

London Borough of Waltham Forest

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education



SACRE Annual Report 2023-24

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Waltham Forest SACRE is a member of the National Association of SACREs

1. Introduction

1.1. Preface by the Chair

We started the beginning of the school year feeling positive on how the RE network for teachers had developed during 2022-23 and was now able to make an impact on supporting the growth of quality teaching and learning in our schools. One of the requests from the group was that SACRE clarify and provide support for Collective Worship in schools. As a result we undertook a review of the SACRE guidance and organised a training event on Collective Worship for teachers, governors and members of SACRE.

A review of our membership identified a lack of representation from the Sikh, Orthodox Christian and Pentecostal Christian communities as well as a need to increase the representation from teachers.

The development of the RE Hubs website connecting teachers to speakers, places to visit and support groups across London is most welcome. It is hoped that we can encourage local places of worship and speakers in the borough to register.

SACRE advised the LA that a change be made to appoint the Humanist representative from Group D to Group A in response to a recent High Court judgement (Bowen vs Kent CC).

There were two notable highlights to our meetings. In November, Hasan Bolucek gave a presentation on the faith and practice of the Alivi community (a recent but growing community in the borough).

Sophie Casely and Molly Ryan from Leytonstone School gave a presentation about the journey they had made developing the Key stage 3 curriculum. They gave examples of lessons exploring different themes and skills and demonstrated the use of “lenses” to develop critical thinking.

The meeting received a briefing on the Ofsted subject report “Deep and Meaningful” which outlines some of the challenges that we need to consider in the coming year.

As always, I need to add my thanks and admiration to the members of SACRE for the time and energy that they have given to our work. I am particularly grateful for the support of Ruth Kaufman and Is’Haaq Jasat throughout the year.

Colin Whitehead, Chair SACRE

1.2. The local context

The community of the London Borough of Waltham Forest is culturally and socially diverse. Many people have travelled across the globe to come and make their home among us. This diversity is celebrated in the schools, shops, restaurants, businesses, places of worship and institutions throughout the borough.

The 2021 census shows some changes in the borough over the last 10 years. The most marked are: an increase in those identifying as “No religion” and a decrease in those identifying as “Christian”.

Religious affiliation in Waltham Forest % of pop. ¹		
Religion	2011	2021
Buddhist	0.8	0.7
Christian	48.4	39.0
Hindu	2.3	1.9
Jewish	0.5	0.5
Muslim	21.9	21.6
Sikh	0.5	0.5
No Religion	18.0	27.9
Religion Other	0.4	1.0
Religion not stated	7.3	7.0

Our school population records pupils coming from over 150 different language backgrounds. This diversity is also reflected in the faiths and beliefs of our community, as well as in the varied cultural traditions of those who identify as followers within the major religious groups.

The borough is served by:

- 53 primary schools (30 maintained, 21 academies. 2 free schools)
- 17 secondary schools (8 maintained, 8 academies. 1 free schools)
- 2 6th form colleges
- 3 nursery schools (maintained)
- 4 special schools (1 maintained, 3 academies)

Of these schools 11 are schools with a religious character (8 primary & 3 secondary)

1.3. Key priorities for action in 2023-24

The key priorities for action were agreed as:

- Ensure that all teachers of RE have access to training in order to develop their confidence and skills to teach RE effectively.
- Ensure that all schools are provided with information and access to training to help them deliver Collective Worship in a meaningful and appropriate way that meets statutory requirements.
- Improve SACRE impact and effectiveness

2. ¹ Source: Office for National Statistics

2. Religious Education

2.1 Locally Agreed Syllabus

The current agreed syllabus came into effect in September 2021. The results of a previous SACRE survey show that it has been adopted in all maintained community schools and several academies.

Work to support the effective implementation of the syllabus is carried out through the RE Teacher Network. In addition, the teacher meetings offer an opportunity to review the syllabus and consider how it might evolve when considering its renewal in 2026. At the end of the 2024 academic year, SACRE asked schools to fill in a survey about the effectiveness of the syllabus in readiness for beginning the formal review process.

2.2 Standards in RE

KS 4 GCSE Religious Studies 2023 (confirmed results: see **appendix B**)

16 schools entered students into a Religious Studies full course GCSE at KS4. Entries were spread across 4 exam boards. The Waltham Forest average point score for those sitting the AQA and Eduqas exams exceeded the national average.

Nationally male students did less well in the subject achieving a lower average points score than females.

Across the LA the participation in the subject at GCSE increased in 2023. 8 schools entered more than 90% of their cohort. Two schools made a notable increase in the percentage of students taking the subject. Leytonstone School increased the percentage of the cohort from 18% in 2022 to 94% in 2023. Likewise, Walthamstow Academy 34% (2022) to 97% in 2023.

SACRE congratulated these schools on their success and progress along with Eden Girls' and Norlington Boys' on their high participation and above average results.

One school entered students into the RS short course.

SACRE noted that two schools continued not offer RS as a GSCE option in 2023.

KS5 A level Religious Studies: 2023 (confirmed results: see **appendix B**)

The 2023 results showed a significant reduction from the previous year with only 29 entries across the borough. 2022 saw 44 students taking the subject at A level.

OFSTED inspection reports published in 2023-24

Ofsted published reports on 30 schools in the borough. 2 schools were graded as “Outstanding”, 26 as “Good” and 2 as “Requires Improvement”.

In the inspections made only 5 included a “deep dive” into the provision and quality of RE. Comments from the reports included:

“Pupils visit different places of worship and visiting speakers share their knowledge of other faiths with them. These experiences encourage pupils to understand and respect different beliefs and customs.” [primary]

“The school gives considerable thought and care to pupils’ personal development. Pupils are taught about different faiths, beliefs and lifestyles.” [primary]

“The school encourages pupils to consider the views of others. For example, in religious education, Year 6 pupils learn about different beliefs and experiences and why people have differing perspectives. These experiences help pupils to develop their own ideas.” [primary]

“Leaders have introduced positive changes that have made the curriculum more ambitious. For example, religious education is taught with more detail.” [secondary]

2.3 Support for Teaching & Learning

RE Teacher Network Meetings

During the academic year, 3 Subject Network meetings were held, which is an increase on the last 2 years. The first took place on Wednesday 20th September 2023. The main focus was on activities promoting engagement and high quality questioning by pupils in the RE classroom. At this meeting, attendees were also able to find out more about support for teaching Humanism in the borough and the Faith and Belief Forum’s school linking programme, including how to participate in this, as the group were joined by Ruth Kaufman (Humanist rep on SACRE) and Alejandra Cáceres-Sánchez (Programmes Officer at the Faith and Belief Forum).

The second meeting was held on Thursday 29th February. This began with short slots from guests Stacey Burman (London RE Hub Lead) who explained how the hubs initiative could benefit schools, followed by Alejandra Cáceres-Sánchez to give an update on the linking programme and what schools needed to do in order to be a part of the programme for the following academic year. The main part of the meeting was presented by Stephen Pett from RE Today Services who

helped attendees to explore how to consolidate pupils' learning in RE and look at how cognitive neuroscience can help us shape teaching and learning in the subject.

Wednesday 12th June saw the final meeting of the year in which the group focused on RE and assessment. The group concentrated on assessment tasks which were meaningful for pupils and appropriate to their ages and stages.

The Waltham Forest network currently works well as a cross phase group, with both primary and secondary teachers attending and sharing ideas. It is generally led by two advisers; one a primary specialist (Julia Diamond-Conway) and one a secondary specialist (Angela Hill) so that the meeting can split into groups by age of pupils taught where necessary. In order to meet the needs of staff, the meetings include discussions on which CPD people would find most useful; these are always taken into account when the next meeting is planned.

The positive support by teachers to the twilight network meetings encourages us to plan ahead for a daytime conference in the Autumn Term next year. This is planned to cover training sessions for teachers, as well as an opportunity to review the strengths of the current Agreed Syllabus ahead of the formal process of consultation.

2.4 Curriculum resources and teacher support

SACRE has purchased several resources for schools. These include artefacts for all secondary schools to help teaching staff demonstrate diversity within Christianity and books of teaching ideas to help secondary teachers deliver high quality RE lessons. For most primary schools, a set to help teach about Diwali has been purchased.

Where more appropriate, schools with primary age pupils have been bought non-fiction books for pupils on Hindu traditions. These resources will be distributed to schools at the conference for teachers and subject leaders of RE planned for the Autumn Term 2024.

2.5 Complaints about RE

SACRE has a role in investigating complaints against schools in relation to RE and Collective Worship. In 2022-23 there were no such formal complaints reported.

2.6 Withdrawal from RE

Currently we do not have data to indicate the number of students that have been formally withdrawn from RE lessons.

3. Collective Worship

3.1 Guidance to schools

Due to the results of the previous year's survey of schools, Collective Worship was highlighted as a priority for this academic year. Schools were invited to a free CPD session on Collective Worship and consulted about SACRE's new Collective Worship guidance. The guidance was subsequently published and indications from this year's survey are that schools are now meeting their statutory duty with regards to Collective Worship more often, but not necessarily at all times.

3.2 Determinations

SACRE has a statutory role in considering and granting determinations under The Education Reform Act of 1988. No such requests were made this year. The Adviser to SACRE is always available to assist Headteachers in respect of any request.

4. Links with other bodies

We have been working with the Faith and Belief Forum to encourage more schools to take up the offer of the "Linking schools" project

A number of SACRE members are active members of the Waltham Forest Faith and Belief Forum

5. Other local issues

1.4. Safeguarding

Safeguarding is a standard item on all our agenda and all members are now familiar with the duties as set out in "Keeping Children safe in Education"².

1.5. Survey of schools

6. Advice given to the local authority by SACRE

1.6. Humanist representation

SACRE advised the LA that a change should be made to appoint the Humanist representative from Group D to Group A in response to a recent High Court judgement (Bowen vs Kent CC).

The LA agreed to consider this recommendation subject to consultation with the LA legal team.

²

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/954314/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_2020_-_Update_-_January_2021.pdf

1.7. School workforce data

SACRE expressed concern that some schools in the borough had not submitted any data with regard to hours teaching RE in the annual workforce survey 2023.

The LA agreed to contact those schools and discover the meaning behind the lack of data.

1.8. Schools not entering students for GCSE RE

SACRE expressed concern that 2 maintained secondary schools had not entered any students for GCSE RE in 2022 despite it being a requirement of the Agreed Syllabus that an exam option is offered.

The LA agreed to contact those schools for an explanation.

7. Organization of SACRE

1.9. Meetings and attendance

The SACRE had a programme of 6 meetings across the year: Most. meetings were conducted online. However, the return to an in-person meeting in the summer term was warmly welcomed by members.

Date of meeting	Quorate	no. attended	Apologies received
AGM 27 th September 2023	Yes	15	1
27 th September 2023	Yes	15	1
29 th November 2022	Yes	11	2
27 th February 2024	Yes	12	1
23 rd May 2024	Yes	11	5
10 th July 2024	Yes	14	3

1.10. Professional and administrative support

SACRE has enjoyed excellent professional support from the Waltham Forest Governor Services manager during the year. All meetings have been effectively clerked and minutes produced in a timely fashion.

In January Assistant Director of Learning, Gerry Kemble, who has provided the meeting with support and advice for a number of years, left the local authority. Since then the SACRE has been ably supported by Rachel Bowman, interim Assistant Director.

1.11. Membership

During the year SACRE has endeavoured to increase the representation in Groups A, B and C.

It is noted that in Group A there is not currently a representative from the Sikh faith or representatives from the wider Christian communities in the borough.

The lack of wider representation in Group C remains a concern.

A list of members and representation as of July 2024 is attached in **Appendix A**

1.12. Finance

Expenditure: financial year April 1st 2023 – March 31st 2024

Item	cost
Advisor contract (REToday)	£9,352.50
Governor Services	£6,302.00
Officer support (Dir. Children's' Services Recharge)	£4,282.00
NASACRE Membership	£105.00
HUB services	£1,044.00
Conference bookings/training	0
Resources for schools	£7,281.28
Total	£28,366.78

1.13. Who receives this report

This report will be distributed to:

- Director of Children's Services
- Members of the Education Scrutiny Sub Committee
- Headteachers of schools and colleges in Waltham Forest
- Chairs of governors and Academy Trusts
- NASACRE

The SACRE clerk will send a copy of the SACRE report to the Department for Education: ministers@education.gov.uk

The report will also be emailed to NASACRE for publication on its website:

SACRE reports: admin@nasacre.org.uk

If you have any comments about this report, please contact

Waltham Forest Governor Services :

governor.services@walthamforest.gov.uk



Appendix A

MEMBERSHIP OF WALTHAM FOREST SACRE ~ July 2024

Group A	Other Christian denominations and other faiths represented in Waltham Forest		
	Mrs Tara Khare	Hinduism	27/03/23
	Mr Jamal Mannan	Islam	5/7/25
	Ms Ruquyya Vankad	Islam	5/7/25
	Mr Paul Braham	Judaism	10/07/26
	Ms Jasmin Danish	Bah'ai	19/10/25
	Ms Ruth Kaufman	Humanist	09/05/27
	Mr Keith Pilling	Buddhism	27/03/23
Group B	The Church of England: Appointed by the Diocese of Chelmsford Education Committee with the Synod of the Waltham Forest Deanery.		
4 members	Ms Ruth Everett		17/10/25
	Fr Bernard Eaton		
Group C	The Teachers and Educators of the borough		
12 members	Ms Heather Soar	Primary	10/10/25
	Mr Is'Haaq Jasat	Secondary	07/07/24
	Ms Rukhsana Yaqoob	Secondary	05/06/26
	Mr Colin Whitehead	Sch. governor	20/03/26
	Ms Katy Youngman	Primary	30/11/26
Group D	The London Borough of Waltham Forest and the community		
	Cllr Roy Berg	Elected Member	24/05/26
	Cllr Richard Sweden	Elected Member	24/05/26
	Cllr Kastriot Berberi	Elected Member	24/05/26
	Cllr Yusuf Patel	Elected Member	24/05/26
	Ms Rachel Bowman	LBWF Assistant Director – Schools	
Others attending - non-voting			
	Ms Julia Diamond-Conway	RE Advisor to WF SACRE	
	Ms Annette Reidy	SACRE Administrator	

Appendix B

GCSE KS4 Waltham Forest KS4 cohort 2023							
Full Course	No. on roll	No. of entries	% of entred	School Av. Pts	difference to Nat av		
AQA GCSE Religious Studies A	Nat. av. Pt score 5.1 (LA 5.2)				F/M +0.9		
Belmont Park School	13	6	46%	0.7	-4.4		
Buxton School	133	2	2%	1.0	-4.1		
Chingford Foundation School	229	222	97%	4.6	-0.5		
Eden Girls' School, Waltham Forest	112	110	98%	6.7	1.6		
Highams Park School	235	1	0%	1.0	-4.1		
Lammas School and Sixth Form	122	47	39%	3.7	-1.4		
Leytonstone School	174	163	94%	4.5	-0.6		
Norlington School and 6th Form	130	125	96%	6.2	1.1		
Walthamstow Academy	177	172	97%	5.6	0.5		
Willowfield School	171	1	1%	6.0	0.9		
Eduqas GCSE in Religious Studies	Nat. av. Pt score 5.0 (LA 5.9)				F/M +0.8		
Willowfield School	171	77	45%	5.9	0.9		
Pearson GCSE Religious Studies B	Nat. av. Pt score 5.1 (LA 4.9)				F/M +0.8		
Connaught School for Girls	125	123	98%	4.9	-0.2		
George Mitchell School	117	30	26%	4.7	-0.3		
Highams Park School	235	21	9%	5.6	0.5		
Kelmscott School	169	166	98%	4.2	-0.9		
South Chingford Foundation School	95	22	23%	4.1	-1.0		
Walthamstow School for Girls	178	98	55%	6.1	1.0		
Pearson GCSE Religious Studies A	Nat. av. Pt score 5.0 (LA 4.0)				F/M +0.7		
Holy Family Catholic School	195	189	97%	4.0	-1		
Short Course	No. on roll	No. of entries	% of entred				
AQA Religious Studies short course							
Buxton School	133	53	40%				
Schools not entering students for GCSE Religious Studies							
Frederick Bremer School							
Heathcote School & Science College							

Religious Studies (4610) / Exam: GCE A level 2023

School/College	NOE	A*-A	A*-B	A*-E	Avg Pts
National (all entries)	15220	25.8	55.3	97.3	35.5
Chingford Foundation School	11	18.2	36.4	100.0	32.7
Leyton Sixth Form College	10	-	30.0	100.0	30.0
Sir George Monoux College	8	-	-	100.0	21.3