

Thurrock SACRE Annual Report 2024-2025



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Introduction

Since 1988, it has been a requirement that every local authority (LA) has a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE).

Though legislation sets out both the structure and the remit of a local SACRE - principally, overseeing religious education (RE) and collective worship - in practice every SACRE has developed its own particular style and character.

It is a legislative requirement that each SACRE produces an annual report of its work and that this is published, sent to the local authority, to local schools and to other interested parties. One important element of the report is performance data and an analysis of the extent to which schools are meeting their legal duties in relation to RE. Validated GCSE data was not available until this month, hence the delay in the publication of the report. More recently, other datasets have been made available by the DfE, most significantly the school workforce data that supports the monitoring of the level of provision in secondary schools.

Louis Trup

Chair – Thurrock Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Foreword by the Chair of SACRE

Foreword by the Chair of Thurrock SACRE

As the incoming Chair, I am pleased to present the Annual Report of the Thurrock Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) for 2024–2025.

SACRE continues to recognise the important contribution of Religious Education to pupils' understanding of religion and belief in contemporary society, and to the promotion of mutual understanding and community cohesion in a diverse local and national context. Ensuring that all pupils have equitable access to high-quality Religious Education remains a central concern of SACRE's work.

As in previous years, SACRE has drawn on a range of national and local data, alongside school-level information and published curriculum materials, to inform its monitoring of standards and provision for Religious Education across the borough. This evidence-led approach enables SACRE to fulfil its statutory role and to provide informed advice to the local authority and schools.

I would like to thank the previous Chair for his service to the SACRE; the report covers the time of his chairmanship and is a testament to the impact he has had on the education of young people in Thurrock.

I would also like to thank SACRE members for their ongoing commitment and thoughtful engagement throughout the year. Thanks to the Clerk to SACRE for her support in ensuring that meetings are effectively organised and recorded, and finally, to the SACRE Adviser for the careful preparation of reports and data that have enabled members to scrutinise provision in depth.

This report sets out SACRE's findings and advice for 2024–2025 and will inform its priorities for the coming year. It also marks the commencement of my term as Chair of Thurrock SACRE. The previous chair stood down from this role at the end of 2025 (prior to the publishing of this report) following his retirement and relocation away from the local authority area. The whole membership of SACRE thank him for his work and wish him well in the future.

Membership of Thurrock SACRE 2024–2025 SACRE

Committee A:

Miss R Saul, Diocese of Brentwood, Roman Catholic Member
Ms H Kaur Takhtar, Sikh Member
Mr T Ojetola, Pentecostal Member
Mr L Trup, Jewish Member
Revd David R Coaker, Grays United Reformed Church Member
Ms A Sharma, Hindu Member
Mr R Badaloo, Muslim Member
X3 Vacancies

Committee B:

Mr P Anderson, Church of England Member
Mrs L Fry, Church of England Member
Ms L Olajide, Church of England Member
Mrs R Everett, Church of England Member

Committee C:

Ms J Culloty, Teachers' Associations
Ms A Thompson, Teachers' Associations
Mrs C Pumfrey, Teachers' Associations
Ms R Shina, Teachers' Associations
X2 Vacancies

Committee D:

Councillor Qaisar Abbas, Local Authority
Councillor Daniel Chukwu, Local Authority
Councillor Lynda Heath, Local Authority

SACRE meeting dates (2024–2025)

1. **25 November 2024**
2. **8 January 2025**
3. **11 March 2025**

Standards in Thurrock Schools

SACRE undertakes regular monitoring of standards and provision for Religious Education using a combination of national datasets, school workforce and timetable data, GCSE entry and attainment information, and review of published school curriculum documentation. During 2024–2025, SACRE reviewed detailed school-level data relating to curriculum time allocation for RE across Years 7–11 and GCSE Religious Studies entry and outcomes. This analysis builds on equivalent data reported in the 2023–24 Annual Report and enables SACRE to identify patterns, anomalies and areas of concern at individual school level.

Detailed school-level data underpinning this analysis, including curriculum time allocations across Years 7–11, GCSE Religious Studies entry patterns and attainment outcomes, are provided in Appendix B.

Curriculum Time for Religious Education

School workforce and timetable data indicate that, of the 16 secondary schools in Thurrock, 14 are currently reporting some curriculum time for Religious Education. While this represents an improvement in reporting compared with the previous year, SACRE notes that the quantity and distribution of curriculum time remain a significant concern.

At Grays Convent High School, RE accounts for approximately 14.0% of overall curriculum time across Years 7–11. The school enters around 95% of pupils for GCSE Religious Studies and reports GCSE outcomes at grades 9–4 of approximately 92%, significantly above the national average of around 74%. SACRE regards this as secure and well-resourced provision.

At William Edwards School and Sports College, RE curriculum time is reported at approximately 3.4% of overall timetable time overall but the amount of time dedicated to the subject decreases as students move through the school. The school did not enter pupils for GCSE Religious Studies in 2025 but the subject does appear in the options booklet. SACRE why there were no entries in this particular year.

At Ortu Gable Hall School (Mossbourne Fobbing Academy) - students receive one lesson every two weeks in years 7–9. This amount of time for religious education is significantly less than that required to deliver the Thurrock Agreed Syllabus. Even though the academy is not required to follow the syllabus, this does require questions to be asked in relation to the standard of provision which should be comparable to that syllabus. However, at KS4, pupils receive one lesson per week – following a GCSE Short Course.

St Clere's School, overall, RE curriculum time is reported at around 3%. Like Gable Hall – there were no GCSE Religious Studies entries in 2025. SACRE notes that published curriculum and options materials emphasise subject choice at KS4, with limited clarity about how RE entitlement is secured for pupils not opting for examined courses. The school tell us that pupils in years 7–9 have one 60 minute lesson per fortnight which is insufficient time to deliver the Agreed Syllabus or the deliver a programme with in comparable in breadth, depth and ambition. In year pupils have 30 minutes and in year 11 there is no discrete provision only RE related topics within the personal development time.

Ortu Hassenbrook Academy, RE curriculum time is reported at similarly low levels (around 3–4% overall). The school enters no pupils for GCSE Religious Studies. SACRE is concerned that, in the absence of examined provision, RE may be marginalised within the KS4 curriculum.

At The Hathaway Academy, RE curriculum time is reported at approximately 4.5% overall. The school does not report GCSE Religious Studies entries. SACRE notes the presence of a published RS curriculum but remains concerned about the absence of accredited outcomes and the sufficiency of curriculum time.

At The Gateway Academy, RE curriculum time is reported at approximately 4.0%. The school does not enter pupils for GCSE Religious Studies. Published KS4 curriculum documentation identifies English, mathematics, science, PSHE and core PE as compulsory subjects, with RE not clearly identified as part of the KS4 core entitlement. SACRE is concerned that RE provision at KS4 may be limited or marginalised.

At Harris Academy Riverside, RE accounts for approximately 2.9% of overall curriculum time. The school enters around 10.5% of pupils for GCSE Religious Studies and reports GCSE outcomes at grades 9–4 of approximately 74%, above the national average. SACRE notes the strength of outcomes but is concerned that low overall curriculum time suggests RE provision may be concentrated primarily within GCSE option groups.

At Harris Academy Ockendon, RE curriculum time is reported at approximately 3.7% overall. The school enters around 7.4% of pupils for GCSE Religious Studies, with approximately 71% achieving grades 9–4, above the national average. SACRE is concerned that provision may not extend to all pupils at KS4.

At Harris Academy Chafford Hundred, overall RE curriculum time is reported at approximately 2.4%, among the lowest in the borough. The school enters around 9.6% of pupils for GCSE Religious Studies and reports GCSE 9–4 attainment of approximately 75%, above the national average. Workforce data indicate zero hours of RE in Year 10.

At Orsett Heath Academy, SACRE notes incomplete and inconsistent reporting of RE curriculum time. While the school enters pupils for GCSE Religious Studies (approximately 6–8% of the cohort) and reports GCSE outcomes broadly in line with the national average, published curriculum and options information does not clearly demonstrate how RE entitlement is secured for all pupils.

Across all reporting schools, the average proportion of curriculum time devoted to RE is approximately 3.5%. Comparison with 2023–24 data indicates improved transparency but no systemic increase in curriculum time.

SACRE recommends that the local authority seek urgent clarification from the schools and their academy trust regarding the accuracy of the data and the arrangements in place for delivering Religious Education in Year 10.

GCSE Religious Studies Entries and Outcomes

GCSE Religious Studies entry patterns continue to show significant variation across Thurrock secondary schools. In the 2024–2025 dataset, only six of the 16 secondary schools in the borough make entries for GCSE Religious Studies.

At Harris Academy Chafford Hundred, Harris Academy Riverside and Harris Academy Ockendon, although GCSE entry rates are below 11% of the cohort, while GCSE outcomes at grades 9–4 are consistently above national averages. SACRE considers that this pattern indicates a significant risk that provision may be restricted to examination groups.

SACRE notes a similar, though less clearly evidenced, concern at Orsett Heath Academy, where GCSE Religious Studies entries are recorded but curriculum time data are incomplete.

In light of these findings, SACRE formally requested that the local authority's school improvement team seek further information from the schools and their academy trusts to clarify how Religious Education is provided for pupils who do not take GCSE Religious Studies, particularly in Years 10 and 11. SACRE further requested that outcomes of this follow-up be reported back to SACRE.

Collective Worship

During 2024–2025, SACRE did not receive any requests for determinations or complaints relating to collective worship. The current situation is that no schools in Thurrock have active determinations in place.

National Developments in Religious Education

During 2024–2025, national developments in Religious Education were a standing item on the agenda of each SACRE meeting. Updates were presented by the Associate Adviser and discussed by members, with particular attention given to their implications for RE provision, standards and accountability in Thurrock schools.

Across the year, SACRE discussed the following national matters:

- **The Government's Curriculum and Assessment Review**, including the call for evidence and submissions made by national bodies such as NATRE and the Religious Education Council.
- **The status of Religious Education within the curriculum**, in particular its position within the basic curriculum rather than the National Curriculum, and the implications this has for parity, accountability and inspection.
- **Curriculum narrowing**, especially in secondary schools, and the risk that RE is reduced or marginalised when curriculum time is under pressure.

- **National expectations and standards for RE**, including discussion of whether a clearer national entitlement or content standard could help secure consistency and quality while still allowing flexibility for different types of schools.
- **Teacher supply, recruitment and training**, particularly the shortage of teachers with appropriate subject knowledge to deliver high-quality RE at GCSE level.
- **National professional development opportunities**, including conferences, webinars and training programmes available to SACRE members and teachers.
- **Funding and grant opportunities** to support RE in schools, and how these might be promoted locally.

Following these discussions, SACRE reached the following conclusions:

- SACRE agreed that continued national scrutiny of the place of RE in the curriculum is necessary to secure parity with other subjects.
- Members expressed support for the principle of a clearer national entitlement or standard for RE, provided this does not undermine local flexibility or the ability of different categories of school to meet statutory requirements in appropriate ways.
- SACRE agreed to engage constructively with national consultations where appropriate and to share relevant information with Thurrock schools to support informed local discussion.
- SACRE resolved that national developments in RE should remain a standing agenda item at future meetings.

Appendix A: SACRE Workplan 2024–2025

The SACRE Workplan for 2024–2025 was agreed at the autumn term meeting and is aligned with SACRE’s statutory duties under section 391 of the Education Act 1996. The workplan sets out clear objectives, actions, responsibilities, timescales and success criteria, while recognising the constraints of the SACRE budget and the need to respond flexibly to national and local developments.

Key priorities within the 2024–2025 workplan included:

- Ensuring that SACRE meetings were effectively planned, quorate and supported by clear agendas, accurate minutes and timely publication of papers.
- Supporting SACRE members’ understanding of their statutory responsibilities, the Thurrock Agreed Syllabus, and national developments in Religious Education through regular updates and opportunities for training.

- Monitoring standards and provision for Religious Education and Collective Worship through the analysis of workforce census data, GCSE entry and attainment data, surveys of provision, and review of school websites and policies.
- Producing and publishing the Annual Report of SACRE's work, including advice to the local authority, and ensuring that this is shared with schools, the Department for Education and NASACRE.
- Strengthening engagement with local schools, academies and academy trusts to better understand how RE and Collective Worship are provided across Thurrock, including promoting self-evaluation through mechanisms such as the RE Quality Mark.
- Providing information and guidance to schools through regular communication with RE subject leaders and dissemination of relevant national and local materials.
- Evaluating SACRE's own effectiveness annually and identifying priorities for future work.

The workplan also included a schedule of SACRE meetings for the year, identifying key focus areas for each term, including national developments, monitoring of standards, approval of the annual report, relationships with stakeholders, and consideration of Ofsted expectations and the right of withdrawal.

Progress against the workplan was reviewed throughout the year, and SACRE agreed that it would continue to refine its priorities in response to emerging evidence and developments in education policy.

Appendix A: SACRE work plan 2024-25

To meet the statutory duties of a SACRE

Objective	Action	Responsibility	Date	Success criteria
SACRE meetings are planned and dates published annually	Agenda planning Liaison with relevant council departments Meeting preparation Report writing Meeting attendance Minute taking Publication of meeting agendas and minutes SACRE members to consider taking part in NASACRE provided online training	Clerk, Chair, Adviser LA representative, members	Termly SACRE meetings	Meetings are effective meetings with actions followed up between meetings Members have a working knowledge of - issues affecting RE in the area - the Agreed Syllabus for RE - an understanding of the responsibilities of SACRE
SACRE have the opportunity to consider national developments in relation to RE in Thurrock	Consider relevant material from National organisations (AREAIC, NATRE, NASACRE/RE Council/ Culham St Gabriel's Trust as well as the DfE, Ofsted and Thurrock Council departments Consider how teachers in Thurrock should respond to major national and international events where these impact on religious education Analyse the recommendations and government response to the Curriculum and Assessment Review Keep a watching brief on Government reorganisation proposals and how they impact Thurrock and other local SACREs Monitor the impact of Ofsted's revised inspection toolkit in relation to the monitoring of RE	Adviser Adviser	As information is published When relevant When announced Autumn 2025/ Spring 2026? November 2025 onwards	Items on the Agenda for each meeting, Attendance at relevant meetings e.g. NASACRE AGM Minutes record discussions and actions SACRE members feel confident that the agreed syllabus remains relevant to the modern world Thurrock SACRE is able to respond to the recommendations of the final report with information from Thurrock Schools

Produce annual report of the work of SACRE including advice to the council.	Collate information, source data and draft report Ensure final report presented to LA Send copy to Department for Education and to NASACRE	Adviser to draft Chair to write introduction Clerk to circulate. Elected representative to present to council	Spring Term (to account for data publication dates)	Completed draft in time for Spring meeting Report presented to council Copies sent to all schools Copy acknowledged by DfE
Engage with local schools and Academy Trusts to understand how Religious Education and Collective Worship are provided in Thurrock	Arrange visits to schools to gather information about the use of the Agreed Syllabus 2022-27 Publicise the RE Quality Mark and encourage schools to share their submissions with SACRE as a means of self-evaluation Members to hold discussions with subject leaders using prepared template	(SACRE members at least one per year)	Up to 4 school visits - 2 per term Suggested schedule	Meaningful evaluation visits or discussion completed, and reports discussed at SACRE meetings.
Provide information on the RE curriculum to schools including through publicising national opportunities for training	Update a mailing list for RE leads in primary and secondary schools to facilitate briefings. Update schools on current developments in RE (NATRE and other material requested by SACRE) Establish a primary school RE Network group	Adviser Adviser and RE Today	Termly Annually - Summer Term subject to funding	Schools in receipt of material Teachers respond to material received Teachers raise questions to the adviser A new network group meets – lead by volunteer teachers
Monitor provision for RE and Collective Worship	Source and present national and local data as follows: GCSE validated and unvalidated results and entries (local and national) School workforce data (local and national) Surveys of provision and of issues such as withdrawal, use of agreed syllabus, who teaches RE etc (local) Review school websites Write to schools about findings Sample collective worship policies	Adviser All SACRE members LA representative	Annually	LA respond to advice offered on strengths of RE and collective worship, and areas in need of development Schools respond to feedback on their websites and policies
Evaluate SACRE work and establish priorities	Item at autumn term meeting	All SACRE members	Autumn term meeting	Evaluation identified success criteria are met

Appendix B: Secondary School RE Provision and GCSE Religious Studies (2024–25)

School name	School type	Academy trust / sponsor	Religious character	Y7 RE %	Y8 RE %	Y9 RE %	Y10 RE %	Y11 RE %	Overall RE % (Y7–11)	GCSE RS Full Course entries %	Any GCSE RS entries?	GCSE RS 9–4 % (Full Course)	Zero hours in any Y7–11?	Potential compliance query (academy)?
Grays Convent High School	Local authority maintained schools		Roman Catholic	11.23	9.37	9.44	10.37	10.68	10.26	94.7	Yes	92.3	No	No
Gable Hall School	Academies	ORTU Federation Ltd		2.56	2.93	3.94	4.43	2.81	2.47	0.0	No		No	No
St Clere's School	Academies	Osborne Co-operative Academy Trust		4.28	4.48	4.26	1.14	1.1	2.69	0.0	No		No	No
The Gateway Academy	Academies	The Gateway Learning Community	Does not apply							0.0	No		No	No
Ortu Gable Hall School	Academies	ORTU Federation Ltd		2.56	2.93	3.94	4.43	2.81	2.47	0.0	No		No	No
William Edwards School	Academies	South West Essex Community Education Trust (SWECET)		4.87	4.68	3.47	2.48	2.43	3.42	0.0	No		No	No
Harris Academy Chafford Hundred	Academies	Harris Federation		3.83	4.48	3.55	0.0	0.73	2.41	9.6	Yes	100.0	Yes	No
The Hathaway Academy	Academies	Academy Transformation Trust		2.98	3.31	3.21	4.28	1.32	2.86	15.6	Yes	50.0	No	No
Ortu Hassenbrook Academy	Academies	ORTU Federation Ltd		1.77	1.94	1.94	1.78	1.97	1.87	0.0	No		No	No
Harris Academy Riverside	Free Schools	Harris Federation		3.39	3.4	3.02	2.36	1.08	2.19	9.8	Yes	77.8	No	No
Harris Academy Ockendon	Academies	Harris Federation		3.64	4.08	3.47	3.92	4.58	4.5	10.4	Yes	88.0	No	No

Orsett Heath Academy	Free Schools	South West Essex Community Education Trust (SWECET)			4.68	5.26	7.41		5.68		No		No	No
Thames Park Secondary School	Free Schools	Osborne Co-operative Academy Trust									No		No	No

Note: Zero hours reported in any compulsory year group (Years 7–11) may indicate a potential breach of academy funding agreement requirements if the data accurately reflect practice.