



Purpose: For Decision

Committee Report

Committee	Isle of Wight Monitoring group for the SACRE
Date	20 February 2023
Title	Monitoring Group Report
Report of	Professional Adviser to the SACRE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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 20 February 2023. SACRE has a statutory responsibility to monitor the effectiveness of the agreed syllabus and this group meets before each full SACRE meeting in order to support SACRE in fulfilling this responsibility.

Those present at the meeting were: Justine Ball (Sacre Professional Adviser), Harry Kirby Beth Feltham and Cllr Debbie Andre.

The group received updates on professional RE education, monitoring the effectiveness of RE and an update of results from the GCSE examination series in 2022. Further updates on the 2021 census results on religion and the monitoring survey for RE and Collective Worship were discussed.

Recommendations:

That SACRE notes the findings of the monitoring group meeting.

2. Inspector/Adviser Updates:

HIAS Primary and Secondary RE Network meetings have taken place virtually for Island teachers in the Spring term. Teachers have been discussing overview studies and pondering time as well as ways to assess RE and provide evidence of RE teaching in the meetings. Island teacher have also attended RE courses on the mainland, such as Assessing RE and Collective Worship. An Island Collective Worship training event was held for teachers at the Bay Secondary School on Thursday 8 March to share best practice and examples of Collective Worship across the island. The monitoring group requested that the SACRE consider RE training for governors next year and ways to promote youth voice to SACRE – for

example by a conference/event for upper primary and lower secondary children on RE.

3. Updates on the Isle of Wight 2022 GCSE Religious Studies examinations

It was noted that only 3 schools had entries for the GCSE RS and that 23% of the cohort of students were entered for Religious Studies, which is a drop in numbers compared to previous years. The results were below national and significantly below national at 1, 5 and 7+ indicators.

The group discussed what they could do to help with this and went on to discuss recruiting Religious Studies teachers on the Island. It was commented that it had been very difficult to recruit RS teachers on the island and that word of mouth had been key to recruitment rather than adverts. It was stated that Religious Studies was worse than other subjects for recruitment. This may be a factor when considering GCSE results here. The group discussed ways to increase the awareness of the value of the subject for schools, for example through training for Senior Leaders and for Governors on the value of RE. It was agreed that the group would run training for governors in the next academic year as a way of increasing the profile of Religious Education in schools and promoting conversations about the subject more widely in schools.

The group also discussed raising the profile of the subject to help with GCSE take up by working on the Youth Voice to SACRE in the next year and considering a conference with primary and secondary young people, so that young people themselves talk to others about the subject and its importance on the school timetable.

Justine Ball noted dropping numbers of RE specialist teachers was a national concern. The Association of University Lecturers in RE (AULRE) and the National RE Council were raising awareness of the benefits of teaching RE and information about this campaign can be found here: [New RE teacher recruitment campaign kicks off as popular GCSE subject faces staff shortage \(natre.org.uk\)](https://natre.org.uk)

Other sources of evidence of effectiveness of RE:

The Inspector/adviser reported that there were very few mentions for RE specifically in the Ofsted reports for Isle of Wight schools. There were two schools that had comments specifically relating to RE and both were positive, with comments made about the value of learning about different religions and traditions and the importance for this in helping children prepare for life in modern Britain.

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

A survey had been sent to Headteachers of Island schools early in the Spring term. 19 Island schools responded and the numbers withdrawn from RE and Collective Worship in the responding schools were very low:

All of RE: 2 children

Parts of RE: 8 children

All of Collective Worship: 8 children

Parts of CW: 8 children

The reasons given were the beliefs of the parents, whether religious or non religious.

5. School visits:

Two school visits had been undertaken with RE leaders who attend the Island RE networks. These had a focus on the RE curriculum to explore how the subject is engaging, meaningful and interesting for all children. Work was discussed mapping golden threads in schools to ensure more rigour, show progression and be engaging. Floor books and ways of recording information as a subject leader were also discussed.

6. UK Census 2021

The Professional Adviser introduced a report on religious activity in our area drawn from the 2021 UK Census, which had been prepared and circulated. She stated that she shared this information with schools at the recent RE network. The results are as follows for the Island:

43.9% had no religion
47.7% Christian
0.4% Buddhist
0.2% Hindu
0.1% Jewish
0.4% Muslim
0.0% Sikh
0.8% Any other religion

The results nationally were as follows for comparison:

- Less than half of the population (46.2%, 27.5 million people) described themselves as “Christian”, a 13.1 percentage point decrease from 59.3% (33.3 million) in 2011; despite this decrease, “Christian” remained the most common response to the religion question.
- “No religion” was the second most common response, increasing by 12.0 percentage points to 37.2% (22.2 million) from 25.2% (14.1 million) in 2011.
- There were increases in the number of people who described themselves as “Muslim” (3.9 million, 6.5% in 2021, up from 2.7 million, 4.9% in 2011) and “Hindu” (1.0 million, 1.7% in 2021, up from 818,000, 1.5% in 2011).

RECOMMENDATION

1. These set out in full the specific recommendation(s) the Committee are being asked to consider. Ensure the recommendation(s) are reflective of those in the options section, and the recommendations are worded in such a way they can be directly used in the Minutes.