revised guidance to schools including a model policy. SACRE agreed that even though this policy is not a required policy, it was important for schools to have a published document so that their practice was clear to parents and also in case there were to be a challenge to that practice.

¹ Thurrock Council Education Support Strategy 2019-2022
<https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/sites/default/files/assets/documents/education-support-strategy-2019-v02.pdf>

SACRE discussion of National Developments in RE

At each meeting, SACRE received an update of some of the national developments in RE. In this reporting year, these updates and publications included the following:

- i. the completion of a public perception survey on RE conducted by Culham St Gabriel's Trust <https://www.cstg.org.uk/activities/campaigns/public-perception/>
- ii. Publications from Ofsted and Ofqual in relation to examination
- iii. Resources published by organisations linked to specific religious or non-religious worldviews.
- iv. Government action related to RE including responses to parliamentary questions and the White Paper 2022.

Other matters discussed that fall under the remit of SACRE

Thurrock SACRE is pleased to be part of the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE) and welcomed the introduction of a comprehensive training programme for SACRE members.

Officers from the Chafford Hundred Teaching School Hubs attended SACRE during the year and briefed members about the services offered to schools. SACRE agreed to work closely with the hub, especially in relation to initial teacher education and addressing the shortage of secondary specialists in Thurrock schools.

Agreed Syllabus review

SACRE completed its Agreed Syllabus review in the spring of 2022 with a launch planned for Autumn 2022. SACRE and its Agreed Syllabus Conference resolved to renew the license with RE Today for their model syllabus A and to offer printed copies for all schools in Thurrock.

Teacher Education

SACRE noted the disappointing news that following the withdrawal of bursaries in the previous year, the number of recruits to training to teach RE had fallen again. Given that the DfE had failed to meet its target for recruiting teachers of RE for 9 years in the previous 10, and the fact that three times as many lessons of RE are taught by those with no-post A level qualification in the subject, it was difficult to see how this could be justified.

In more positive news, the government had decided to continue funding subject knowledge enhancement courses so that those with a degree in a subject outside the Theology and Religious Studies field could be better prepared to train as a teacher of RE.

SACRE continued to monitor opportunities for training and to circulate these to teachers in Thurrock. These included:

[NATRE's New2RE programme](#) for primary and secondary Early Career teachers (in their first two years of teaching) and those trained in another subject but new to teaching RE

[Research of the Month](#) from RE:Online to help teachers keep up to date with the latest developments in their subject

[#REChatUK twitter forum](#)

Occurs the first Monday of every month in term time. The timetable is here: [#REchatUK](#)
(natre.org.uk)

Appendix A Workplan 2021-2022

SACRE WORK PLAN 2021-2022 To meet the statutory duties of a SACRE

Objective	Action	Responsibility	Date	Success criteria
1. SACRE meetings are planned and dates published annually	Agenda planning Liaison with relevant council departments Meeting preparation Report writing Meeting attendance Minute taking Publication of meeting agendas and minutes SACRE members to consider taking part in NASACRE provided online training	Clerk, Chair, Adviser LA representative, members	Termly SACRE meetings	Meetings are effective meetings with actions followed up between meetings Members have a working knowledge of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> issues affecting RE in the area the Agreed Syllabus for RE an understanding of the responsibilities of SACRE
2. SACRE have the opportunity to consider national developments in relation to RE in Thurrock	Consider relevant material from National organisations (AREAIC, NATRE, NASACRE/RE Council/ Culham St Gabriel's Trust as well as the DfE, Ofsted and Thurrock Council departments	Adviser	As information is published	Items on the Agenda for each meeting, Attendance at relevant meetings e.g. NASACRE AGM Minutes record discussions and actions
3. Produce annual report of the work of SACRE including advice to the council.	Consider the National Association of SACREs template for annual reports Collate information, source data and draft report Ensure final report presented to LA Send copy to Department for Education and to NASACRE	Adviser to draft Chair to write introduction Clerk to circulate. Elected representative to present to council	Spring Term (to account for data publication dates)	Completed draft in time for Spring meeting Report presented to council Copies sent to all schools Copy acknowledged by DfE

4. Engage with local schools and Academy Trusts to understand how Religious Education and Collective Worship are provided in Thurrock	<p>Invite a sample of schools to complete the RE Quality Mark Template for self-evaluation.</p> <p>Share with school leaders and governors to encourage completion</p> <p>Committee considers school reports (REQM self-evaluations)</p>	<p>(SACRE members at least one per year)</p> <p>Associate Adviser with support from TPHA.</p>	<p>Up to 4 school visits – 2 per term</p> <p>Suggested schedule – schools to complete once every three years</p>	<p>Meaningful evaluation visits or discussion completed, and reports discussed at SACRE meetings.</p>
5. Provide information on the RE curriculum to schools including through training	<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>
6. Monitor provision for RE and Collective Worship	<p>Source and present national and local data as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – GCSE validated and unvalidated results and entries (local and national) – School workforce data (local and national) – Surveys of provision and of issues such as withdrawal, use of agreed syllabus, who teaches RE etc (local) – Review school websites – Write to schools about findings – Sample collective worship policies 	<p>Adviser</p> <p>All SACRE members</p> <p>LA representative</p>	<p>Annually</p>	<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>
7. Evaluate SACRE work and establish priorities	<p>Item at autumn term meeting</p>	<p>All SACRE members</p>	<p>Autumn term meeting</p>	<p>Evaluation identified success criteria are met</p>

Schedule 2021/22 Date of meeting	Subject	Objective (note – objectives 1 and 2 apply to all meetings)
Autumn 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National developments - update Monitoring provision via school workforce data / self-evaluation Review of membership and attendance Evaluation of work plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 7 2 6
Spring 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring provision via GCSE and A level results (if available) Annual report approval/ using new template Relationships e.g: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools and Academies Teaching School Hubs the Council Governors Communities of religion and belief Thurrock work on Community Integration NASACRE Youth Cabinet Regional Schools Commissioners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 3 4+5
Summer 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards and Achievements in RE in schools Review of SACRE website Review of Collective Worship and right of withdrawal Ofsted Framework on RE – latest reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 6 6 5

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spirited Arts Competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 4
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Appendix B - Provision for RE as reported in the workforce census -November 2021

November 2021

School name	% year 7 hours - RE	% year 8 hours - RE	% year 9 hours - RE	% year 10 hours - RE	% year 11 hours - RE	GCSE entries	GCSE Grade 9-4	Notes
Grays Convent High School	7.86	6.92	4.58	10.7	8.11	95%	85%	
Harris Academy Chafford Hundred	6.17	5.2	6.3	1.1 (Phil)	0.85 (Phil)	3%	2.2%	RE is optional at KS4
Harris Academy Ockendon	4.14	4.66	4.04	4.96	0	0%	N/A	RS is optional at KS4. Core RE delivered by tutors but planned by RE specialist
Harris Academy Riverside	0	1.85	0	0	0	21%	20.5%	RE is optional at KS4
Ormiston Park Academy	0%	N/A	Not reported in 2021
Orsett Heath Academy	2	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Ortu Gable Hall School	2.48	2.56	2.35	0	0	0.4%	0%	No GCSE offered
Ortu Hassenbrook Academy	5.45	4.9	5.76	4.5	0	0%	N/A	
St Clere's School	4.74	4.39	4.33	0	0	0%	N/A	There is a core RE lesson for pupils who do not opt for GCSE
Thames Park Secondary School	3.58	3.71	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
The Gateway Academy	3.68	3.49	0	0	0	96%	50.5%	No GCSE offered for 2022. There is no core RE lesson
The Hathaway Academy	4.44	5.01	3.85	2.19	2.07	9%	4.2%	RE is optional at KS4
William Edwards School	4.28	4.34	4.12	2.73	0.98	4%	1.7%	GCSE RS was offered in 2022 but insufficient pupils chose to allow the course to run

Key Blue Shading: Reporting Query
 Orange Shading: Provision Query