

SOUTHEND-ON-SEA LOCAL AUTHORITY

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (S.A.C.R.E.)

ANNUAL REPORT 2016 – 2017



Southend on Sea's 'Pier at Twilight'

*(Reproduced with permission of John Pye, SBC Volunteer,
Photograph taken from the 100 year-old Cliff Lift on Southend Seafrost)*

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1: INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR OF SACRE: KEVIN RYAN

I am pleased to introduce the Annual Report on the work of the Southend on Sea SACRE, in my tenth year as its Chair. It continues to be an exciting and rewarding time to be involved with Religious Education, both nationally and locally, but also a challenging one.

The Agreed Syllabus that was planned and developed by teachers and other interested parties locally in Southend, was launched as *Improving Learning Together in Religious Education* and adopted by schools, where it has been of tremendous benefit over the last five years. It has encouraged and developed a range of skills and ideas, including creativity, reflection and empathy which when utilised allows learning and learners to flourish.

SACRE believes that R.E., when well taught, can improve the wellbeing of all students and helps foster good community relations, and allows the implementation of a positive spiritual moral social and cultural ethos. In exploring questions of identity and community young people are gaining a deeper understanding of themselves and of others. The Agreed Syllabus has a continuing focus on British Values, which is a strongly encouraged emphasis within classrooms by the Department for Education. Ofsted's specialist RE Reports look for and expect to see the inclusion within an Agreed Syllabus of materials to support newly qualified and early career teachers and non-subject specialists who might be expected to deliver Religious Education within their schools.

As an organic and "living" document it is now necessary, to reflect Southend on Sea's changing needs, and to overhaul and update the Agreed Syllabus, as an organic, on-going resource to assist the provision and delivery of good R.E. Teachers at RE Network meetings for teachers within the Local Authority (LA) have expressed very positive feedback in relation to the current Agreed Syllabus, which was put in place for a five year period and is now ready for review. SACRE itself is aware that there has been changes to the school landscape with the rapid conversion to academy status by many schools. We have seen free school set ups and the extension to special school provision. The social, cultural, religious and ethnic diversity of the Borough of Southend on Sea continues to alter and additionally the issue of BREXIT has also had its impact. The final decision on how our Agreed Syllabus moves forward will be made by the agreed Syllabus Conference which will be convened by SACRE on behalf of the Local Authority, who will also feed in their views.

Part of SACRE's responsibility is to support and monitor the provision of R.E. in Southend's education establishments. Religious Education is a statutory requirement for all school age students in full time education, under the provision of the 1944 Education Act. The analysis of GCSE and A level Religious Studies presented in the report highlights some outstanding achievements, but also evidence of underachievement and possible non-provision in some of the LA's schools. Governors are reminded of their responsibility to ensure that RE is delivered in accordance with statutory requirements. SACRE also promotes and encourages a strong Spiritual Moral Social Cultural ethos to be evident within all our Southend schools.

There are a number of national reports published within the preceding 12 months that highlight the need for high quality training to enable Primary and Secondary teach R.E that is both engaging and effective. SACRE members have noted and discussed the issues raised in these reports and their effects, as well as the implications for schools.

This Report provides an overview of Religious Education within Southend on Sea's schools and the work of SACRE within this context: I commend it to you.

Kevin Ryan,
Chair, SACRE, Southend on Sea Borough Council
14th May 2018

2. ADVICE GIVEN BY SACRE

The Local Authority of Southend on Sea sought advice for a Pupil Referral Unit converting to Academy status. Advice that Religious Education is to be taught in all schools was shared via the resources assembled by the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education and in particular the following:

2. Do Academies have to provide RE?

Yes, under the terms of their Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State, all Academies have to provide RE for all their pupils, except for those whose parents exercise the right of withdrawal. The type of RE specified in the Funding Agreement depends on whether or not the Academy has a religious designation, and for converter Academies, on whether the predecessor school was a voluntary controlled (VC), Voluntary aided (VA) or foundation school.
(p.1; pp. 2)

3. Does an Academy with a religious designation have to follow a particular RE syllabus?

They may, in addition, provide RE that is in line with a locally agreed syllabus and teach about other faiths if they choose.
(p.1; pp 3)

The Review of Religious Education in England
The Religious Education Council of England and Wales; October 2013.

The predecessor school in question was not of a religious designation, neither was it a foundation school nor did it have a Voluntary Aided, nor Voluntary Controlled status.

3. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (RE)

3.1 STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The SACRE continues to fulfil its responsibility to monitor standards and quality in RE (Religious Education) Collective Worship and spiritual development. Examination results at GCSE, A/S and A level are monitored and reported to SACRE as part of the LA's overall monitoring and evaluation of standards.

3.2 Analysis of GCSE, AS and 'A' level results for 2017

There are again some extremely impressive achievements in RS at GCSE, AS and A-Level examinations which reflect the continued high quality of teaching.

School entry policies for full GCSE Religious Studies (RS) differ from school to school, depending on the arrangements for statutory RE within the Key Stage 4 curriculum and the provision of RS within the school's AS and 'A' Level examination option choices.

In 2017 there was a pleasing increase in the number of schools in Southend, from nine to 11 schools out of 12 in the LA, which entered students for the GCSE Religious Studies (Full Course).

It is to be celebrated that six schools entered close to 100% of students for the Full Course GCSE in 2017, compared with just four schools doing so in 2016. The Eastwood Academy entered 159/161 students; St Bernard's High School entered 142/144; St Thomas More High School 143/144; Southend High School for Boys entered 149/150 of their students, with 104 taking the Full GCSE Course and 45 entered into the GCSE Short Course. Westcliff High School for Girls entered 149/150 students. It is also pleasing to see that Belfairs Academy entered 93.91% of its students into an RS examination with 216/230 entered into the GCSE Full Course and that Chase High also entered students into the Full Course, neither school having entered students into RS GCSE external examinations in 2016.

There were no entries from one or more of the LA's secondary schools into either GCSE Full or Short Course for the second year in succession. This situation would bear investigation to ensure the students are receiving religious education in the curriculum, as this is a statutory requirement. If external factors are involved SACRE should offer support.

Cohort numbers ranged from 17 students at Chase High School (just 8.9%) from a NOR of 191, to 159 out of a cohort of 161 at the Eastwood School. 100% of the cohort were also entered at St Thomas More High, as in St Bernard's High School, although these schools' Catholicity will obviously have been a positive influence on subject availability and choice.

The comments on achievement that follow will clearly be affected by the overall patterns of entry which vary considerably between schools. The selective nature of four of the secondary academies within the LA skews their and the LA's figures somewhat and therefore comparisons between schools must be considered with this in mind. Students also transfer to different schools for 6th Form so tracking of cohorts from GCSE to GCE AS / A level examinations, is not possible.

3.21 Achievement at GSCE Religious Studies GCSE Full Course

- In 2017 51.88% of students (a rise from 49% in 2016) sat a GCSE course in Religious Studies which is above the national figure of 46.91%.
- Overall, of those pupils, 80.7% (compared to 82% in 2016) achieved A*-C grades at GSCE which is **well above** the national figure for all schools of 70%. 98.4% achieved A* - G grades which is **above** the national figures of 97.9%.
- Four schools exceeded the national picture significantly with 100% of students entered achieving A*- C grades. Students from seven schools achieved 100% A*- G grades including entries from three non-selective schools: The Eastwood Academy, Cecil Jones Academy, and Chase High Schools. Students from the remaining nonselective schools achieved between 94.4% and 99.3% which is also to be celebrated
- Southend schools achieved A*- G grades ranging from 94.4% - 100% of the cohort, which is an average across all schools of 98.4%, this, again, is slightly above the national average of 97.9% and is also to be celebrated

- Although a small cohort of 17 entries, 88.2% of students at Chase High School achieved A* to C passes and 41.2% achieved either A* or A passes which is very pleasing.
- Shoeburyness High School also entered a small cohort of 39 students who achieved good results, with 56.5% of the students achieving A*- B grades. A very respectable 97.4% achieved A* - G grades. This was also the case for the small cohort of Cecil Jones Academy where 100% of students achieved A*-G grades.
- All students entered by both Westcliff High Schools (Boys and Girls) and both Southend High Schools (Boys and Girls) achieved A*-C grades and an impressive 6.7 – 7.7 average points which is well above the National average of 4.7 points. The average point-score of the schools was 5.5 which is above that of National scores of 4.7

Achievement at the higher grades (A*-A) within the LA in GCSE RS was particularly good with 42.5 % (A* @17% + A @ 25.5%) being significantly **above** the corresponding National figures of 27.4% (A* @ 8.8% and A @ 18.6%). The LA's results are also in line with its A*+A results for 2016 so the high achievement has been sustained.

Governing Bodies will generally want to satisfy themselves that:

- the statutory requirements for schools to provide Religious Education for **all** students are being met at Key Stage 3 and 4.
- the overall proportion of students being entered for any accreditation in RS at GCSE is appropriate given the number of students on role in the LA (NOR) is declared as 2105 and number of entries (NOE) is declared as 1092 which is 51.92%, however, this is a good percentage rise from 2016 when the number entered was only just 35.41% of the students on roll.
- that school websites state the school's arrangements for teaching RE, whether or not the school / academy follows the local agreed syllabus or states which other such syllabus it follows:
 - In their curriculum information on school websites, in general, secondary schools include only a minimal mention, if any, of RE provision for KS 3 students and for KS 4 students not following RS examination syllabi
 - If secondary schools do mention RS it is generally as part of their examination syllabi
- that, while good teaching is being received by a small percentage of a school's cohort perhaps more students could be encouraged to choose RS as an option:
 - To take advantage of this good teaching
 - understandably, some learners will not be entered for examinations in RS for a variety of reasons, however, SACRE should satisfy itself that all learners' entitlement, to receive Religious Education, is being met at Key Stages 3 – 5

3.22 GCSE Short Course in Religious Studies

One school, Southend High School for Boys, entered students into the Religious Studies GCSE (Short Course). Their achievement was again impressive with 88.9% achieving A* - B grades with national figures of 42.2% achieving these grades. The GCSE Short Courses are no longer counted in a school's accountability measures, i.e. the A*-C GCSE pass rate. Therefore many schools will be phasing out short courses which is borne out with the decline in the number of schools entering students in 2017.

3.23 Achievement at GCE AS and Advanced Level in Religious Studies

GCE AS Level Religious Studies examinations:

- In 2017 eight schools entered students for AS Level RS against nine entering students in 2016 although cohort sizes per school were smaller in 2017 than in 2016
- Achievement in AS Level in the schools was very good, with all but one of the eight schools entering students achieving above the percentages achieved by schools nationally.
- Albeit the small cohorts entered results were **well above** the national levels with
 - all students from all but one school achieving above the national results at grades A-B
 - all students entered achieving an A-D pass
- Average points scores of all eight schools were also above those achieved nationally and for the LA the average at 20.7 pts is above that achieved in 2016 at 18.1 pts

GCE 'A' Level Religious Studies examinations:

Once again there is a very positive picture for A Level across the Borough in 2106 – 17 which must reflect the high quality of teaching and eight schools entered students for A Level RS, with a total of students entered remaining similar in 2017, with 146 entries, to those entered in 2016 (149).

The number of student entries fell slightly both locally and nationally. The cohorts entered from individual schools varied from 4 to 24 students.

- All students entered by schools within the LA achieved between grade A*-E
- Six of the nine schools achieved percentage of passes **significantly above** the national figure of 24.2% at grade A*-A, as follows:
 - Westcliff High School for Boys Academy achieving 54.2% grade A*-A
 - Southend High school for Boys achieving 47.4% grade A*-A
 - Southend High School for Girls achieving 43.8% grade A*-A
- Three non-selective schools Shoeburyness High School, Belfairs and Cecil Jones Academies and are to be congratulated for a notable achievement providing successful A-Level examination courses for very small cohorts as follows:
 - all eight students of Shoeburyness High School, achieved grades B-E with 25% achieving grades B and C
 - a creditable set of results achieved by students from Cecil Jones Academy, from 4 entries, with 25% achieving A*-A grades and 100% of students achieving A*-E grades
 - 8% of students at Belfairs Academy achieved A*-A grades and a very commendable 50% of the 12 students entered achieved A*-B grades

- Students at St Bernard’s High School and at St Thomas More High School achieved **well above** the national figures for A*-B passes with a creditable 68.4% and 64.7% respectively

Governors should consider the following points:

- Where number of students entered for GCE A level was small (and smaller than their cohort) as in three secondary academies, (excepting where students themselves have withdrawn) that provision is made for meeting the statutory requirements to teach RE to **all**:
 - This question applies in **all** the schools where the GCE external examination cohorts are less than the full cohort of students in that particular year
 - That provision for Religious Education should be stated on the websites of secondary schools within the LA to inform prospective/parents and students

3.3 COMPLAINTS CONCERNING RE

No formal complaints were made about religious education under the LA statutory complaints procedure during 2016 - 17.

3.4 WITHDRAWAL FROM RE

There are no figures provided from schools in respect of withdrawal from Religious Education within the responses to the LA-wide survey of schools recently undertaken.

4.0 AGREED SYLLABUS for RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The Local Authority’s Agreed Syllabus has been in place since its launch in September 2013 and is used in all non-faith primary schools and academies and the majority of secondary schools and academies for Key Stage 3.

During the academic year 2015 - 2016 information gathered via the survey of all the LA’s schools and continuing consultations and discussions with Lead Teachers attending the RE Networks, indicated that teachers and schools continue to be pleased with and to use the Locally Agreed Syllabus. This is, however, due to be renewed or replaced by the autumn of 2018 and consultation has taken place with teachers and schools via the RE Networks. A range of different processes and resources were discussed but teachers agreed they would struggle to support SACRE by rewriting the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Due the lack of funding the Local Authority would be unable to support schools to release teachers from school duties for the time necessary for the task to be undertaken, as has happened in the past. It was therefore through the Primary and Secondary RE Networks that consideration of the replacement or renewal of the syllabus would continue to be considered and discussed during the latter half of the 2016 - 17 academic year.

4.1 TEACHER TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND SOCIAL, MORAL, SPIRITUAL AND CULTURAL EDUCATION

During the academic year 2016 – 17, the number of teachers who attended the Primary and Secondary Network Meetings, led by Frances Neil, remained constant. The year’s dates for the Network Meetings are published on the South Essex Teaching Schools Alliance (SETSA) website

- Information of local and national importance (such as circulating the RE Survey, information about the RE Curriculum, and Ofsted updates)
- Details of discussion points (such as examination reforms and legalities surrounding curriculum provision)
- Resources that are available such as sharing details of visiting speakers / places of interest and worship to visit
- An opportunity to share ideas, resources and teaching points

5. COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

5.1 MONITORING

SACRE has highlighted the need to monitor provision and quality of collective worship in schools within the LA. Frances Neil has attended worship in primary schools within the LA and found standards to be high and pupils attentive and interested and the content well prepared, well presented and supportive of the LA's aims for respect, promoting British Values and celebrating diversity.

5.2 TRAINING

There has been no training for schools on collective worship during the year.

5.3 DETERMINATIONS

There were no applications for determinations to alter the character of collective worship for all or some pupils in a particular school during 2016-17.

5.4 COMPLAINTS CONCERNING COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

No formal complaints were made about collective worship under the local statutory complaints procedure during 2016-17.

6 LINKS WITH OTHER AGENCIES

6.1 NATIONAL

Southend SACRE is a member of the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE). Frances Neil is a member of National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE) and the Association of RE Inspectors, Assessors and Consultants (ARIAC). SACRE has been delighted to have been supported by NATRE and *REToday*, whose National Adviser, Kate Christopher, has attended SACRE meetings as an observer and many of the RE networks to provide high quality CPD to support teachers in their work. SACRE has also been supported by The South Essex Teaching School Alliance (SETSA) who have provided accommodation and refreshments for the termly RE Network meetings under their "school to school support" section.

An application for the Accord Award 2017 subtitled "believing in children, learning together" (sic) was submitted. Although Southend LA's SACRE was not shortlisted for the award, Southend SACRE's submission authored by Frances Neil, was noted in the section "**Other commended practices**" as follows:

Breadth of SACRE membership

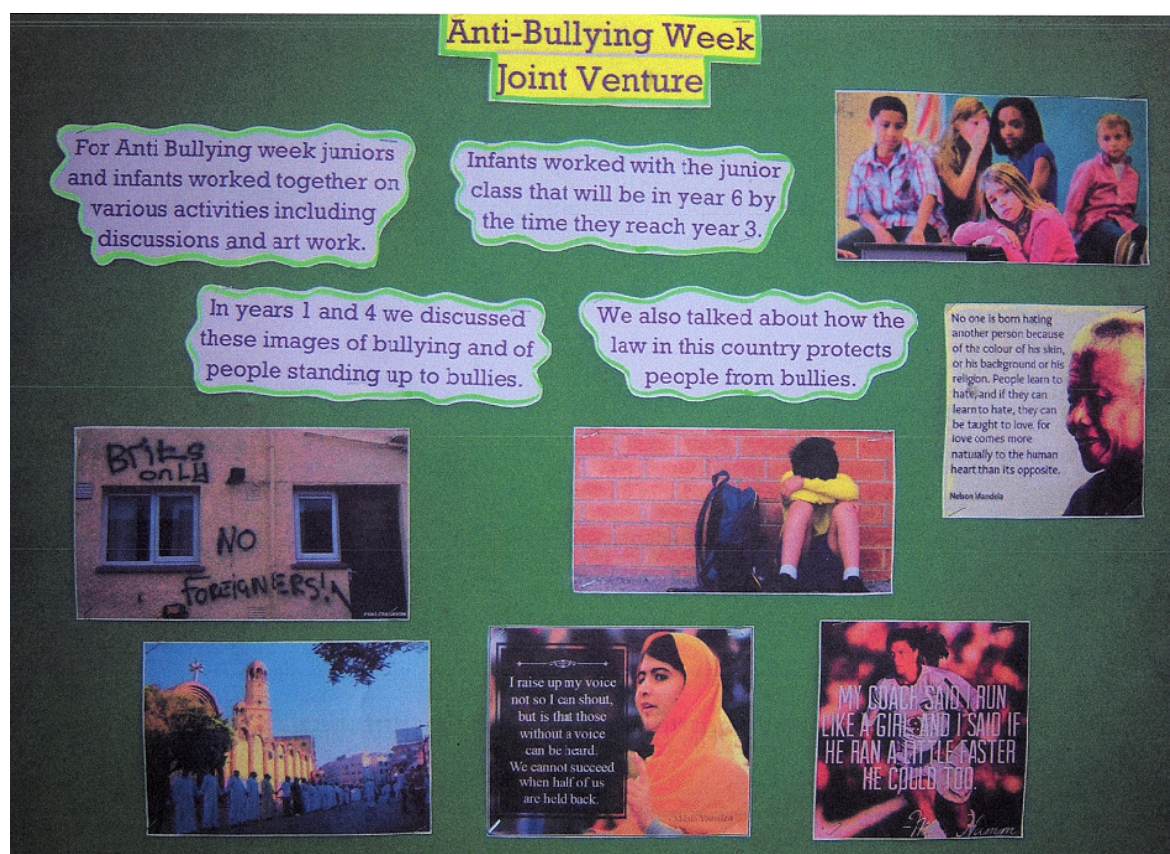
Some SACREs earned praise for the breadth of members on their local authority and teacher Committees..... The emphasis on the needs of pupils from a minority ethnic background that the appointment symbolised was welcomed. Though other SACREs may find it hard to replicate the dedication, Southend SACRE had seven of the local authority's councillors serving on its Committee D. This sent a strong signal about the Council's prioritisation for RE, which was appreciated.

Inclusive SACREs: findings from the 2017 Accord Inclusivity Award

6.2 LOCAL

During the year SACRE meetings have been held at the Tickfield Centre and local places of worship, such as the Unitarian Meeting House as they celebrated their Centenary. SACRE continued to link with the LA's 'Healthy Schools Partnership' and their 'Difference and Diversity Group' meetings, which Frances Neil attended on SACRE's behalf. The membership of this group involves schools and young people and other local groups such as Essex Police, the Fire Services and Southend United's Community Foundation which leads on "Show Racism the Red Card". The LA's 'Healthy Schools' Lead, Chair of the Difference and Diversity Group, has attended SACRE as an observer and continues an interest in SACRE's work.

Art Work from Temple Sutton Primary School – Anti-Bullying Week addressing the subject of religious and racial bullying and how the law in England protects people.



7 OTHER ISSUES

7.1 BUDGET

The Local Authority has delegated a reasonable sum of money to SACRE to enable the group to function independently and effectively. The funds are allocated carefully to support SACRE to meet and continue its work effectively. Expenditure included clerking, contracting an Adviser for RE, national association affiliation fees and incidental expenses, for example, venue costs.

As previously discussed during the 16-17 academic year SACRE funded the following:

- Places for the Chair of SACRE, Kevin Ryan, attend the excellent National Conference, held by NATRE, in January 2017.
- Other CPD opportunities through supporting the work of the RE Adviser with the RE Networks, described above, which are aimed at supporting student and pupil achievement in the schools within the LA.

7.2 ATTENDANCE AND MEMBERSHIP of SACRE

It is pleasing to report that some historical membership issues have been successfully resolved during the year and members' attendance at SACRE meetings was again consistent and supportive during the 2016-2017 year. SACRE was pleased to welcome new members at the beginning of the year.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
CONSTITUTION, TERMS OF REFERENCE AND

APPENDIX B
MEMBERSHIP OF SOUTHEND SACRE FOR 2016-17