



**Title of meeting:** Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

**Date of meeting:** 14 June 2023

**Subject:** SACRE Monitoring Group Report

**Report by:** Justine Ball, SACRE Advisor

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- 1. Purpose of report:** The purpose of this report is to inform SACRE of the findings and discussions that took place during the meeting of the SACRE monitoring sub-group on 24 May 2023.

Members shared the monitoring group Terms of Reference, considered the most recent Ofsted reports which mentioned RE, discussed teacher training and vacancies, explored national and local initiatives for RE, considered wider visits to Portsmouth mosques and Ramadan advice for teachers and then discussed the recent withdrawal from RE and Collective Worship survey completed in Portsmouth.

**Recommendations:**

**That SACRE notes the findings of the monitoring group meeting.**

**That SACRE asks for the withdrawal survey to be repeated in the Spring of 2024 and to be discussed in the May 2024 SACRE meeting.**

**That an initial meeting be set up to discuss widening visits to Mosques for teachers.**

**That advice be provided for the monitoring group to consider regarding Ramadan and support for schools.**

- 2. Background:** The monitoring group met at 4.30pm on 24 May 2023.  
Present:

Sam Duddles (SACRE Chair and group B), Jane Kelly (group B), Kari Laing (group C), Councillor Abdul Kadir and Councillor Asghar Shah (group D),

Also in attendance: Justine Ball (SACRE Professional Advisor), Debbie Anderson (Head of School Improvement), Chris May (Hampshire Secondary Teaching and Learning Adviser for RE), and Karen Martin (SACRE Clerk).

Apologies were received from Elizabeth Jenkerson (group A), Pastor Chris Thomas (group A), Taki Jaffer (group D) and Councillor Benedict Swann (Group D).



### **3. Inspector/Adviser Updates:**

Justine Ball informed the group that there were a small number of Ofsted inspections in the local area recently but that there was only one Ofsted report that had specifically mentioned RE. The comments were very positive and especially so on the importance of visits to places of worship. It was noted by the group that RE can play a large role in the outcomes of an Ofsted inspection and that diversity within modern Britain is an important part of the Ofsted framework and is being noted by inspectors.

Justine Ball and Chris May updated the group on the situation with Religious Studies (RS) teacher training and teacher vacancies in the local area. The advisers informed the group that local Initial Teacher Education providers had mentioned that very few candidates are coming forward for training as RE or RS teachers and that this a national concern, which has been noted in previous SACRE meetings. It was noted that the group were not aware of any secondary vacancies for RS specialist teachers in Portsmouth although it was commented upon that Secondary schools are also struggling to recruit across all subject areas currently. Chris May had recently been to the Association of University Lecturers in Religious Education (AULRE) and there had been much discussion of these topics, including the comment that although there are specific issues relating to RE teacher vacancies, recruitment is difficult across all subjects. Culham St Gabriels Trust and other national bodies are continuing their work in supporting training specialist RE teachers and the group will be informed about their work regularly through the year.

Chris May informed the group about his work in two secondary schools and Justine Ball informed the group that she would be working with some primary schools on their RE curriculum in the coming Summer and early Autumn term.

### **4. Monitoring RE and Collective Worship (CW) Survey:**

A survey on withdrawals from RE and Collective Worship had been sent to Headteachers of LA maintained schools on 20 February and 19 schools had responded. Of these schools, the group noted that very low numbers of children were partially withdrawn from RE and Collective Worship and that there were no children withdrawn from the whole of RE. The schools all knew the reasons for withdrawal and the reasons were varied but often due to the religious belief of the family. Schools were very positive about the support they receive for RE and Collective Worship and the group asked that the survey is repeated again in the Spring term of 2024.

### **5. Visits to Portsmouth Mosques:**

The group discussed further interaction between Portsmouth mosques and the SACRE going forward and this was welcomed by all. There was some discussion about the best way to move forward with this and it was agreed that a lunchtime visit to the Muslim academy in Buckland would be a good starting point. It was hoped that visits to other mosques would follow. It was agreed that the Chair of SACRE together with some of the group D Counsellors would set up an initial meeting to begin this important work.



The group also discussed further support for schools during Ramadan, particularly in relation to multi faith prayer rooms and PE. It agreed to investigate providing information to schools and to see what further local and national advice was available.