

Report of: Director of Learning and Schools

| Meeting of: | Date: | Ward(s): |
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| Children's Scrutiny Committee | 26 November 2019 | All |

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SUBJECT: Islington SACRE (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education) Annual Report 2019

1. Synopsis

- 1.1 Religious Education encompasses not only religious literacy and the knowledge of the values and insights of religious and non-religious world views, but also the endorsement of diversity and the encouragement of tolerance, respect and mutual understanding within our neighbourhood, our nation and the wider world. Since RE is the only strand of the Curriculum which can be moulded by local perspectives SACRE is in a unique position to listen to and take account of local needs and circumstances. Above all, we seek to provide the encouragement, support and subject knowledge that local schools need as they seek to provide teaching of the highest quality.

Over the past 12 months Islington SACRE's task has been, with the support of RE Today consultant Kate Christopher, to embed the current syllabus for the teaching of RE and to improve support and training for RE teaching. In this, we have sought to provide a framework for the teaching of Religious Education based on current thinking on religious education, but attentive to local circumstances and the needs of Islington schools. With the help of School Improvement Lead Anthony Doudle, Islington SACRE's website now publishes a valuable range of resources and guidance for schools.

Continuing the implementation of the syllabus and scheme of works, broadening the range of resources directly available to schools and discovering new ways to engage with local schools remain important ongoing tasks for SACRE. Whilst we have broadened and renewed the membership of Islington SACRE, we are still seeking faith representative from a number of traditions as well as local teachers. We want to ensure that all voices are heard and every perspective is included.

2. Recommendations

2.1 To note Islington SACREs work in 2018-19, specifically:

- Published guidance on Ramadan, Collective Worship, PE
- Future guidance on Sex and Relationships education under discussion
- Worked with Primary teachers on the Agreed Syllabus, focusing on assessment
- Produced exemplars of learning outcomes to support the Agreed syllabus
- Briefed Deputies and Governors on RE-related matters
- Produced RE-specific words to support understanding of new Ofsted framework in relation to RE
- Enlarged membership
- Organized a summer conference for teachers and SACRE members

3. Advice to statutory bodies

- 3.1 SACRE has written up-to-date advice which is to be shared on Islington Council's website. This advice is for schools, parents, Local Authority parties or any other interested member of the community. An online function enables members of the public to contact Anthony Doudle, Head of School Improvement and SACRE lead on the council, to ensure SACRE can receive questions and comments. In 2018 – 19 SACRE have published national guidance about diversity of religion and belief as well as the 2017 Agreed Syllabus for Islington.
- 3.2 SACRE have created guidance on further key topics (below), which are currently being edited and will be published soon. These topics are:
- Supporting students during Ramadan
 - Matters of religion and belief associated with PE (Physical Education)
 - Collective Worship in schools.
- 3.3 SACRE are currently considering a statement and advice regarding new Ofsted Sex and Relationships education requirements.
- 3.4 Additionally, Anthony Doudle works directly with Heads and Deputies across Islington. Where necessary this provides a platform for keeping senior leaders abreast of new about SACRE. For example; in advance of the launch of the 2017 Agreed Syllabus RE adviser Kate Christopher and Anthony Doudle briefed this group on the importance of the syllabus
- 3.5 Through CPD offered to teachers on the new Ofsted framework, members of SACRE created a list of key words children should have learned at each Key Stage in RE lessons. This is linked to the new Syllabus and directly supports teachers in connecting RE to Ofsted requirements.

4. New Grading system

- 4.1 In 2018 GCSE changed to a new grading system - under the new 1-9 system of grades would be used, and therefore replacing the A*-G, known now as the 'legacy' system.

For examination in 2018 students will start the GCSE in 2016. Therefore the legacy data we have for 2017 describes schools who entered their Yr 10s for examination at GCSE, who would have started in 2015. This will be the last year of legacy grading.

Once a GCSE subject has been reformed to be assessed under the new system, the legacy data will not appear in 2018 GCSE performance tables. The number of entries for the RE (9-1) GCSE in 2018 that were included in the DfE performance tables were 365. This compares to 810 in 2017. The fall in numbers will be explained largely or completely by the exclusion of A* to G RE GCSEs taken by Year 10 in 2017. Ofsted do not want schools to begin GCSEs in Year 9, whether students sit the exam in Year 10 or 11. Results being disallowed in this way can be seen as punitive, although Ofsted argue that students should enjoy a full Key stage 3 before GCSE's start. The expectation that GCSEs start in Year 10 and not Year 9 is present in the new Ofsted framework.

However, schools begin GCSEs in Year 9 because the GCSE examinations themselves are more challenging, and this is particularly true of RE. This suggests SACRE could support Secondary schools (including Academies) with Key Stage 3 planning and provision that prepares students for the content to be covered at GCSE, but is appropriate for Key stage 3 learning.

4.2 Standards and Quality of Provision of RE

Appendix 1: Islington GCSE data 2016 – 2017 indicates that 53.6% of pupils were entered for a GCSE in Religious Studies in 2016 and 58.7% in 2017. This represents a 5% increase in uptake. In 2016 the percentage of pupils who achieved a grade C and above was at 73.3%. In 2017 this outcome declined to 68.1%.

Appendix 2: Islington GCSE data 2017 – 2018 - because the grading system is different from 2017 it is not possible to compare the results over the previous year at a grade by grade level although it is possible to make the following comparisons with the previous year:

- a GCSE average point score (APS) - 2018: APS 5/2019: APS 5.36
- the percentage at grade 7 and above
- the percentage at grade 4 and above

As can be seen the GCSE APS in 2018 was 5.0, an increase on 4.5 for 2017. As 2018 results were achieved by Y11 entrants rather than Y10 & Y11 as was the case in 2017. It is not possible to say if the age of the students makes a difference from this data alone. Potentially a Y10 student is less intellectually mature and lower grades can be expected. Conversely Y11 students are juggling several GCSE subjects at the same time, therefore it could be argued that sitting the exam in Y10 allows students to focus more effectively. However, it seems certain that schools will enter most or all students in Y11 from now on, and SACRE can support Secondary schools with their Key Stage 3 provision.

Appendix 3: Islington GCSE data 2018 – 2019 outcomes are better than those for 2018* for all indicators - % 4+, % 5+, % 7+ whether we look at % of entrants passed or % of roll that passed. In 2019 there was a large increase in the number of pupils taking RE compared to 2018 (497 compared to 365, an increase of 36%). The RE GCSE sat in 2018 was the first sitting of the new 1-9 RE GCSE and so any old style RE GCSEs taken in Y10 in 2017 by that cohort would have been discounted.

4.3 Quality of RE provision in schools

Across the Primary sector, SACRE has begun to reap the rewards of a deliberate effort to reach out to and support teachers of RE at Primary. To this end Primary Hubs meet once a term. In the year 2017- 2018, the main focus was on the Agreed Syllabus; sharing information for those not at the launch, workshopping teaching approaches and sharing best practice. Teachers' main questions concern how to work a significant new piece of planning into their already

existing teaching and learning. The focus in the year 2018-19 is on assessment of the Agreed Syllabus. Teachers chose key questions from each strand of the syllabus for each year group. Pupils produced work to exemplify the key questions in action. These are to be collated and shared with all teachers, so an example of good RE and how it might be assessed, at every year group based on the Agreed Syllabus, can be seen. This is a significant piece of work that will be of enormous value to teachers.

Collective Worship has also been explored in the Hub, led by Anthony Doudle. Understanding the nature and purpose of Collective Worship and how it differs from RE in the curriculum is important for teachers and this was well-received.

The idea of a **Youth Council** or **Youth SACRE** has been briefly suggested to Hub teachers but not explored in any detail. It is suggested that teachers will have a chance to further consider this idea at the summer conference, where SACRE members, faith and belief representatives and teachers will be together.

Across the Secondary sector, contact between SACRE and Secondary teachers has declined somewhat. The 2017 Agreed Syllabus made full provision for Secondary however nationally there is a tendency for Secondary's to engage with their locally Agreed Syllabus only so far as it supports the GCSE. Ofsted do not recommend this, but it happens. There is much in the Agreed Syllabus that could support teachers at KS3 in offering a rich and age-appropriate learning experience at KS3, which is also good preparation for KS4. Like Primary colleagues, it may be that Secondary teachers also need time and space devoted to discussing and planning together.

4.4 **Withdrawal and Complaints**

There have been no complaints about RE and no requests for withdrawal. There have been no requests for change of designation and no complaints about collective worship. There have been two FOI requests which have been responded to within the statutory time frame

4.5 **Agreed Syllabus**

As noted above, the Agreed Syllabus was launched in 2017 and work is well under way with Primary teachers of RE to share good practice, further develop teaching resources and understanding of assessment in relation to the Agreed Syllabus. Work this year has focused on assessment of the Agreed Syllabus.

Kate Christopher has briefed SACRE on the final report of the Commission on RE (CoRE, Sept 2018).

SACRE are aware that the Commission recommends changes to SACREs in future, to be renamed Local Advisory Networks for Religion and Worldviews, and significantly to lose their statutory duty to review and produce an Agreed Syllabus every 5 yrs. SACRE will keep abreast of any policy or pressures which suggest such changes might be underway through the input of the RE adviser and updates from NASACRE.

SACRE will also prepare to review the 2017 Agreed Syllabus in 2022 as it is uncertain whether such changes to primary legislation will occur. This work will begin in 2021.

5. **Collective Worship**

5.1 **Guidance on Collective Worship**

SACRE has written a comprehensive guidance on Collective Worship (CW) for the website covering the legal requirements, its presence in different school types and the difference between 'collective' and 'corporate' worship.

5.2 **Quality of Collective Worship**

Collective Worship is a statutory requirement in all schools. The legal requirement to provide a daily act of Collective Worship and religious education in the curriculum, known as the 'religious clauses', stems from the 1944 Education Act. In this Act RE was included in the school day as Christian faith nurture rather than an academic subject of the curriculum. Some schools find the requirement for Collective Worship an anomaly, other schools do not offer worship in a religious sense but bring pupils together to celebrate shared values and develop a sense of trust, commitment and community. The future for RE seems to be as an academic subject rather than personal growth. Islington SACRE's continued guidance on Collective Worship, including non-religious Collective Worship, is good practice.

5.3 **Determinations and Complaints about collective worship**

As noted, there have been no requests for change of determination or complaints about collective worship.

Contribution of SACRE to the wider Local Authority agenda

6 **SACRE's contribution to other agendas**

6.1 Schools' partnership: supporting groups of schools to work together share good practice, and understand for themselves their strategic goals and how to achieve them. In bringing teachers together for the Hub and conference SACRE is contributing to school's ability to collaborate effectively.

In briefing Deputies and Governors on RE-related matters, including the work of teachers, SACRE supports schools' knowledge and understanding of the wider educational picture.

Attainment measures: in line with national levels. With a focus on assessment and learning outcomes in the Hub, SACRE enables teachers of RE to create high quality teaching and learning and assessment materials. This means pupils have the opportunity to achieve the highest levels in RE. Teachers' understanding of (a) high quality learning and (b) how to assess this are the essential first steps in raising attainment and SACRE is supporting Primary teachers well with this.

SACRE's contribution to the LA's public sector equality duty

6.2 Islington SACRE contributes to the borough's wider equality duty by actively recruiting and welcoming people from diverse backgrounds. Islington is a diverse borough and SACRE reflects this. Members are not expected to integrate into a dominant culture, but each represent their own particular background, expertise and commitments. In this sense SACRE is a good example of collaboration and shared goals achieved in a pluralistic culture.

A Youth SACRE or Youth Council could offer the same plural, collaborative culture for young people in Islington. Some young people are proud of their backgrounds and beliefs and would love the chance to share their knowledge and experiences more widely as well as learn about others in their community. However, diversity of faith, belief and worldview is only one type of

diversity. The Commission on RE final report recommends SACREs enlarge to include expertise from education, academia, museums and galleries, as well as faith and belief 'insiders'. SACRE could consider enlarging membership to reflect this.

7. **Implications**

7.1 **Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

7.2 **Legal Implications**

Every local authority is required by law to have a SACRE. It is an independent statutory body that is responsible for advising the council on religious education and collective worship in schools.

7.3 **Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030**

None.

7.4 **Resident Impact Assessment**

The Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The Council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The Council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding. A resident impact assessment has not been completed as it is not required in this instance.

8. **Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations**

The Children's Services Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the work of SACRE and the appended GCSE data.

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Islington GCSE data 2016 – 2017
- Appendix 2: Islington GCSE data 2017 – 2018
- Appendix 3: Islington GCSE data 2018 – 2019

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Appendix 1: Islington GCSE data 2016 – 2017

| 2016 RS GCSE | Islington Yr 11 inc special schools | 2017 RS GCSE | Islington Yr 11 inc special schools |
|-----------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|--|
| A* | 53 | A* | 60 |
| A | 148 | A | 119 |
| B | 272 | B | 186 |
| C | 201 | C | 187 |
| D | 137 | D | 109 |
| E | 55 | E | 62 |
| F | 29 | F | 50 |
| G | 12 | G | 22 |
| U | 12 | U | 12 |
| X | 0 | X | 3 |
| No of entries | 919 | No of entries | 810 |
| No of C and above | 674 | No of C and above | 552 |
| % on roll entered for GCSE | 53.6 | % on roll entered for GCSE | 58.7 |
| RS | 73.3 | RS | 68.1 |
| % of entries achieved C and above | | % of entries achieved C and above | |

Appendix 2: Islington GCSE data 2017 – 2018

| GCSE entries & results 2018 compared to 2017 | | | | |
|--|------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|
| | Old Grade (2017) | Results 2017 | New Grade (2018) | Results 2018 |
| | A* | 60 | 9 | 12 |
| | A | 119 | 8 | 26 |
| | | | 7 | 43 |
| | B | 186 | 6 | 70 |
| | | | 5 | 71 |
| | C | 187 | 4 | 59 |
| | | | 3 | 49 |
| | D | 109 | 2 | 19 |
| | E | 62 | 1 | 13 |
| | F | 50 | | |
| | G | 22 | U | 3 |
| | U | 12 | X | 0 |
| | X | 3 | | |
| # Entries | | 810 | | 365 |
| # 7+ / A+ | | 179 | | 81 |
| # 4+ / C+ | | 601 | | 318 |
| 7+ / A+ grades included in performance tables* as % of entries | | 22.1 | | 22.2 |
| 4+ / C+ grades included in performance tables* as % of entries | | 74.2 | | 87.1 |
| Entries included in perf. tables as % of Roll. | | 58.7 | | 25.9 |
| Average Point Score | | 4.5 | | 5.0 |

Appendix 3: Islington GCSE data 2018 – 2019

| GCSE entries & results 2019 compared to 2018 | | | |
|---|------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | Grade | Results 2018 | Results 2019 |
| | 9 | 12 | 34 |
| | 8 | 26 | 55 |
| | 7 | 43 | 74 |
| | 6 | 70 | 79 |
| | 5 | 71 | 84 |
| | 4 | 59 | 60 |
| | 3 | 49 | 62 |
| | 2 | 19 | 35 |
| | 1 | 13 | 9 |
| | U | 3 | 4 |
| | X | 0 | 1 |
| | # Entries | | 365 |
| # 7+ | | 81 | 163 |
| # 4+ | | 318 | 386 |
| 7+ grades included in performance tables* as % of entries | | 22.2 | 32.8 |
| 4+ grades included in performance tables* as % of entries | | 87.1 | 77.7 |
| Entries included in perf. tables as % of Roll. | | 25.9 | 33.8 |
| Average Point Score | | 5 | 5.36 |