

Royal Greenwich SACRE

Standing Advisory Council in Religious Education

Annual Report 2015



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Contact information

Chair of the SACRE:

Mr. Jeff Laws up to the 12th October 2015

Ms. Linda Coplestone from the 12th October 2015

Mr. Robert Morgan from the 2nd December 2015 R.A.Morgan@greenwich.ac.uk

Vice-Chair of the SACRE:

Mr. Bob Love

Chair of the Agreed Syllabus Conference:

Mr. Robert Morgan from December 2015 R.A.Morgan@greenwich.ac.uk

Contact from Royal Greenwich Local Authority:

Michele Holmes up to 12th October 2015 Michele.holmes@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Geraldine Turton from 12th October 2015 Geraldine.turton@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Consultant RE Inspector/ Adviser:

Denise Chaplin Denise.chaplin@lewisham.gov.uk

Clerk for SACRE & ASC from Royal Greenwich Local Authority:

Carol Ladbrook Telephone 020 8921 5631 Carol.ladbrook@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Greenwich SACRE is a member of the National Association of SACREs <http://www.nasacre.org.uk/>



Background and SACRE Meeting Dates

I. Background

Building on the work described in last year's Annual Report, SACRE has continued to make good progress on a number of areas of work as well as endeavouring to tackle challenges as detailed in this report.

SACRE members have participated in several national and regional activities including events organised for Holocaust Memorial Day, the annual conference organised by the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE) including the NASACRE AGM and local Inter faith group events.

Meeting dates for year January 2015- December 2015

Spring Term	17th March 2015	St Mary Magdalene school, Woolwich Site
Summer Term 1	28th April 2015	Woolwich Mosque, Plumstead
Summer Term 2	1st July 2015	St. Mary Magdalene school, Greenwich Peninsula
Autumn Term 1	12th October 2015	Bishop John Robinson school, Thamesmead
Autumn Term 2	2nd December 2015	University of Greenwich, Avery Hill Campus

An executive group, consisting of the current Chair, Consultant, Adviser and Clerk meet prior to each meeting to review actions and plan the agenda.

Training for new SACRE members in 2015

Spring Term	22nd January 2015	Catford Civic Suite
Autumn Term	10th November 2015	Catford Civic Suite

Training was shared with new SACRE members from the Lewisham and Lambeth SACRE.s

I. Overview and Chair's introduction to the Annual Report of Greenwich

This year has been one of transition for the Royal Borough of Greenwich SACRE in terms of personnel. I would like to give thanks to Jeff Laws and Michele Holmes who served SACRE admirably in their respective capacity as chair and local authority contact.

There has been a full agenda of business for SACRE members to discuss in a variety of faith and educational settings which demonstrate the rich diversity of this Royal borough. SACRE members are committed to ensuring that the local authority is fully briefed in all matters pertaining to Religious Education.

SACRE members have undergone tailored training, have met regularly and been informed by expertise, notably from Denise Chaplin, and the annual conference held by NASACRE. This year has seen the need to review the locally agreed syllabus and working parties have been established to bring the new syllabus into being. Members are also informed of new initiatives in education, politics as well as being kept informed of the progress of student's access to the curriculum and their GCSE and A level results.

SACRE members are aware of the rapidly changing world and how the need for a thoughtful and measured approach to the guidance of Religious Education still remains an important matter for our community.

I present the annual report for your consideration

Robert Morgan
Acting Chair

2. Religious Education (RE)

2.1 The Locally Agreed Syllabus

This year an Agreed Syllabus Conference was established and has been scoping out the work required to review the Agreed Syllabus in order to bid for an appropriate level of funding from the LA. Robert Morgan was elected as Chair of the Agreed Syllabus Conference.

In the October SACRE meeting, headline information for GCSE and A Levels nationally was circulated. A local examination analysis was presented at the next SACRE meeting. National figures for GCSE full course and A Level have risen. Short course entries have dropped because they are not being counted in the measures for which schools are judged. SACRE appreciated that it is important that they have information that the whole cohort in the school is being taught statutory RE.

SACRE were advised that this has an impact on the Agreed Syllabus review. The current Agreed Syllabus states all students should be taught an accredited examination course in Greenwich. However members realised that if numbers show not all are being taught that, there is nothing in the Agreed Syllabus to say what teachers might offer as an alternative. The data to be presented at the next meeting would mean that SACRE may have more questions for secondary schools about pupils who have not been entered.

Concern was expressed about the Academies. It appears that one may not be teaching RE at all. SACRE may need to take up this question with the DfE, as it relates to the funding arrangements for teaching of RE in academies.

Mrs. Turton spoke about a desk-top review with schools. There had been previous conversations about the quality of RE in schools and SACRE members possibly sampling school websites. Mrs. Harrison reminded members that she had received very few responses to the questionnaire she had circulated in the previous year. SACRE members considered examining school websites to answer a set of template questions. This was an action that SACRE would consider in the next year.

2.2 Understanding Faith in Greenwich

In March SACRE was presented with the report, 'Westhill Trust and NASACRE Project Award Final Report from Royal Borough of Greenwich'. The report outlined how the project money that SACRE received from Westhill Trust and NASACRE was used to produce a resource for schools to support the Greenwich Agreed Syllabus, and was a final report to NASACRE on the project.

Some remaining project money was used to hold a training day for primary RE subject leaders on February 26th which had been attended by 23 RE subject leaders. It supported the use of the NASACRE Project resource and was held at two local places of worship: the Old Royal Naval College Chapel and the Ramgarhia Sikh Association in Woolwich. Evaluations of the day were very positive. Teachers commented on how well the training would support their school's use of the resource, and had increased their knowledge of local places of worship and their significance within a changing local community.

2.3 Standards in RE

During the year SACRE members were kept informed about local and national issues relating to RE and standards.

The Agreed Syllabus promotes the use of its Assessment guidance that utilises the 9-level scale of attainment from the non-statutory National Framework for Religious education. It also incorporates a

modification of the 'P' scales for use with children achieving below level 1 mainly in special schools and also incorporates a set of 'pupil – speak' levels developed by the National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE). Levels have been removed from all other subjects by the government so Greenwich needs to revise the current advice for a 'post level' curriculum. Revision of the Assessment Advice have begun as part of the early work for the Agreed Syllabus review.

Members discussed the RE Quality Mark which has support from SACREs and the Association of RE Inspectors Advisors and Consultants (AREIAC). Cllr. Scott-McDonald asked about the quality mark and whether there were any schools in Greenwich that had received the accreditation and was informed that St. Mary Magdalene will be looking to achieve the 'gold' award next year.

2.4 Royal Greenwich Religious Studies Performance in 2015

Royal Greenwich SACRE conducts an annual review of GCSE and A Level religious studies examination entries and outcomes. In December Helen Crystal was warmly welcomed to SACRE where she presented a performance analysis for Religious Studies in Royal Greenwich for 2015 and supported SACRE's discussions around issues arising from the report.

The number of pupils in England and Wales taking GCSE Religious Studies full course rose again in 2015, up 5.3% against 2014 to 283,756. This echoed the increase in A Level entries, which were up 6.5% compared with 2014.

SACRE are aware that the removal of short courses from Department for Education (DfE) performance tables has been judged by the RE community nationally as having a serious and negative impact on the number of pupils choosing to take RS at GCSE level nationally. DfE performance tables do not take account of results in short courses. The GCSE short course RS, which had been very popular in the past and provided a reward for schools who provided RE for all, has suffered as a result. The short course is delivered at GCSE standard but covers half the content of a full course and is therefore worth half a GCSE. Changes in entries for short courses have a disproportionately significant impact on RS: as almost two thirds of all short course GCSEs taken in England and Wales were in RS.

It was pointed out that RS is one of the 'progress 8' subjects and Ms Crystal was asked if this will have an impact? She advised that RS still has the highest number of entries after English, Maths and Science in the Royal Borough.

The report follows:

Royal Greenwich GCSE Religious Studies

There has been a 5% increase in religious studies GCSE entries nationally in 2015 and a 4% decrease in local entries (from 1,200 in 2014 to 1,157 in 2015).¹

Table 1 National and local entries in GCSE Religious Studies 2013-2015

	2013	2014	2015
National	229,009	258,748	271,917 ²
Royal Greenwich	855	1,200	1,157

Religious studies GCSE A* - C performance is in line with 2014 performance and exceeds national performance by 3% points. Locally performance in Religious Studies exceeds performance in English, Geography and History.

Table 2 Religious Studies GCSE A* - C results compared to national

	2013	2014	2015
A* - C Royal Greenwich	76%	75%	75%
A* - C National	74%	72%	72%

Table 3 Religious Studies GCSE A* - G results compared to national

	2013	2014	2015
A* - G Royal Greenwich	99%	98%	98%
A* - G National	98%	98%	98%

Table 4 Religious Studies GCSE A* - C results compared to English, Geography and History results for the borough

	2013	2014	2015
A* - C Religious Studies	76%	75%	75%
A* - C English	72%	75%	69%
A* - C Geography	66%	63%	64%
A* - C History	70%	65%	67%

In 2015, the two secondary special schools did not enter any of their pupils for GCSE religious studies full course (Charlton Park Academy and Moatbridge). Royal Greenwich UTC and The John Roan only entered one pupil for GCSE religious studies (please see the footnote below for information on The John Roan's short course entries and performance).

¹ From 2013/14 short course qualifications were no longer recognised by the DfE in the KS 4 headline measures of a school's performance. The DfE has not provided the Local Authority with information on short course entries for 2014/15. In 2013/14, there were 211 short course entries (202 of these entries were for The John Roan). In 2014/15, The John Roan entered 180 students for the religious studies short course and achieved 66% A* - C grades (this information has been provided by the school data lead).

² Based on Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) data.

Table 5 Religious Studies GCSE A* - C results by school 2013-2015

School	2013	2014	2015	No of entries in 2015	Entries as % of total cohort
St Ursula's	96%	95%	85%	117	100%
St Thomas More	92%	92%	94%	124	98%
Thomas Tallis	44%	62%	56%	216	98%
Plumstead Manor	68%	66%	68%	213	96%
St Paul's Academy	77%	83%	81%	220	96%
Stationers' Crown Woods	N/A	69%	78%	168	76%
Corelli College	100%	N/A	69%	49	28%
Eltham Hill	100%	96%	94%	31	22%
Harris Academy	95%	89%	80%	10	7%
Woolwich Polytechnic	100%	100%	29%	7	3%
Royal Greenwich UTC	N/A	N/A	0%	1	1%
The John Roan	67%	N/A	0%	1	1%
Charlton Park Academy	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0%
Moatbridge	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0%
LA Average	76%	75%	75%	1,157	54%
National Average	74%	72%	72%	271,917	44%

Table 6 Religious Studies GCSE A* - G results by school 2013-2015

School	2013	2014	2015	No of entries 2015	Entries % of cohort
St Ursula's	100%	100%	100%	117	100%
St Thomas More	100%	100%	100%	124	98%
Thomas Tallis	98%	97%	94%	216	98%
Plumstead Manor	98%	98%	98%	213	96%
St Paul's Academy	98%	98%	100%	220	96%
Stationers' Crown Woods	N/A	97%	99%	168	76%
Corelli College	100%	N/A	100%	49	28%
Eltham Hill	100%	100%	100%	31	22%
Harris Academy	100%	100%	100%	10	7%
Woolwich Polytechnic	100%	100%	100%	7	3%
Royal Greenwich UTC	N/A	N/A	100%	1	1%
The John Roan	100%	N/A	100%	1	1%
Charlton Park Academy	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0%
Moatbridge	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0%
LA Average	99%	98%	98%	1,157	54%
National Average	98%	98%	98%	271,917	44%

Chart 7 Religious Studies GCSE A* - C and A* - G results by school (with % entered)

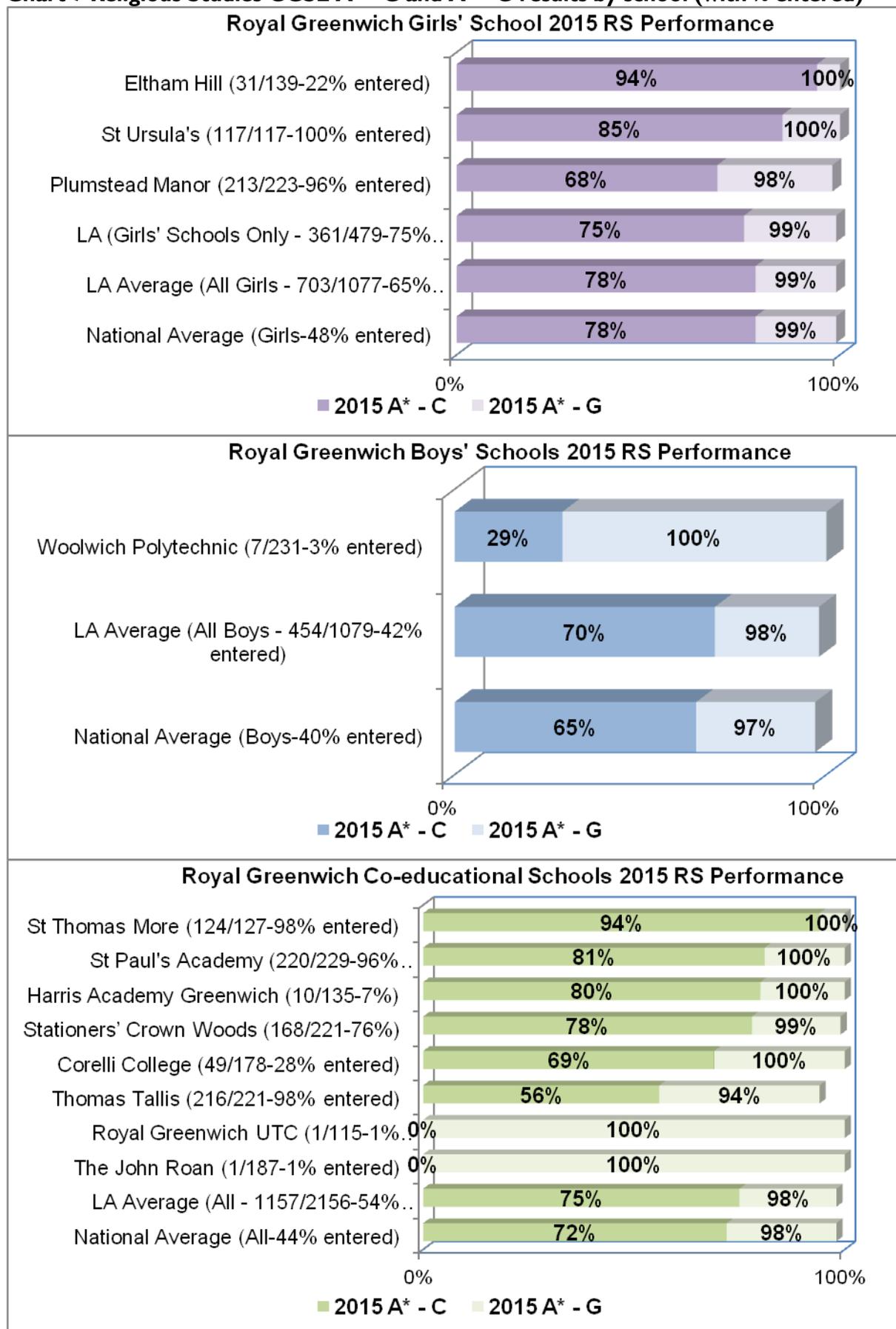


Table 8 Religious Studies GCSE A* - C results in 2015 by contextual factors

		A* - C		No. of entries
		No.	%	
Gender	Female	545	78%	703
	Male	317	70%	454
Pupil Premium³	Not Pupil Premium	550	80%	685
	Pupil Premium	312	66%	472
SEN	No Special Needs	772	78%	987
	Special Needs	90	53%	170
First Language	English	537	71%	755
	Not English	325	81%	402
Ethnicity	White British	300	66%	458
	White Irish	10	67%	15
	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller of Irish Heritage	2	100%	2
	Any Other White Background	67	77%	87
	White and Black Caribbean	25	74%	34
	White and Black African	19	76%	25
	White and Asian	10	91%	11
	Any Other Mixed Background	31	78%	40
	Indian	16	80%	20
	Pakistani	14	88%	16
	Bangladeshi	7	78%	9
	Any Other Asian Background	35	80%	44
	Black Caribbean	24	69%	35
	Black African	237	87%	273
	Any Other Black Background	30	81%	37
	Chinese	10	71%	14
	Any other ethnic group	19	70%	27
	Unknown	6	60%	10
	LA Average		862	75%

³ Pupil premium is additional funding for children who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the past six years, looked after children and children adopted from care. The aim is for schools to use the funding to help close attainment gaps between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils.

A Level Religious Studies

Nationally, the number of A Level entries has risen steadily between 2013 and 2015 and results are broadly consistent year on year. There has been a 75% increase in A Level entries in Royal Greenwich (from 20 in 2014 to 35 in 2015).

Table 9 National and local entries in A Level Religious Studies 2013-2015

	2013	2014	2015
National	19,171	19,841	21,577
Royal Greenwich	12	20	35

Table 10 National performance (A* - A, A* - B and A* - E) 2013-2015

	No of candidates	A* - A	A* - B	A* - E
2013	19,171	26%	55%	99%
2014	19,841	26%	54%	99%
2015	21,577	24%	54%	99%

Four Royal Greenwich schools delivered A Level courses in religious studies in 2015. This is cost effective given the relatively low number of entries. It is important to apply caution when looking at performance over time because of the low number of entries year on year.

Table 11 A Level A* - B results

School	2013	2014	2015	No of entries in 2015
Stationers' Crown Woods	N/A	33%	0%	5
Harris Academy	N/A	N/A	67%	3
Plumstead Manor	17%	67%	18%	11
Thomas Tallis	17%	55%	50%	16
LA Average	17%	55%	34%	35

Table 12 A Level A* - E results

School	2013	2014	2015	No of entries in 2015
Stationers' Crown Woods	N/A	100%	100%	5
Harris Academy	N/A	N/A	100%	3
Plumstead Manor	83%	100%	100%	11
Thomas Tallis	100%	100%	100%	16
LA Average	92%	100%	100%	35

Members were concerned about schools with low entries. The Chair felt it was important to challenge the academies on the number of entries and offer support to those schools showing poorer performance.

SACRE raised concerns about the low number of entries at one school in 2015 compared to previous years. There was recognition that the school had no RE teacher for a long period of time.

The Chair raised the issue about the implications for the Agreed Syllabus at KS4 if RE is not offered at GCSE level. It was felt very important for SACRE to inform schools of their statutory obligation to teach RE and offer support for this provision.

One member suggested that schools who have achieved a good OfSTED judgement may not consider their statutory obligation as important and he felt they should be called to account. Another commented that schools should be looking at these statutory requirements, e.g. following the current Agreed Syllabus, having high expectations and offering accredited courses for quality RE. Not doing that, he suggested, contradicts British Values and compromises SMSC.

The performance of the two special schools was questioned and it was suggested that SACRE should check that children receive their full entitlement to RE at these schools.

2.5 Teaching & resources

During the year SACRE members have been kept informed of RE initiatives, events and resources. Information has been made available to schools though, for example, the Children's Services Schools Bulletin and has included the NATRE RE Newsletters for Primary and Secondary Schools; Art in Heaven, Farmington Fellowships, Holocaust Memorial Day and CPD opportunities.

2.6 Complaints about RE

There have been no complaints about RE in Greenwich schools brought to SACRE this year.

3. Collective Worship

SACRE has not engaged in any work on Collective Worship this year, although it has been referenced in the Multifaith Guidelines materials.

3.1 Advice

The SACRE reviewed and made available its advice on collective worship last year.

3.2 Monitoring

SACRE's role is to monitor the quality of Collective Worship in local schools but notes with concern its limited ability to collect information to make a judgement.

3.3 Training

No training has been provided on Collective Worship for schools this year. However SACRE members received training themselves in their July meeting.

They were reminded that, nationally, there have been issues with collective worship in schools nationally over the last few years. There are two questions currently being asked:

- Is collective worship appropriate in a maintained, non-faith school?
- For some people, collective worship is controversial. Has it an educational value? If so, what is it?

A daily act of collective worship is challenging to provide, particularly in secondary schools but if it is done well, it can make a difference for the whole school community. SACRES need to provide schools with support and encouragement.

There were many questions and an interesting and lively discussion, Members felt it had been helpful to see the difference between collective worship and corporate worship and good to qualify what worship actually means in a school context.

3.3 Complaints

There have been no complaints about Collective Worship brought to SACRE in this reporting year.

3.4 Determinations

No Determination applications have been received this year.

4. Links with other agencies

4.1 Local

Several Greenwich SACRE members attend other SACREs and local Inter Faith Forums and therefore SACRE is informed by their ability to bring to the group information from other areas.

4.2 National

- **The RE Council of England and Wales (REC)**

The work of the REC has been disseminated throughout the year to inform SACRE, faith communities and local schools.

- **Government Departments**

In April SACRE discussed the content and implications of a letter, dated January 2015, sent from Lord Nash to SACREs and Heads of Children's Services

- **The Association of RE Inspectors Advisers and Consultants (AREIAC)**

The RE Adviser supporting the SACRE is a member of AREIAC; information from this body informs SACRE's work.

- **The National Association of SACREs (NASACRE).**

Greenwich SACRE is a member of NASACRE. Mr. Laws and Ms. Holmes attended the NASACRE AGM and Annual Conference in Birmingham on behalf of Greenwich SACRE; other SACRE members also attended on behalf of other SACREs. A report was circulated to all members and members discussed the events and inputs from the day.

The keynote was given by the Rt. Hon. Charles Clarke, Visiting Professor of Philosophy and Faith, Lancaster University. Charles Clarke said that Religion is important in national life and SACREs form a vital link between faith communities and education.

Key points of his address:

Now is a big time for consideration of RE in Education. OfSTED has stated that the 1944 Education Act needs to be reconsidered. The religious landscape in the UK is now very different from 1944 both in practice and diversity. The educational landscape has also changed: Local Education Authorities are now Local Authorities and there is a bigger range of school types for example maintained, Academy, Free, Independent.

Charles Clarke and Linda Woodhead, Professor in the sociology of religion in the Department of Politics, Philosophy & Religion at Lancaster University, had co-authored a book (published in June and made available free on-line to SACREs) to provoke discussion and consideration about RE, asking, "Is the current framework the right one?"

RE has never been more important. You only need to look at the current top news items across the world to see that. The modern world requires a good understanding of religion, faith and religious issues. Perspectives can be a worry and concern or illumination and inspiration.

Charles Clarke then raised a series of questions:

Should RE be a statutory requirement at all?

He believed the answer is yes, because of the increasing need for young people to understand religion.

Should RE be part of the National Curriculum?

Because of the right to withdraw a pupil, it would be difficult to equate it with other subjects. It should be part of the national requirement in education (as it is now part of the basic curriculum).

What should RE be called?

In 1944 it was Religious Instruction. Then there was a compact between the Church and the State – hence the right to withdraw. (In Scotland it is Religious and Moral Education.)

Should RE be taught throughout Key Stages 1-5?

Key Stage 5 has effectively gone, though it is still a legal requirement. Some say RE should be taught in KS1-3 but not KS4, others say it shouldn't be taught in KS4 but in KS1-3. Key Stage 4 is in a mess! Some say start at KS 3. The Tomlinson Report was not implemented. The whole 14-19 framework needs to be reconsidered.

Should RE be national or local?

There is a need for religion and Schools to be linked – SACREs have a role to play in this. Generally there is a lack of LA support for locally agreed syllabuses. If it continues as now, it needs to be properly resourced.

How would a local SACRE work if there was a national structure for RE?

For reasons of community cohesion ALL children should have good cohesive RE. There needs to be better resourcing for SACREs whether there is a nationally or locally agreed syllabus. There needs to be more engagement from faith communities in education and vice-versa. This may only be possible through SACREs who can act as a bridge.

Should non-theistic belief systems be involved?

Community cohesion is important and should back on Ofsted's Framework. It should be given proper weight and should be properly resourced.

Is there a need to have the right to withdraw?

If the regime is different, there should not be a need to have this right.

Charles Clarke also noted that there were issues around training of teachers, resources and respect in schools for RE.

The address was followed by questions and discussion. These included:

- the need for SACREs to get their MP's attention,
- ensuring that parents understood what they were withdrawing pupils from
- the balance of groups within SACREs
- The role of the Established Church
- Resourcing of SACREs and RE
- Qualifications needed to teach RE and good Continuing Professional Development
- Collective Worship

5. SACRE Arrangements

5.1 Local Authority Support

The SACRE's support is provided by an Clerk; who provides a central contact for SACRE business, distributing papers for meetings and servicing the meetings.

SACRE is supported by an external RE Consultant Adviser / Inspector from another LA and an Officer from Greenwich Children's Services. Salaries and administration costs for these posts and a budget for the work of SACRE and the Agreed Syllabus Conference were met by Greenwich Children's Services.

5.2 Membership

During the year SACRE have been sorry to see several members move on. The clerk has endeavoured to fill vacancies and check up on absences. This had led to a series of quorate meetings and a reduction in vacancies.

5.3 SACRE Training

SACRE members are concerned to ensure that new members can understand SACRE's work and participate actively as soon as possible. Training sessions were provided twice this year for new or inexperienced members.

6. Other Work of the SACRE

6.1 Ramadan Advice

In July SACRE were informed that several schools had asked for advice on support for students during Ramadan. Ms. Chaplin had also spoken to schools that had made enquiries. The SACRE advice on Ramadan has been sent to all schools via the E-Bulletin.

Members were reminded that the start of Ramadan in 2016 is earlier and will coincide with the examination period. Advice for schools was therefore going to be prepared earlier.

In December therefore the RE Adviser introduced the document 'Fasting in Ramadan 2016'. Ramadan in 2016 coincides with the national examinations and schools need to consider arrangements for students.

SACRE approved the guidance for schools and suggested the title be amended to 2016-2018. It was agreed that the document should be sent out to schools early in the New Year. This information could also be sent to all governors via the termly Information Sheet produced by Governor Services.

6.2 The Multi Faith Guidelines

The Working Group reorganized to complete the work in their December meeting and were set to tie up all loose ends early in 2016.

6.3 Promoting Fundamental British Values as part of SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development)

In their April meeting SACRE members discussed the guidance document, produced by the Department for Education in November 2014, on promoting British Values in schools. One member emphasised that RE is a core delivery vehicle of British Values and so RE subject leaders may feel empowered by this guidance, as it has highlighted the importance of RE in schools.

SACRE heard from Stationers Crown Woods Academy where all subject leaders were asked to find where SMSC happens in their subject and beyond. This practice is inspired by that of RSA Academy Arrow Vale, which used the Schools with Soul approach to developing SMSC.

Following this meeting, the SACRE's SMSC framework audit tool, which has been promoted to Royal Greenwich schools, was revised to incorporate British Values and circulated through the subject leader network meetings.

6.4 Working with other LA Priorities

In April two elected members proposed that they bring a presentation of the wider priorities of the LA to the July SACRE meeting but, due to a change in membership, this did not take place. This discussion had arisen as part of the work done late in 2014 on the SACRE Self Evaluation Toolkit, where there is a section on SACRE's relationship with the LA.

6.5 Response to the Charlie Hebdo murders and the Hyper Cacher hostage deaths

In April SACRE discussed the advice from NASACRE, 'Teaching Islam after the Charlie Hebdo murders and the Hyper Cacher hostage deaths'. SACRE members expressed concern that some parents and carers may not understand the aims and objectives of the RE curriculum and may be influenced by groups such as the British National Party, which has posted a letter template on its website to try and persuade parents/carers to withdraw their children from RE lessons. SACRE members felt that it is particularly important that those children whose parents might not understand the purpose of RE are exactly the children who would benefit from a broad understanding of what religion and faith involves.

SACRE heard that the issue of parental withdrawal from RE was also discussed at the recent, joint primary and secondary subject leader network meeting. Whilst having individual conversations with parents and carers often clarifies their understanding and prevents withdrawal, this is not always enough to address parental concerns over RE content. SACRE members agreed to be mindful of the NASACRE advice and to be active advocates for a broad and balanced RE curriculum at every possible opportunity.

6.6 Holocaust Memorial Day

SACRE were advised that the Town Hall will have its usual celebration of Holocaust Memorial Day which will include contributions from Greenwich pupils. SACRE members will receive invitations to the event via the Town Hall and SACRE wished invitations to be sent to schools.

6.7 Baha'i holidays

In October, the Baha'i representative, Mr. Duncan, circulated copies of the Feast Days and Holy Days of the new Baha'i Calendar explaining how the calendar changes over the next couple of years. Ms. Chaplin felt this would be useful information for schools when faced with parents wishing to withdraw pupils for feast and holy days and asked if there are any celebrations planned in Greenwich for the Birth of the Bab and the Birth of Baha u' llah. Mr. Duncan said that a celebration event will be held at the Quaker Hall at 8 p.m. on Friday 13th November to which SACRE members would be welcomed.

6.8 What is RE for?: request from Mark Plater at Bishop Grosseteste University

SACRE members were introduced to the questionnaire 'What is RE for?' which is a study developed by Bishop Grosseteste University. This survey is particularly important, at a time when SACRE members will be considering a review of the Agreed Syllabus, as the questionnaire would help Members have an understanding of the Syllabus. All SACREs have been requested to complete the survey. SACRE members were reminded of the definition of RE as it is described in the current Agreed Syllabus. A discussion ensued after which SACRE members were requested to complete the RE survey on line.

6.9 A New Settlement: Religion and Belief in Schools

In October SACRE reviewed the NASACRE briefing on this important paper. The paper discusses some salient recommendations from NASACRE and questions SACREs should be asking for each one. (The complete report is available on the NASACRE website.) SACRE agreed to discuss this further in the new year and to send a response to the paper as this was being requested.

The Accord Coalition's 2016 Inclusivity Award

SACRE members were introduced to the information about the award. It is open to all schools in England and Wales and relates to how they have gone about making that extra step within the particular setting that they find themselves in to be inclusive. Schools will not be disadvantaged for having to operate under a different legal framework from some other schools, or being located in a diverse or relatively mono-cultural area. The annual Accord Inclusivity Award was first run in 2010 and since winning institutions have included rural, suburban, inner city, faith and special schools. Participating in the Award has been highlighted by Ofsted as a way schools can complement their duties under the Equality Act to advance equality of opportunity, foster good relations and tackle discrimination.

SACRE requested that the LA circulate this information to schools.

Appendix A

Membership as at December 2015

Group A	Representing	Name
	African-Caribbean Churches	Pastor Segun Adenuga
	Bahai	Mr. Allen Duncan
	Baptist Churches	Vacant
	Buddhism	Mr. Keith Alker
	Evangelical Churches	Mr. Jeff Laws
	Hinduism	Vacancy
	Hinduism	Vacancy
	Islam	Mr. Adel Khaireh
	Islam	Imam Swaleh Kabocho
	Judaism	Rev. David Rome
	Methodist Church	Ms. Lin Coplestone
	Roman Catholic Church	Vacancy
	Sikhism	Vacancy
	Sikhism	Mr. Balbir Singh Bakhshi
	URC	Vacancy
Group B	The Church of England	Mr. Bob Love (Vice Chair)
	The Church of England	Mr. Jeremy Lunnon
	The Church of England	Vacancy
	The Church of England	Mr. Shaun Burns
Group C	Teachers in the LA	Ms. Emma Redman
		Mrs. Claire Harrison
		Ms. Rachael Greenwood
		Ms. Ruth Handyside
		Ms. Jo Richardson
	HE Co-optee	Mr. Robert Morgan
Group D	The Local Authority	Cllr. Mandy Brinkhurst
		Cllr. Denise Scott-Macdonald
		Cllr. Ololade Babatola
		Ms. Michele Holmes (to September 2015) Mrs. Geraldine Turton (from September 2015)

Fasting in Ramadan

2016 / 1437 - 2017 / 1438

May Allah look favourably upon your fasting and answer your prayers!



Guidance for schools when meeting the needs of Muslim pupils

from the **Greenwich SACRE**

RAMADAN

Meeting the needs of Muslim pupils

Introduction

"Oh, you who believe! Fasting was prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may become righteous."

Surah Al-Baqarah (The Cow) - Holy Qur'an 2:183

Fasting in the month of Ramadan, the month of revelation of the Holy Qur'an, is an obligation for all Muslims past the age of puberty. There are exemptions from these requirements for some people, such as the sick, those engaging in a long journey, menstruating women, or those who are frail in old age. Exemptions have to be made up later or compensated for, e.g. by fasting on another day or by feeding the poor. Fasting at other times is also encouraged but is non-obligatory.

Fasting is undertaken by Muslims for the sake of Allah, the Creator, the Merciful, the Loving (to mention just three of His names or attributes) and is regarded as an expiation of human failings. It cultivates virtues such as piety, love of God, brotherhood, vigilance, devotion, patience, unselfishness, moderation, thriftiness and satisfaction with what one has, discipline, social belonging, self-control, and compassion for fellow human beings who might suffer hunger and deprivation unwillingly.

Fasting in Islam is not merely denial of food and drink alone. Muslims believe they should also try to restrain their other senses, such as the eye, ears, and particularly the tongue, avoiding backbiting, scandal-mongering, obscenity, confrontation and such matters.

Fasting during Ramadan is one of the main requirements of the Islamic faith. Muslims are required to abstain from all food, drink and sexual activity (where appropriate), from dawn to nightfall through the 30 or 29 days between one new moon and the next. The daily fast begins before the time of the Fajr (dawn) prayer and finishes at the time of Maghrib (sunset) prayer.

It is very important for many Muslim families that their children should begin participating in the practice of fasting at an early age. Most children of secondary school age, as they are considered adult members of their communities, will be expected to fast. Many primary school children will be fasting as well with younger pupils fasting possibly for part of Ramadan, or only on certain days of each week.

Teachers therefore need to bear in mind that the routine of Muslim families is entirely different during Ramadan. The whole household will be awake much earlier in the morning and will stay up later at night, particularly when, as in 2016-17, Ramadan falls in the summer months with long daylight hours. Young children may well become more tired or excitable in school during this time even if they are not fasting themselves. Those students who are fasting may become very tired and thirsty during the school day.

Good Practice Guidelines

Schools are asked to consider the following points in determining their approach to the needs of the Muslim schoolchildren and staff in their care during Ramadan.

Key aspects should be:

- inform and reassure parents /carers in advance how they will support pupils who are fasting, including any special provisions that will be made for pupils who are fasting during Ramadan.
- in primary schools, establish a register of those pupils who will be fasting, what their fast will involve (e.g. are they abstaining from drink as well as food) and on which days, based on parental permission, given either verbally or in writing. Pupils of secondary age will be expected to fast and it would not therefore be a practical or reliable course of action to attempt to establish a register with them.
- make special provision at lunchtimes for pupils who are fasting but cannot go home. They may want to rest and be quiet or they may enjoy taking part in special activities that can be arranged for them while other pupils are having their lunch. They may also wish to perform prayers at this time, or to share reading the Qur'an with other Muslim pupils or staff.
- ensure that no pupil who is fasting is required to do anything that would make her/him break the fast or become dehydrated or weak. This could include swimming, cross-country running or weight-training.
- anticipate that fasting may make some pupils weak or tired, and adapt the curriculum as appropriate. This could mean, for example, planning less energetic activities in P.E particularly as this year's Ramadan falls in the hottest time of the year with the longest days.
- where possible, use the fact that pupils are fasting to inform and enrich the curriculum experience both for themselves and others. It could provide a starting point for discussions in a number of subjects, such as religious education, history, P.E., health education, performing arts, geography, science and in collective worship.
- Be sensitive when holding evening events such as parents' evenings, prize -givings etc so that staff and pupils have time to return home to break their fast.

Other Considerations

Prayer facilities:

Many Muslim staff and older Muslim pupils who are fasting may like to have the opportunity to pray at lunchtime. If schools are to meet this need they will have to:

- provide supervised and appropriate rooms that are sensitive to the needs of the participants, where possible one for girls and one for boys if these are not already made available for this purpose throughout the year;
- make available washing facilities and a vessel for washing. Those praying will need to wash their arms and feet which, because facilities are not built for this purpose, may lead to a few puddles on the floor which will need to be cleaned up afterwards;
- allow those wishing to pray to bring prayer mats, and if they wish to, slippers to wear after ablution. Sensitive storage for these items needs to be agreed with those concerned.

Summer Examinations 2016 & 2017

Students observing the fast will have consumed their last food and drink before dawn and then during 2016 and 2017 there will be many students across the country taking public examinations during the fast period. Given the importance of hydration for maintaining concentration, it would not be surprising if exam performance was to suffer.

Clearly, if fasting exam candidates are at an unfair disadvantage when they go into their exams with no food or water, the consequences could mean not only lower grades for the individuals but also poorer performance for their school in league tables.

Education providers should seek to reduce any disadvantage by considering how best to support staff and students during periods of fasting that clash with the exam season.

Clare Young, a senior solicitor in the education team at national business law firm DWF said about the exam period 2016:

'The Equality Act 2010 gives staff and students protection from discrimination on grounds of specified protected characteristics, including religious or philosophical belief. Therefore, it is unlawful to treat a teacher or pupil less favourably because of their religion or belief, or to apply any provision, criterion or practice (PCP) that disadvantages a particular group without the PCP being a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. In this situation, PCPs could include any arrangements made for revision or sitting exams, which could arguably place Muslims observing the fast at a severe disadvantage.'

It is highly unlikely that exam boards will consider it practicable to rearrange exam timetables to avoid daylight hours during Ramadan. However, it is understood that talks are taking place between teaching unions, the Joint Council for Qualifications and leading Muslim groups to see if anything can be done to reduce the impact on affected students.

As these arrangements clearly have an impact on a particular religious group, timetabling decisions must be capable of being objectively justified bearing in mind the difficulties of fitting in exams within the wider context of the academic year, including the need to allow time for marking and moderating and ensuring the security of exam questions.'

For other year groups, it may be that internal school exam schedules could be retimed to ensure that students do not have too many exams on the same day, or that special arrangements are made to allow some students to sit certain exams at different times. School plans for other exam arrangements, such as revision sessions and the location of rooms could be reviewed to minimise the impact on those who are fasting.

If students are normally permitted to take food and drink into the exam room with them, it would be considerate where possible to allocate a separate exam room for fasting pupils so they are not distracted by others who might have water bottles or snacks on their desks.

Assemblies/Collective Worship:

It is good practice to use collective worship / assemblies to acknowledge and explain about Ramadan. It is also helpful to check that the content of all assemblies during this time is planned sensitively towards pupils who may be feeling weak or hungry.

After school and out of school activities:

Where schools have a high proportion of Muslim pupils, consideration may need to be given to suspending or adapting some extra-curricular activities during Ramadan for practical reasons.

In other schools where the normal programme will be maintained, it is important to ensure that pupils do not suffer in any way through not being able to participate. An example of this would be where 100% attendance at lunchtime practices is required by members of sporting teams.

In planning an annual calendar of out of school visits, it would be sensible to bear in mind the timing of the Ramadan so that one-off special opportunities are not denied to Muslim pupils.

With younger pupils who are not fasting every day it is usually possible to arrange with their families that they do not fast on a particular day so to participate comfortably in an outing.

Celebrating Id in school:

Id-ul-Fitr at the end of Ramadan is a great day of celebration for Muslim families and it is appropriate that schools should mark this time in a special way. Some schools may want to organise events, put up signs, decorate rooms and exchange Id cards.

Absence for Religious Observance:

Schools need to strike a balance between authorised absence for religious observance and excessive loss of school time and may consider the following to be reasonable:

- **Pupils** (*Please bear in mind that many Muslim families mark the occasion of Id for up to three days.*)

A one day authorised absence for religious observance at Id-ul-Fitr (a 10 day holiday in some Muslim countries) and another at Id-ul-Adha (the festival at the time of the annual Hajj Pilgrimage). If parents/carers request further days, then consideration should be given to this. Each case should be considered on an individual basis, looking at patterns of absence and the impact on the overall attendance level.

Please note that the Islamic calendar is subject to the sighting of the new moon, or the news of this from recognised Islamic authorities. Therefore, there is some uncertainty in establishing the date until the last moment. It should also be understood that different Muslims in Britain might follow different days depending on their country of origin or the school of thought they follow.

The register code 'R' should be used for absence authorised when it is due to religious observance. The DfE School Attendance Guidance (Oct 2014) states 'The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.'

- **Staff**

Requests for leave from individual members of staff should be treated sympathetically by the Headteacher and governing body.

Communicating with Parents / Carers

It is helpful when the school's policy regarding holidays for religious observance is communicated to parents/carers and included in the school prospectus. Ideally, in advance of Ramadan, all parents/carers of Muslim pupils should receive information about the school's arrangements; either through a letter in English or translation, or a meeting in school. This communication with the home can achieve the following:

- acknowledge the importance of Ramadan and Id ul Fitr in Islam and show concern for the welfare and education of the child;
- state clearly the position with regard to authorised absence for religious observance and stress the need for parents/carers to ensure that their children are not absent for more days than are authorised;
- outline the special provisions that will be made for pupils who are fasting during Ramadan;
- request confirmation from parents/carers of primary age pupils about whether their child will be fasting during Ramadan, and if so, on which days. Or give parents/carers an opportunity to come into school to discuss how best to decide on which days to allocate fasting and which to avoid;
- give details of any plans for the celebration of Id in schools;
- seek advance notice of when the pupil is likely to be away from school (see section above 'Absence for religious observance') whilst recognising that Muslims cannot be specific in advance of the information being given by the appropriate Islamic authorities.

Prayer Times for Ramadan

The Islamic calendar is lunar and has 354 or 355 days. Therefore precise dates cannot be forecast as they depend on the sighting of the moon. Ramadan begins on June 6th or 7th in 2016. Prayer times for June and July may be found on many mosque websites.

Id-ul-Fitr (the festival marking the end of Ramadan) falls on July 7th (plus or minus 1 day).