

People Directorate
222 Upper Street, Islington

Report of: Corporate Director of Childrens Services

Meeting of: Childrens Services Scrutiny Committee

Date: 29th May 2024

Ward(s): All

Subject: SACRE Annual Report 2023

1. Synopsis

- 1.1. The law states that Religious Education must be taught in all schools. Religious Education (RE) is not part of the National Curriculum and therefore it is a local responsibility. Islington's **Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education** (SACRE) role is to advise the local authority on what needs to be done to improve RE and collective worship (CW) for schools in its area. Through the SACRE, local communities and teachers have the opportunity to influence directly what pupils learn in Religious Education.
- 1.2. Islington SACRE endorses diversity and the encouragement of tolerance, respect, and mutual understanding within our neighbourhood, our nation, and the wider world. Religious Education is the only strand of the curriculum which is shaped and influenced by local perspectives. SACRE is therefore in a unique position to listen to, and take account of local needs and circumstances.
- 1.3. The main duties of SACRE include:
 - addressing issues relating to RE in local schools and other educational establishments.
 - developing ways of supporting schools in the delivery of the religious education syllabus and monitoring this delivery.
 - developing and maintaining links with local and national faith communities.
 - considering applications for determinations from school leaders. This is an application that the school be released from the requirements for CW to be of a mainly Christian character.

- producing an annual report of its work of Religious Education encompassing religious literacy and the knowledge of the values and insights of religious and non-religious world views.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. To accept this report and agree the recommendations for SACRE to undertake the following actions:
- 2.2. **Recommendation 1:** Actively recruit a diverse membership to the SACRE Board including full representation from all sectors of the education community.
- 2.3. **Recommendation 2:** Monitor the renewed agreed syllabus and schedule annual review of its impact.
- 2.4. **Recommendation 3:** SACRE Members to observe RE Network Meetings.
- 2.5. **Recommendation 4:** SACRE to support Islington secondary schools in improve outcomes at GCSE, particularly at the higher grades (7 - 9)

3. Background

3.1. The demographics of religion and belief in Islington and beyond

The 2011 census information sets the demographic context for our local authority areas, the region and the nation.

CENSUS 2011 Area name	Religion	Christian	Buddhist	Hindu	Jewish	Muslim	Sikh	Other religion	No religion	Religion not stated
Islington	206,125	82,879	2,117	2,108	1,915	19,521	569	967	61,911	34,138
		40.2%	1.0%	1.0%	0.9%	9.5%	0.3%	0.5%	30.0%	16.6%
Kensington & Chelsea	158,649	86,005	2,447	1,386	3,320	15,812	263	778	32,669	15,969
		54.2%	1.5%	0.9%	2.1%	10.0%	0.2%	0.5%	20.6%	10.1%
Westminster	219,396	97,877	3,194	4,178	7,237	40,073	496	1,280	44,542	20,519
		44.6%	1.5%	1.9%	3.3%	18.3%	0.2%	0.6%	20.3%	9.4%
Hackney	246,270	95,131	3,075	1,577	15,477	34,727	1,872	1,311	69,454	23,646
		38.6%	1.2%	0.6%	6.3%	14.1%	0.8%	0.5%	28.2%	9.6%
Newham	307,984	123,119	2,446	26,962	342	98,456	6,421	1,090	29,373	19,775
		40.0%	0.8%	8.8%	0.1%	32.0%	2.1%	0.4%	9.5%	6.4%
London	8,173,941	3,957,984	82,026	411,291	148,602	1,012,823	126,134	47,970	1,694,372	692,739
		48.4%	1.0%	5.0%	1.8%	12.4%	1.5%	0.6%	20.7%	8.5%
England and Wales	56,075,912	33,243,175	247,743	816,633	263,346	2,706,066	423,158	240,530	14,097,229	4,038,032
		59.3%	0.4%	1.5%	0.5%	4.8%	0.8%	0.4%	25.1%	7.2%

3.2. The profile of Islington Schools – Please refer to Appendix A

- SACRE provides the Islington Agreed Syllabus and Schemes of work to all educational settings.
- 23/57 (40%) of educational settings are not required to adopt the Islington Agreed Syllabus or Schemes of Work

4. Summary of SACRE work 2022 - 2023

4.1. Management of SACRE:

- Two meetings of SACRE were held in 2022/23.
- Islington Council is responsible for the composition of SACRE. Islington SACRE is composed of three groups:
 - Representatives of the Church of England, other Christian denominations and other religions and world-views to reflect broadly the diversity of belief in the area.
 - Associations representing teachers. Currently this includes both Primary and Secondary school teachers from Islington Schools. There remains a vacancy from teachers' unions
 - Local Council representatives (including deputies as required)
 - Local authority adviser
 - Clerk to SACRE provided by Islington Governor Services
 - SACRE meetings are held at the Islington Town Hall and clerked by Islington Governor Services. There is at no cost to Islington SACRE.
- Membership of SACRE remains a challenge. Ensuring all statutory groups are represented is a priority. The Chair of SACRE has prioritised securing a broad and diverse membership going forward including representatives of Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim and Jain faiths and Humanist worldview.
- RE Today have been procured to provide professional advisory support to the SACRE through Ian Nicholson, National RE Adviser who attends all SACRE meetings and who also delivers the CPD offered to teachers of RE. This includes a termly national update on RE which is both oral and written so that it is shared with colleagues who are not able to attend the meeting. This has focused on developments for teachers as well as reference to subject reports from Ofsted and the Report of HMCI which covered elements relating to the quality and provision of RE.

4.2. Advice to statutory bodies:

- SACRE continues to provide up-to-date advice, which is shared on the Islington CS portal for schools. This advice is for schools and Local Authority parties or any other interested members of the community. An online function enables members of the public to contact the Assistant Director for School Improvement and/or the Chair of SACRE to ensure SACRE can receive questions (including FOIs) and comments.
- Additionally, the School Improvement Service supports and acts as a broker in the ongoing engagement with Headteachers, senior leaders and RE Leaders across Islington to provide a platform for keeping senior leaders abreast of news about SACRE. For example: providing bespoke support for schools as required.

4.3. Standards and Quality of Provision of RE:

The table below illustrates the 3-year trend for Religious Studies at GCSE level

GCSE RS Entries & Results 2019 v 2023 comparison		
Grade	Results 2019	Results 2023
9	34	45
8	55	51
7	74	89
6	79	92
5	84	77
4	60	81
3	62	102
2	35	45
1	9	20
U	4	5
X	1	4
# Entries	497	611
# 7+	163	185
#5+	326	354
# 4+	386	435
7+ grades as % of entries	32.8	30.3
5+ grades as % of entries	65.6	57.9
4+ grades as % of entries	77.7	71.2
Entries as % of Roll.	33.8	39.9
Average Point Score	5.36	5.09

GCSE examination results:

- In 2023 results fell back in line with those in pre-pandemic years. Following self-assessment mechanisms and grade boundaries that reflected the challenges students faced during the pandemic and the associated grade inflation across 2020 – 2022, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) returned to Grade boundaries informed by grades achieved in pre-pandemic years.
- 2023 saw an increase in entries to 611 from 497 in 2019.
- Although the number of Passes (Level 4), Strong Passes (Level 5) and High Passes (Level 7+) has all increased, as a percentage of the cohort the percentages when compared with 2019 were 2.5% lower for Level 7 or higher, 7.7% for Level 5 or higher and 6.5% for Level 4 or higher.
- The focus of the network meetings across 2023/24 will be to ensure the outcomes in 2024 exceed 2019 levels.

4.4. Quality of Education provision in Islington schools:

96% of schools in Islington are rated as good or outstanding 2022/23 as shown below:

Phase and type	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Inadequate	Total	% good or better
Nursery	1	2			3	100.0%
Primary	7	35	1	1	44	95.5%
Academies and free schools	2	3			5	100.0%
Maintained	5	32	(1)	(1)	39	94.9%
Secondary	5	4	1		10	90.0%
Academies and free schools	2	1	(1)		4	75.0%
Maintained	3	3			6	100.0%
PRU	2	2			4	100.0%
Free School - Alternative Provision	1				1	100.0%
Pupil Referral Unit	1	2			3	100.0%
Special	4	2			6	100.0%
Academies and free schools	2	2			4	100.0%
Community Special School	2				2	100.0%
Total	19	45	2	1	67	96.0%

The vast majority of schools in Islington (96%) were rated as good or outstanding, as at the end of August 2023, an **improvement** of 5% points since 2019. This includes:

- 100% of nursery schools were good or outstanding
- 96% of primary schools were good or outstanding
- 90% of secondary schools were good or outstanding
- 100% of special schools were good or outstanding
- 100% of pupil referral units (PRU) were good or outstanding

Nationally 89% of all schools were rated good or outstanding by Ofsted, as at August 2023. The London region leads the way in terms of both pupil's educational outcomes and high-quality school places, with 95% of schools rated as good or outstanding. Islington, at 96%, is ranked **19th** in England.

4.5. Withdrawal and Complaints:

- There have been no complaints about RE and no requests for withdrawal from RE lessons or collective worship
- There have been no requests for change of designation and no complaints about collective worship
- There has been one (1) FOI request which were responded to within the statutory time frame

4.6. **Contribution of SACRE to the wider Local Authority agenda:**

School partnerships:

- In bringing teachers together for network/CPD meetings is contributing to schools' ability to collaborate effectively. These meetings are held termly.
- The termly meetings for teachers of RE in Islington has been provided by the SACRE partnership with RE Today. The meetings have included – Diversity in RE and SMSC, Knowledge in RE – Substantive, Disciplinary and Personal, the Progressive Study of Christianity and Leadership and Management of RE. The average attendance across the four events was fourteen teachers.
- In briefing school leaders and Governors on RE-related matters, including the work of teachers, SACRE supports schools' knowledge and understanding of the wider educational picture.

Attainment measures:

- Maintaining a focus on assessment and learning outcomes, SACRE has supported teachers of RE to create high quality teaching and learning and assessment materials.
- SACRE fully supports the ambitions outlined in the Islington Education Plan that puts children and young people first.

4.7. **Collective Worship:**

- SACRE provides comprehensive guidance on Collective Worship (CW) on Islington CS covering the legal requirements, its presence in different school types and the difference between 'collective' and 'corporate' worship.
- Collective Worship is a statutory requirement in all schools. The legal requirement for schools is to provide a daily act of Collective Worship and regular religious education lessons.
- Islington SACRE's continues to provide guidance on Collective Worship, including non-religious approaches to Collective Worship

4.8. **Islington Agreed Syllabus:**

The Agreed Syllabus for Islington was renewed in September 2022 and has been well received by schools, thanks to the ongoing external support from RE Today and from the Islington School Improvement Service.

The renewed syllabus builds on the previous syllabus available to all school. Since 2017, SACRE has also provided schools with an extensive scheme of work that supports teachers to deliver a high quality RE curriculum.

RE is legally required for all pupils. Plural RE that conveys and accords equal respect to different religions and non-religious worldviews (e.g. Humanism) is a core subject and an entitlement for all pupils throughout their schooling. For schools offering GCSE short course RE in Y9 and Y10, there is still a requirement that there is identifiable RE in Y11. Teachers should ensure that KS4 accords equal respect to religious and non-religious worldviews. Following a GCSE course does not automatically fulfil this requirement.

RE is different from assembly. Curriculum time for RE is distinct from the time spent on collective worship or school assembly, even though making links between the collective worship and the purposes and themes of RE would be good practice.

The syllabus refers to religious and non-religious worldviews throughout. The term 'worldview' encompasses a broad range of ideas, incorporating the religious and non-religious. Traditionally, RE has examined religious worldviews by looking at the traditional beliefs, teachings and practices of the world religions (Buddhism, Christianity etc.). Recent developments in RE, differentiate between organised or institutional worldviews and individual worldviews. The syllabus uses the idea of worldviews as a way of allowing for some flexibility in the presentation of traditional religions – acknowledging the diversity within traditions, geographically and across time. It also enables pupils to recognise that members of religious traditions may have individual worldviews that differ. The idea of personal worldviews applies to pupils' own perspectives within the RE classroom. The renewed syllabus and the schemes of work ensure a broad and balance approach to learning about world religions. An overview is outlined below:

	FS (Discovering)	KS1 (Exploring)	Lower KS2 (Connecting)	Upper KS2 (Connecting)	KS3 (Applying/interpreting)
Believing (Religious beliefs, teachings, sources; questions about meaning, purpose and truth)		1.1 Who is a Christian and what do they believe? 1.2 Who is a Muslim and what do they believe? 1.3 Who is Jewish and what do they believe?	L2.1 What do different people believe about God?	U2.1 Why do some people believe God exists?	3.1 Do we need to prove God's existence?
	F1 Which stories are special and why?	1.4 What can we learn from sacred books?	L2.2 Why is the Bible so important for Christians today?		3.2 Does living biblically mean obeying the whole Bible?
	F2 Which people are special and why?		L2.3 Why is Jesus inspiring to some people?	U2.2 What would Jesus do? Can people live by the values of Jesus in the twenty-first century?	3.3 What is so radical about Jesus?
				U2.3 What do religions say to us when life gets hard?	3.4 Is death the end? Does it matter? 3.5 Why is there suffering? Are there any good solutions?
Expressing (Religious and spiritual forms of expression; questions about identity and diversity)	F3. What places are special and why?	1.5 What makes some places sacred?	L2.4 Why do people pray?	U2.4 If God is everywhere, why go to a place of worship?	3.6 Should religious buildings be sold to feed the starving?
	F4. What times are special and why?	1.6 How and why do we celebrate special and sacred times?	L2.5 Why are festivals important to religious communities? L2.5a* How do people from religious and non-religious communities celebrate key festivals? L2.6 Why do some people think that life is a journey and what significant experiences mark this?	U2.5 Is it better to express your beliefs in arts and architecture or in charity and generosity? U2.9*** What can be done to reduce racism? What can we learn from religious and non-religious worldviews?	3.7 How can people express the spiritual through the arts?

	FS (Discovering)	KS1 (Exploring)	Lower KS2 (Connecting)	Upper KS2 (Connecting)	KS3 (Applying/interpreting)
Living (Religious practices and ways of living; questions about values and commitments)	F5. Being special: where do we belong?	1.7 What does it mean to belong to a faith community?	L2.7 What does it mean to be a Christian in Britain today? L2.8 What does it mean to be a Hindu in Britain today? L2.10** How do family life and festivals show what matters to Jewish people?	U2.6 What does it mean to be a Muslim in Britain today?	3.8 What is good and what is challenging about being a teenage Sikh or Buddhist or Muslim in Britain today?
					3.9 Should happiness be the purpose of life?
		1.8 How should we care for others and the world, and why does it matter?	L2.9 What can we learn from religions about deciding what is right and wrong?	U2.7 What matters most to Christians and Humanists?	3.10 Does religion help people to be good?
	F6. What is special about our world?			U2.8 What difference does it make to believe in ahimsa (harmlessness), grace, and/or Ummah (community)?	3.11 What difference does it make to believe in...?
			U2.10*** Green religion? What do religious and non-religious worldviews teach about caring for the Earth?	3.12 Is religion a power for peace or a cause of conflict in the world today?	
			<i>* This unit is optional but can be integrated with L2.5. It offers a way of looking at Christmas through different academic disciplines. ** If schools have not done the systematic unit on Jewish people (1.3) in KS1, they should include this systematic unit in LKS2.</i>	<i>*** These units are optional. They could be done in addition to the other UKS2 questions or in place of a question in the same strand.</i>	

As part of the renewed syllabus and schemes of work, Islington schools have also been provided with web based materials that allow them to share on the school website. This information helps to support parents/carers understanding of what is taught and how the school will approach matters of religious knowledge and understanding.

The Agreed Syllabus for RE forms the basis of all training for the teachers of RE in Islington and is due for review in 2027. RE Today working with Islington have planned the next twelve months of CPD meetings to focus on the further development of pedagogy and practice to ensure that the syllabus is embedded in all of the schools who are required to use it.

5. Implications

5.1. Financial Implications

5.1.1. There are no financial implications for this report

5.2. Legal Implications

5.2.1. The authority must constitute a standing advisory council on religious education (SACRE), to advise the authority on religious worship in community and non-denominational foundation schools and religious education to be given in connection with an agreed or other syllabus (sections 390 and 391 Education Act 1996). SACRE must publish an annual report, in particular in relation to advice given to the authority (section 391(6) and (7) Education Act 1996).

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

5.3.1. Environmental Implications must be reviewed by the Energy Services team. Energy Services requires eight working days for implications to be reviewed. Email: energyservices@islington.gov.uk

5.3.2. There are no implications for this report

5.4. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

5.4.1. 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.

5.4.2. An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required in relation to this report, because SACRE is a statutory requirement for all local authorities to implement.

6. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

6.1. To accept the annual report of Islington SCARE

6.2. To agree the recommendations outlined in section 2

Appendix A: Types of Schools in Islington

<p>Maintained Schools using the Islington Agreed Syllabus and Schemes of Work</p>	<p>Kate Greenway Nursery School, Margaret McMillan Nursery School, North Islington Nursery School, Ambler Primary School, Ashmount Primary School, Canonbury Primary School, Drayton Park Primary School, Duncombe Primary School, Gillespie Primary School, Grafton Primary School, Hanover Primary School, Hargrave Park Primary School, Highbury Quadrant Primary School, Hugh Myddelton Primary School, Laycock Primary School, Montem Primary School, Moreland Primary School, Newington Green Primary School, Pakeman Primary School, Pooles Park Primary School, Prior Weston Primary School, Robert Blair Primary School, Rotherfield Primary School, Thornhill Primary School, Tufnell Park Primary School, Vittoria Primary School, Winton Primary School, Yerbury Primary School, Arts & Media School Islington, Beacon High, Central Foundation Boys School, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School, Highbury Fields School</p>
<p>Voluntary Aided schools may choose to follow their locally agreed syllabus or different locally agreed syllabus (with the permission of the SACRE concerned) or devise their own curriculum (which must broadly reflect the requirements of an agreed syllabus).</p>	<p>Christ The King RC Primary School, Sacred Heart RC Primary School, St Andrews CE Primary School, St Joan of Arc RC Primary School, St John Evangelist RC Primary School, St Johns Highbury Vale CE Primary School, St Johns Upper Holloway CE Primary School, St Joseph's RC Primary School, St Jude & St Paul's CE Primary School, St Luke's CE Primary School, St Mark's CE Primary School, St Mary's CE Primary School, St Peter's & St Paul's RC Primary School, St Aloysius' College</p>
<p>All through Maintained Schools using the Islington Agreed Syllabus and Schemes of Work</p>	<p>New River College, Samuel Rhodes Special School, Richard Clousdley Special School</p>
<p>All Through Academies may choose to follow their locally agreed syllabus or different locally agreed syllabus (with the permission of the SACRE concerned) or devise their own curriculum (which must broadly reflect the requirements of an agreed syllabus).</p>	<p>St Mary Magdalene Academy</p>
<p>Single Academy Trust/Free Schools As above</p>	<p>William Tyndale Academy, Whitehall Park School, The London Screen Academy, The Pears Family Charitable Foundation School</p>

<p>Multi Academy Trusts <i>*note individual schools identified in MATs are the ones in Islington. These MATs may have schools outside of Islington but are not highlighted here.</i></p> <p>As above</p>	<p>City of London MAT (Highbury Grove, Highgate Hill, COLAI, COLPA-I), The Bridge London Trust (Primary, Secondary, Sate lite, Integrated Learning Space Special schools and Hungerford Primary) Living in Harmony (New North Primary School)</p>
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