

**SOUTHEND-ON-SEA LOCAL AUTHORITY**

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

**ANNUAL REPORT 2017 – 2018**



**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 Seafront)*

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# **BOROUGH OF SOUTHEND ON SEA**

## **Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) Annual Report 2018/19**

### **1: INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR OF SACRE: KEVIN RYAN**

As the Chairman of SACRE I am delighted to introduce the Annual Report for 2018 - 2019.

This year members of SACRE have again been pleased to receive results of the GCSE, AS and Advanced Level Religious Studies examinations and have noted that these results are significantly above the national average in certain areas. There are a number of high performing Religious Education Departments within Southend-on-Sea, where achievement has been outstanding reflecting the high quality of teaching, however, members have raised concerns about schools not meeting statutory requirements to provide Religious Education for all students.

Work is underway on the Second revised Southend-on-Sea Locally Agreed Syllabus, which is focused on the context and the needs of the area covered by our Authority and will be ready for the start of the Academic Year 2018-2019. This is a welcome and exciting prospect

and the SACRE looks forward to working with schools and community groups to launch the syllabus.

Part of the role of the SACRE is to advise the LA upon the religious education to be given its schools in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus. In particular, it can offer support and guidance on methods of teaching, the selection of resources and materials and the provision of training for teachers of Religious Education. We are also required to advise the Authority upon matters connected with collective worship within its schools.

It is therefore important that we are able to reflect upon and celebrate the diverse religious make-up of the citizens within the Borough in our own membership.

The SACRE is concerned that representatives of all faith communities and those who hold non-religious world views participate in our decision-making through ensuring that their appointed representatives are proactively engaged in our work.

We look forward therefore to expanding and developing this representation during the next Year.

**Kevin Ryan**

**Chair of Southend-on-Sea SACRE**

**14<sup>th</sup> May 2019**

## **2. ADVICE GIVEN BY SACRE**

### **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.

The nature of Southend's selective admissions at 11 also has an impact upon achievement. It is necessary to acknowledge this in any statement or analysis of a schools' figures.

#### **3.2 Analysis of GCSE, AS and 'A' level results for 2018**

There are again some extremely impressive achievements among students at Southend's schools in their 2018 RS at GCSE, both maintained and academy, at AS and A-Level examinations which must, once again, reflect the continued high quality of teaching.

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

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. The arrangement for 6<sup>th</sup> form entry and subjects offered also mean students may transfer from school to school for 6th Form programmes of study so tracking of cohorts from GCSE to GCE AS / A level examinations, is not possible and comparison between school's achievements cannot be made.

Just four schools entered close to 100% of students for the Full Course GCSE in in 2018 compared with six schools entering such numbers in 2017 and just four schools doing so in 2016.

It is also pleasing to see the following data:

- St Bernard's High School entered 143/144 students
- St Thomas More High School 145/149
- Westcliff High School for Girls entered all 151 students
- Belfairs Academy entered 218/276 students.

Again in 2018 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. In other schools in the Borough entries ranged from 78 (from a cohort of 148) to 44 (of a cohort of 149).

There were no entries from one or more of the LA's secondary schools into either GCSE Full or Short Course, some for the second year in succession. This situation would bear investigation to ensure the students are receiving their entitlement to Religious Education in the curriculum, as per the statutory requirement. If external factors are involved SACRE should offer support. It is also disappointing that schools whose results were impressive and celebrated in 2017 did not submit entries in 2018.

### **3.21 Achievement at GSCE Religious Studies GCSE Full Course**

The considered views of experienced teachers of GCSE RS that this examination is more difficult than under previous GCSE courses of study and this may have constrained entries in some schools.

Sadly there was a slight decline in the number of schools entering students into the GCSE RS Full Course in 2018, with 10 schools entered (down from 11 schools with entries in 2017). This is still more than in 2016 (which saw only 9 schools out of the 14 in the Borough entering students).

It is noteworthy that the grading system has changed for RS GCSE Full Courses so instead of A\* to G, Q, U and X, GCSE grades are now published as 9 (highest) to 1, with U and X.

- Students entered from the non-selective Shoeburyness High School achieved an impressive set of results with 100% of students passing and 64.5% of students receiving grades 9-5 which was above national score of 61.7%. Similarly, 76.8% of students achieved grades 9-4, again this was above the national scores of 72.6%.
- Students at the non-selective Belfairs Academy also achieved a good set of results with 98.6% of students achieving a pass and 45.9% and 58.7% achieving 9-5 grades and 9-4, respectively.

- Results were significantly above the national scores of 7.8% at grade 9 for students both of Westcliff High School for Girls (at 45.7%) where an impressive 100% achieved grades 9-5 and Southend High School Girls (at 38.6%) where students also achieved a pass rate of 97.7% at grades 9-5
- Impressive data showed 71% of students entered at St Thomas More High School achieved grades 9—5 (well above the national scores of 59.7%) while 81.4% of students achieved grades 9-4 which was also above national scores of 71.8%. Students' average point score was 5.4pts above the national score at 5.1pts.
- Impressively, 83.8% of Westcliff High School for Boys Academy students achieved grades 9-7 with a 100% pass rate and an average points score of 7.7pts, well above the national points' score of 5.5pts.
- Also impressive were the results achieved by of students of Southend High School for Boys. 76.9% of students achieved a grade 9-7 with 100% achieving grades 9-4. Their average points were 7.5pts well above the national point score of 5.5pts.
- It is worthy of mention that St Bernard's High School entered the whole cohort of students on role and all pupils passed. It is creditable that 76.2% achieved grades 9-4 with a points score of 5.1 pts which is just above the national point score of 5pts.

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 and not only for those studying RS examinations which, of course will not necessarily be followed by all students.
- 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 and 5 students (which includes those in 6<sup>th</sup> forms) not following any RS examination syllabi
  - If secondary schools do mention RS it is generally as part of their examination syllabi

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 Some learners, understandably, will not be entered for examinations in RS for a variety of reasons, however, SACRE and school governors 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

In 2018, as in 2017, one school, Southend High School for Boys, entered students into the Religious Studies GCSE (Short Course). Their achievement was well above national figures with 58% achieving grade 9-7. This surpasses the national figures of 29.1% achieving these grades. All students achieving passes 9-4. 60% of passes were at grade 7 and 6 combined, with 11.6% achieving the highest grade of 9 and 17.4% achieving a grade 8. 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.

### 3.23 Achievement at GCE AS and Advanced Level in Religious Studies

#### GCE AS Level Religious Studies examinations:

- In 2018 just seven schools entered students for AS Level RS against eight entering students in 2017 and nine in 2016.
- The total number of entries increased from 83 in 2017 to 102 in 2018, however, this is due largely to a much larger cohort of students being entered from Southend High School for Boys, from 27 in 2017 to 67 in 2018
- Cohorts varied from 67 to 3 students entered.
- Achievement in AS Level in the schools was very good, with students in four schools, Southend High School for Boys and both Westcliff and Southend High Schools For Girls achieving passes at an impressive A\*-B between 80.6% -100%, significantly above the 35.8% achieved by 'all schools' nationally.
- Also worthy of note are the 33.3% of students at the non-selective Shoeburyness High School who achieved at A\*- B passes which is in line with National figures for all schools.

#### GCE 'A' Level Religious Studies examinations:

There is a very positive picture for A Level across the Borough in 2017- 2018 with schools and students achieving an impressive set of results which must reflect the high quality of teaching. Eight schools entered students for A Level RS, although, sadly, there is a declining trend in the number of entries with 115 students entered compared to 146 entries in 2017 and in 149 in 2016.

The number of entries from individual schools varied from 6 to 17 students.

- All students entered by schools within the LA achieved between grade A\*-E passes.
- Three of the eight schools achieved percentage of passes **significantly above** the national figure of 23% at grade A\*-A, as follows:
  - Southend High school for Boys achieving 82.4% grade A\*-A
  - Westcliff High School for Boys Academy achieving 58.3% grade A\*-A
  - Westcliff High School for Girls achieving 42.9% grade A\*-A

Also achieving above national figures:

- Southend High School for Girls achieving 33.3% grade A\*-A
- Two non-selective schools, Shoeburyness High School and Belfairs Academy are to be congratulated for a notable achievement providing successful A-Level examination courses for very small cohorts as follows:

- A praiseworthy result for all eight students of Belfairs Academy saw them achieve grades C-D and therefore 100% of students achieving A\*-E grades
- a creditable set of results achieved by students from Shoeburyness High School, from 6 entries (an increase from 4 of 2017) with 66.7% achieving C passes and 100% of students achieving A\*-E grades
- In both St Bernard's High School and St Thomas More High School 6.9% of students achieving grade A passes. Both schools entered cohorts of 16 students
- It is commendable that 100% of the students from both St Bernard's High and from St Thomas More High entered achieved A level passes in RS

**Governors should consider the following points:**

- Where number of students entered for GCE A level was smaller than their total cohort (excepting where students themselves have withdrawn) that provision is made for meeting the statutory requirements to teach RE to **all students:**
  - 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 2017-18.

**3.4 WITHDRAWAL FROM RE**

There are no figures provided from schools in respect of withdrawal from Religious Education Southend's schools. The opportunity was taken to collect such data, informally, when Lead RE teachers assembled for CPD recently. This leads SACRE to believe that across the whole Borough this figure was very low. Most teachers reported no withdrawals; three teachers knew of single families or single pupils who were withdrawn. It is not believed the families were related, nor that they belonged to the same faith, belief or worshipping group.

It is considered that SACRE may need to ascertain, on a more formal basis in the coming year, how many pupils/students are withdrawn or, for students over 16 years of age, withdraw themselves from RE. SACRE may consider it necessary to repeat the 2015 survey of provision for Religious Education and Collective Worship within the Borough, both of academies and maintained schools, to ascertain the current situation.

**4.0 AGREED SYLLABUS for RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

The Local Authority's Agreed Syllabus, in place since September 2013, was due for renewal, rewriting or replacement by September 2018. During the 2017-2018 year the work of the RE Lead Teachers' Networks, both primary and secondary, has centred around the plans to source a new Locally Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education and for that to be in place for the Academic year 2018- 2019.

The new syllabus will be taught in all Borough maintained non-faith primary schools and the majority of secondary schools at Key Stage 3 and will be available for both primary and secondary academies.

During the previous academic years of 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 information was gathered through continuing consultations and discussions with Lead Teachers attending the Primary and secondary RE Networks. As had been previously decided by SACRE the lack of funding the Local Authority would mean that it would be unable to support schools to release teachers from school duties to form 'writing groups' despite the success of that group's work in 2013.

Discussions in this year surrounded the purchase of a syllabus and after considering two in depth, the Lead Teachers and SACRE were given the opportunity to say which they preferred. The choice of both parties was a syllabus that offered:

- support for:
  - whole school curriculum planning
  - key stage and termly planning
  - classroom planning and activities
  
- while offering in depth planning for:
  - Christianity at all Key stages from Early Years/ Foundation Stage
  
- And the major religions present within the United Kingdom, these being (in no particular order):
  - Islam
  - Judaism
  - Hinduism
  - Sikhism
  - Buddhism
  - Non-religious world views such as humanism

Negotiations followed and the publishers presented the Syllabus to SACRE in spring 2018. The Lead Adviser for RE contacted other authorities using the Syllabus and received very good reports.

Sections of the Syllabus were trialled within schools and the findings, thoughts and feedback from Lead Teachers, school leaders and pupils were considered. All were supportive of the syllabus presented and the choice was recommended to Southend Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE).

The responsibility for agreeing the Locally Agreed Syllabus falls to SACRE which is a statutory body consisting of members, professionals and local leaders of religious groups represented within the population of Southend as determined by the most recent government Census.

The Agreed Syllabus for religious education is the legal and statutory basis for religious education in Southend-on-Sea's non-aided schools. At a meeting of the Agreed Syllabus Conference on 5th July 2018, the formal means by which SACRE determine their decision, the SACRE unanimously agreed to adopt as the Locally Agreed Syllabus that published by RE Today which was also recommended to them by teachers of the Borough.

Southend Borough Council have endorsed the decision of SACRE, and adopted the RE Today Syllabus as the new Agreed Syllabus for Southend from 2018-2023 to support high quality teaching of Religious

Education for all pupils and students in non-aided maintained schools in the Borough of Southend (all other schools in Southend are required to follow a locally agreed syllabus (LAS) and, as is the current situation many choose to follow the Southend LAS. Faith Schools follow the syllabus from their own Diocese. The Church of England Diocese of Chelmsford has agreed that St Marys C of E Primary will follow Southend's LAS for its study of 'other faiths'.

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

During the academic year 2017-2018, the number of teachers who attended the Primary and Secondary Network Meetings grew. The meetings were led by RE Adviser, Frances Neil, and a consistent group of secondary school teachers attended or maintained contact with the RE Adviser throughout the year.

The year's dates for the Network Meetings are published on the South Essex Teaching Schools Alliance (SETSA) website ([www.setsa.info](http://www.setsa.info)) entitled "School to School Support" and *most* of the Subject Network Meetings are held on the same day at Westcliff High School for Girls at 4pm in the afternoon so schools can schedule Staff Inset to avoid these days and facilitate attendance by their Lead RE teachers and other teachers of RE who may be interested in the group's work.

This arrangement has worked well and has enabled teachers to attend and contribute to this important professional network which enhances their in-school responsibilities. Due to scheduling difficulties and the packed diaries of teachers and schools it was decided to continue hold the Primary and Secondary Networks together on the published day.

This also facilitated good discussion concerning the RE Syllabus that will be renewed or replaced during autumn 2018. Membership of the Teachers' networks has resulted in a core-group of teachers who either attend each term's meeting or share attendance with a member of their departmental team or who keep contact with Frances Neil, the RE Adviser, for ongoing support, guidance and resources.

SACRE funded the attendance of the Chair of SACRE, Kevin Ryan, who attend the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE) "Strictly RE" Conference in London on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> January. This was an opportunity for the Chair to network and undertake excellent Continuing Professional Development. Other teachers from Southend also attended. It is heartening to experience the dedication and professionalism of teachers in our within the LA.

#### **Continuing Professional Development through Teacher Networks**

Specialist advice and support is available for schools through training sessions held during the Primary and Secondary termly network meetings. These are affiliated to NATREs "*Local RE Groups Network*". Frances Neil, has led primary RE Networks, often supported by a co-opted member of SACRE. The following were shared with RE Lead Teachers:

- Documents such as the Consultation on Religious Education (*CoRE*)
- Regular NATRE Local Group Power Point presentations, Newsletters, and resources
- Details of the RE "Webchat" Program (a question and answer/ ideas sharing broadcast in which any teacher can participate)
- 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 withdrawal from RE, classroom and 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, pupils attentive and interested and the content well prepared, well presented and supportive of the LA's aims for respect, promoting community values and celebrating a richness of diversity and difference that is present within the wider community of Southend on Sea.

### **5.2 TRAINING**

There has been no training for schools on collective worship during the year. Training for SACRE was undertaken to inform them of the legal processes for agreeing a Locally Agreed Syllabus so members felt they could contribute to discussions and were informed in order to make decisions.

### **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 2017-18.

### **5.4 COMPLAINTS CONCERNING COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

No complaints were made about collective worship under the local statutory complaints procedure during 2017-18.

## **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). SACRE has been delighted to have been supported by NATRE and *REToday*, who's National Adviser, Kate Christopher, has attended SACRE meetings to present the prospective Syllabus.

Mrs Christopher also attended an RE network to provide high quality CPD to support teachers in their work as the deployment of RE Today's Syllabus is approaching. 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. Frances Neil led these sessions which were well received and growing in popularity during the year.

### **6.2 LOCAL**

During the year SACRE meetings have been held at the Tickfield Centre, the Civic Centre and local places of worship. SACRE continued to link with the LA's 'Healthy Schools Partnership' through attending their 'Difference and Diversity Group' meetings and the Southend Interfaith Working Group (SWIG) both of which Frances Neil attended on SACRE's behalf.

The membership of this group involves schools and young people and other local groups such as Southend Youth Council, 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.

## **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 17-18 academic year SACRE funded the following:

- Places for the Chair of SACRE, Kevin Ryan, attend the excellent National Conference, held by NATRE, in January 2018.
- 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 2017-2018 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 2017-18