

Dear Headteacher

## **Religious Education school review**

I am writing to request your assistance. One of the duties falling to the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) is to monitor the provision of RE in schools. This is carried out periodically through reviews in a sample of Essex schools. We hope that you might welcome this opportunity for your school's own perception of RE to be supplemented with an informed 'view from outside'.

Suitably qualified professionals with appropriate experience have therefore been commissioned to review RE in 6 secondary schools, 14 primary schools and 1 special schools. The reviewers are:

Andrew Scott                      Graham Handscomb                      Christine Horton  
Andrew Jones                      Graham Lancaster

In addition, we are in the process of enlisting the help of a team of current RE practitioners who will work in partnership with the colleagues above as peer reviewers. If your RE subject leader would be interested in participating in this way please let me know as soon as possible.

The reviews will be constructive and developmental. Those carrying out the reviews will enter into a professional dialogue with school leaders and teachers, acknowledging where things are working well and offering guidance derived from their wealth of experience as to possible ways forward. Within three weeks of the review being carried out, the headteacher and chair of governors will receive a succinct written report (1-2 sides of A4) summarising the reviewers' view of the effectiveness of RE in the school.

The report will cover:

- standards and achievement in RE
- the contribution of RE to social, moral, spiritual, cultural learning
- teaching and learning in RE
- the quality of the RE curriculum
- leadership and management of RE

The report will use clear evaluative language to enable the school leadership team and SACRE to have an accurate view of the reviewers' perceptions. Numerical grades will not be used in the report. An important point to note is that confidentiality will be maintained throughout. The schools involved will not be identified to SACRE or anyone else. A report summarising the findings will be published, but individual schools will not be named. One of the main benefits of the reviews is that they will help SACRE to identify the focus for CPD activities and areas where schools may need additional support. The reviews will therefore underpin SACRE's strategic planning.

The reviewer will spend one day in the school, carrying out a variety of activities which will include:

- holding discussions with the subject leader for RE and other members of staff as appropriate
- reviewing documentation, including:
  - the school development/improvement plan for RE where present
  - policy
  - planning (long-term/medium-term/short-term)
  - records of achievement

- observing RE lessons across the school's age range (copies of lesson plans would be helpful) The reviewer will offer to meet briefly with each of the teachers observed in order to give feedback on the lessons seen. The reviewers will be happy to engage in joint lesson observation with a member of the school leadership team or the subject leader for RE.
- sampling a range of pupils' work
- talking to pupils (ideally about 6). We will ask if pupils could bring with them some RE related work that they are interested in talking about.

A programme for the day will be agreed with the reviewer prior to the visit, and we appreciate that there may need to be flexibility in the timetable depending on circumstances.

At the end of the review day, the reviewer will need to have time to collate their findings. There will then be an opportunity for the reviewer to meet with the headteacher to provide brief verbal feedback. Members of the leadership team, governors and the subject leader for RE are welcome to be present depending on availability.

If possible, could you please let me know by Friday December 8<sup>th</sup> if you are interested in hosting an RE review at your school.

If there is anything arising from this letter that you wish to ask about or discuss, please get in touch with me. I can be contacted by phone (07825995871) or email ([graham.lancaster@essex.gov.uk](mailto:graham.lancaster@essex.gov.uk)).

Yours sincerely

*G P Lancaster*

Graham Lancaster  
LA officer for SACRE