

Essex Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) report 2022 - 2023

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1. Chair's introduction and context

Overview

Since 1988, it has been a requirement that every local education 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 (CW) – in practice every SACRE has developed its own particular style and character. Some of the notable features of SACRE's work during 2022-2023 are included in this report, namely its support to schools and its involvement with our new agreed syllabus implementation, to ensure the new syllabus is adopted as widely as possible. There have been training sessions offered and full implementation began in Autumn 2023.

The revised agreed syllabus for RE was published in 2022 and adopted from the Norfolk Agreed Syllabus 2019. Schools were advised that the full implementation had been put back to September 2023. We are indebted to Norfolk SACRE for allowing us to adopt the syllabus that they have developed, and to their generosity in permitting us to make some changes that reflect the contexts of schools in Essex. We are particularly grateful to John Semmens, the Chair of Norfolk SACRE, and to Simon Oldfield, the former Chair, who have been very supportive throughout the process of adopting the syllabus. We are also grateful to Dr Kathryn Wright, in whose work the interdisciplinary approach is rooted.

It is a legislative requirement that each SACRE produces an annual report of its work and that this is sent to the Department of Education (DFE), NASACRE, to local schools and to other interested parties. Essex LA makes this report available publicly through their website:

https://schools.essex.gov.uk/other/Essex_SACRE/Pages/Essex-SACRE.aspx

SACRE met 3 times across the academic year 2022-2023.

Meeting	Date	Time	Location
1 SACRE meeting	14 November, 2022	4 - 6 p.m.	Online
2 SACRE meeting	9 March, 2023	2 - 4 p.m.	Online
3 SACRE meeting	14 June, 2023	12.30 - 4 p.m.	Christ Church United Reformed Church, Chelmsford

Context

Background In the 2021 Census - figures show the religion data for Essex and our new agreed syllabus will enable all schools to engage with religion and worldviews reflecting the county and local context. Relevant details from the census can be found in the appendices section.

Number of schools by status

Slides– Census 2021 Ethnicity, Language, Religion- December 2022 Essex County Council- Research and Insight Chief Executives Office (downloaded 03.01.23)

Number of Schools by Status

	Academy	Community	Foundation	Voluntary Aided	Voluntary Controlled	Total
Nursery		2				2
Infant	18	16	5	3		42
Junior	22	9	4	4		39
Primary	187	84	22	33	40	366
Primary Phase Total	227	111	31	40	40	449
All through	2					2
Secondary	75		1	3		79
Special	14	5	1			20
Total	318	116	33	43	40	550

Last updated 12 October 2022

2. Advice to statutory bodies

a) Local Authority

The LA/RE consultant to SACRE has given advice to the local authority on several occasions in 2022/2023 including

- Implementation of the syllabus
- Guidance on collective worship
- Issues of withdrawal from RE and collective worship

b) Schools

The consultant has

- Provided support and guidance to schools through e-mail and online meetings when requested by the school and guidance from the LA
- Supported the implementation of the new Local Agreed Syllabus 2022. (Schools were advised that the full implementation had been put back to September 2023)
- Co-ordinated and sent out support information linked to the implementation of the new local agreed syllabus following attendance at the initial training sessions offered during Spring and Summer 2022.

3. Standards and quality of provision of RE (with examples of good practice if appropriate)

Standards and quality of provision of RE (with examples of good practice if appropriate)

Within Essex, advice is available to schools around RE through:

- The Essex Local Agreed Syllabus and support units of work
- the SACRE RE consultant

a) Public examinations

GCSE					
Centre	NOE	9-5	9-4	9-1	Avg Pts
National (All Schools)	113680	62.3	72.7	97.8	5.2
National (State Funded)	105240	60.1	71.0	97.7	5.1
LA (State Funded)	2216	55.9	66.5	97.7	4.9
A-level					
School/College	NOE	A*-A	A*-B	A*-E	Avg Pts
National (all entries)	14700	25.8	55.3	97.3	35.5
LA (State Funded)	306	25.2	51.3	91.8	

A full set of GCSE and A-level entries and results were made available to SACRE.

There are 79 secondary schools in Essex and so a complete list of entries and results is not included here.

Performance in Religious Studies at A-level and GCSE is slightly under the average but not of statistical significance warranting action from SACRE.

SACRE will continue to support schools and pupils in all Key Stages.

SACRE would urge all schools to review their results in line with the national data below.

subject		grade	Numbers achieving	Percentage achieving
Religious Studies	GCSE	9 to 1	218862	98.4
Religious Studies	GCSE	9 to 4	157799	72.1
Religious Studies	GCSE	9 to 5	133943	61.2

Source: GCSE (Full Course) Results (9-1 Only) - June 2023 (England Only) (DFE)

b) The quality of RE provision in schools (See also section 4: The Agreed Syllabus)

Schools began to make use of the Agreed Syllabus in assessing pupils' attainment in RE. The LA consultant has worked with primary and secondary teachers and subject leaders through emails, phone calls, online support through Zoom and in scheduled online training sessions to signpost further assessment information when requested. In 2023-2024 more support will be needed in this area and to support subject knowledge development. Schools are also likely to require further exemplar units of work. Monitoring the Agreed Syllabus is recognised as an ongoing area for development for the group. Whilst training is scheduled for 2023-2024, a degree of monitoring will also be required.

Feedback from 2023 survey

Based on 47 responses – 40 Primary and 7 Secondary

Areas of strength

Compliance - most schools are compliant with the guidance for time allocation for religious education, with some increased time typical as students move into KS2. This is in line with national guidelines.

Areas for concern

RE Lead teachers - time in post: approximately half of respondents had RE leads who had been in post 2 years or less. SACRE will consider how to support RE Leads.

Subject expertise - 40% of respondents had no qualification in RE and 38% of teachers' highest qualification is GCSE.

Teaching - 57% make use of non-teaching staff for delivery not just non-specialists for the delivery of RE

CPD - 60% of teachers had received one day or less of RE specific CPD in the year prior to the implementation of the New Agreed Syllabus

Professional bodies support - 40% of respondents are not accessing support from NATRE, RE Today or any other RE specific body mentioned on the survey

RE in KS4/5 - Where RE is not part of their options, a significant number of students are receiving no RE input (up to 75% at KS5 in those surveyed)

d) Withdrawal from RE

SACRE provides guidance on the statutory 'right of withdrawal' of pupils from Religious Education. 13% of the schools surveyed had pupils withdrawn from RE in that year, although none notified or contacted SACRE/the LA.

In 2023/24 SACRE will proactively contact schools to provide guidance on this issue.

e) Complaints about RE

8% of the schools surveyed had received complaints about RE in that year.

In 2023/24 SACRE will proactively contact schools to provide guidance on this issue.

4. Agreed Syllabus

Agreed Syllabus

In the Spring and Summer Term 2022 initial online training was offered to schools for the new Essex Agreed Syllabus 2023. Plans were made and enacted for training to continue during 2023-2024. Attendance was not monitored centrally. In 2023-2024 attendance at training will be monitored and recorded.

CPD provided to schools

a) If there was a review of the syllabus under report

New syllabus feedback from 2023 survey

Based on 47 responses – 40 Primary and 7 Secondary

Positive feedback	Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enjoying big questions/ lenses• Signing up to NATRE has helped with workload and understanding• School that have developed their own resources (as a trust) feel confident in delivering it/them• Religious literacy emphasis is welcome• Examples from Norfolk were helpful	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communication about availability of training and resources• Lack of Essex exemplar material• Syllabus is not a scheme and this has been a struggle for those with limited resources• Teachers do not have enough time to develop the level of subject knowledge required to deliver the lessons

Subsequent actions for 2023-2024

Training/ guidance for teachers required in the following areas:

- Subject knowledge, particularly philosophy
- Curriculum planning guidance
- Approaches to teaching
- Assessing
- Accessing visitors and visits
- How to ensure planning is of a high enough standard
- Writing a school policy for Religious Education

Some possible actions for SACRE to discuss

- Teacher working groups needed and clear signposting so they can join them
- Building/ curating a set of exemplar resources for teacher to access
- Unit briefings, explaining the knowledge required to deliver them. These could be half-termly.
- Creation of a forum where teachers could support one another, utilising the RE Hub

Quick actions

- The concept of 'encountering' multiple faiths has not been widely understood. A clarification about how many religions are/ can be taught each year/ key stage is required.
- Signposting teachers to where they can access support and training. The current lines of communication are not resulting in teachers receiving direct communication and this process is under review.

5. Collective Worship (with examples of good practice if appropriate)

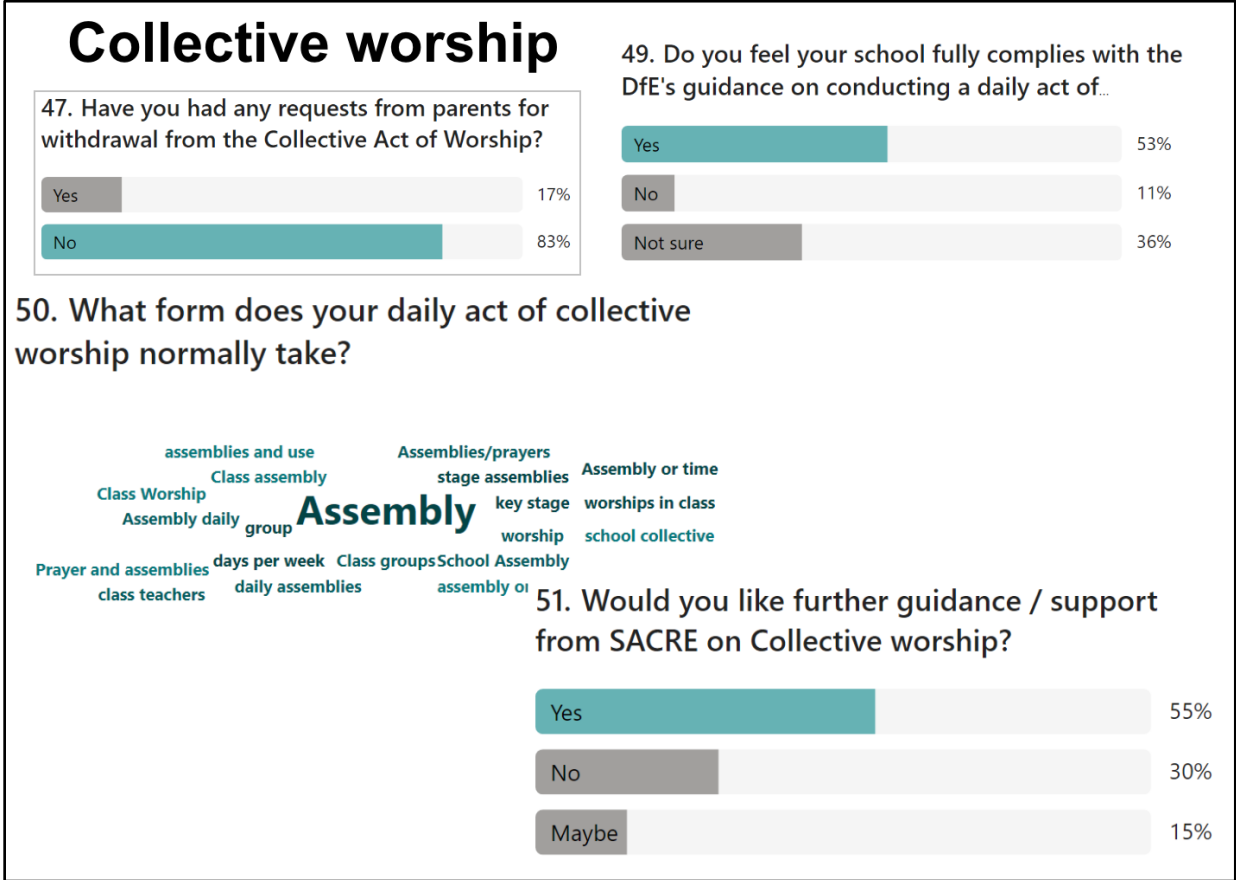


Figure: results from 2023 survey

Collective Worship

Within Essex, advice is available to schools around CW through the SACRE LA Consultant. It is recognised by SACRE that there is a need to revisit advice and support for schools in this area. It is part of our development plan and we will start work in 2023/24

Schools have requested a range of information and guidance in the following areas:

- Legal responsibilities/ legislation
- Concept of spirituality
- How to deliver collective worship (timetabling as well as methods of delivery)
- How to access and develop resources

a) Compliance with the statutory requirement

Compliance with the statutory requirement: SACRE did not receive any notifications from schools of parental withdrawals from Collective Worship. However, 17% of schools surveyed had received parental requests and so this will be followed by by SACRE in 2023-2024

b) Quality of Collective Worship

The LA Consultant has given advice to a few schools in 2021/2022 signposting to relevant current documentation.

c) Determinations

Determinations: There were no requests for a determination from schools in 2022-3, and there were no renewals.

6. Management of SACRE

Management of SACRE

Professional and administrative support and how the LA supports the SACRE (clerking, adviser, links to council initiatives),

There were three meetings of Essex SACRE during the year 2022-23. They are detailed in Section 1

a) Attendance at SACRE, by Group

14 November, 2022

Group A - 8 present, 3 apologies

Group B - 2 present, 1 apology

Group C - none present, 2 apologies

Group D - 3 present, 2 apologies

Co-opted (teachers) - 3 present, no apologies

9 March, 2023

Group A - 8 present, 2 apologies

Group B - 1 present, 2 apologies

Group C - None present, 1 apology

Group D - 3 present, 2 apologies

Co-opted - 0 present, 3 apologies

14 June, 2023

Group A - 3 present, 8 apologies

Group B - 1 present, 0 apologies

Group C - 0 present, 2 apologies

Group D - 0 present, 5 apologies

Co-opted - 0 present, 2 apologies

b) Membership and training

SACRE has not been quorate for all of its meetings in the year September 2022 – August 2023.

Membership is an urgent priority for 2023-2024.

d) SACRE costs

Professional and administrative support

During the year 2022-2023, the following supported SACRE professionally and administratively:

- Maddy Knight and Robin Harbord as the Local Authority officers
- Val Cleare (Diana Lloyd from Oct 2023) as Business Support ECC to SACRE.
- Ruth Everett and Ben Maddison as professional SACRE consultants

Finance: The sum of £10,000 was made available through the LA to support the work of SACRE during the year. The sum covered the cost of employing an RE consultant, the cost of clerking SACRE, training for the new Agreed Syllabus, subscription to NASACRE membership and attending conferences.

7. SACRE links with other bodies

Nationally: Essex SACRE is part of NASACRE and the LA consultant is a member of AREIAC, NATRE and the AREIAC executive. SACRE members attended the NASACRE conference in May 2023 and the monthly webinar programme throughout the academic year. From these individual members gained knowledge and ideas to bring back to what we could do as Essex SACRE.

We are indebted to Norfolk SACRE for allowing us to adopt the syllabus that they have developed, and to their generosity in permitting us to make some changes that reflect the contexts of schools in Essex. We are particularly grateful to John Semmens, the Chair of Norfolk SACRE, and to Simon Oldfield, the former Chair, who have been very supportive throughout the process of adopting the syllabus. We are also grateful to Dr Kathryn Wright, in whose work the interdisciplinary approach is rooted.

Essex SACRE makes use of other support and signposts schools to support from groups such as:

- RE Today
- NASACRE

8. Contribution of SACRE to the wider Local Authority agenda

7. Contribution of SACRE to the wider Local Authority agenda

As well as considering the general position of RE and collective worship in Essex, SACRE discussed the following issues at its meetings during the year:

- Annual Report
- CPD for teachers including an Essex RE Conference (SACRE)
- Secondary RE provision
- SACRE audit and work plan
- Organisation of SACRE – exploring roles for SACRE members
- Reports from regional and national bodies (NASACRE and GM Faiths Forum)
- Reports from network and schools
- Questions to be included in enquiry to schools
- Collective Worship
- Publishing advice for schools on sensitive issues about faith in schools.
- Self-evaluation form (SEF) and development plan
- The need for faith group representation as well as teachers
- Census data

9. Development Plan

Development Plan

The 2023-2024 development plan summary can be found in the Appendices section

10. Appendices

SACRE membership update for 2023

SACRE support

Maddy Knight and Robin Harbord – Local Authority Representatives

Ruth Everett – Consultant to SACRE

Ben Maddison

Val Cleare – Business Support, Essex County Council

Group A – Other faiths panel

Alex Crawford (Buddhist)

Sushila Karia (Hindu)

Naomi Shaw (Jewish)

Richard McIntosh (Salvation Army)

Maggie Woods (Methodist)

Sidra Naeem (Muslim)

Chris Thompson (Roman Catholic)

Smita Rajesh (Hindu)

Sarah Lane Cawte (Chair) (United Reformed Church)

Bill Stephenson (Humanists UK)

Susan Garratt (Society of Friends)

Group B – Church of England panel

Pauline Collier

Pamela Draycott

Revd Alex Jeewan

Group C – Teacher panel

Melissa Marable

Jody Gee

Briony Wilson

Esther Eddy

John Lee

Group D – Local Authority Panel

Councillor Jude Deakin

Councillor Jane Fleming

Councillor Aidan McGurran

Councillor Ross Playle

Councillor Andy Wiles

SACRE development plan 2023-2024

1. Implementation of the new Agreed Syllabus and developing teacher confidence

- continuing momentum following launch of new syllabus
- 4 training sessions from Sept 2023-Mar 24, adapted and repeated in subsequent years
- Support from Simon Oldfield (Norfolk) in re-recording Philosophy lens walkthrough
- Preliminary organisation of Jewish Living Exhibition July 24
- Creation of core content walkthroughs in 2023-24
- Responding to and supporting teachers via email and Zoom

2. Identifying and celebrating excellence – RE Quality Mark, sharing best practice

- Identify a core group of schools to form new syllabus case studies
- Identify potential schools to get the REQM

3. Building local networks and encouraging NATRE membership

- Identify existing network groups through Teaching School Hubs
- promote NATRE membership to Essex schools through all communications

4. Developing effective monitoring/ communication

- Obtain best contact for RE in all schools
- Centralised monitoring and records of schools to create ongoing record
- Half termly newsletter to schools

5. Ensuring that SACRE has sufficient members with the necessary understanding and expertise

- Identification of goals/ numbers/ groups/ expertise desired
- Meeting dates for SACRE identified through to 2026
- NASACRE membership and conference attendance
- training, preparation and transition new RE consultant

6. Utilising the expertise within SACRE – building contacts with faith and non-religious worldview groups, using the teachers group to make better links with schools, etc.

- Supporting speakers to access the NATRE school visitors/ speakers training/ mark
- Create method of advertising speakers to schools

7. Providing support and guidance for schools – a resource bank.

- Identify common and existing resources and centralise into e.g hyperlinked document
- Establish collective worship guidance document for future sharing with schools

8. Linking with the RE Hub

- Identify what the hub can offer us

2021 Census - information relevant to SACRE

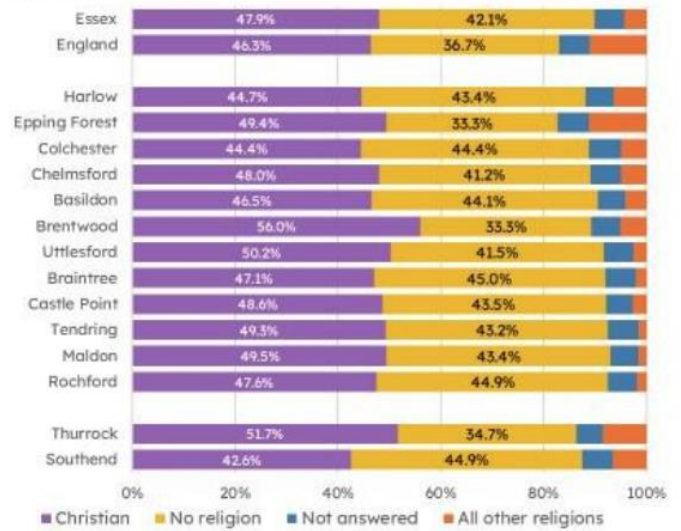
2021 Essex religion data

- No religion 42.1%
- Christian 47.9%
- Not answered 5.7%
- Other religions 4.3% (This is made up of:)
 - Buddhist 9%
 - Hindu 23.8%
 - Jewish 12.5%
 - Muslim 38.0%
 - Sikh – no figure
 - Other religion 11%

Main religion

- Christianity is the most common religion in Essex, 47.9% of residents listed Christianity as their main religion.
- Following Christianity, the next most common responses were No Religion (42.1%) and Not Answered (5.7%). Other religions make up the remaining 4.3% of residents, with Muslim (1.63%) and Hindu (1.0%) being the most common religions in Essex.
- The largest changes between the 2011 census are a decrease in the number of people listing Christianity as their main religion (down by c. 140,000), and increases in the number of people listing No Religion (up c. 240,000), Muslim (up c.11,000), and Hindu (up c. 7,000).

Main religion
Census 2021



Main religion

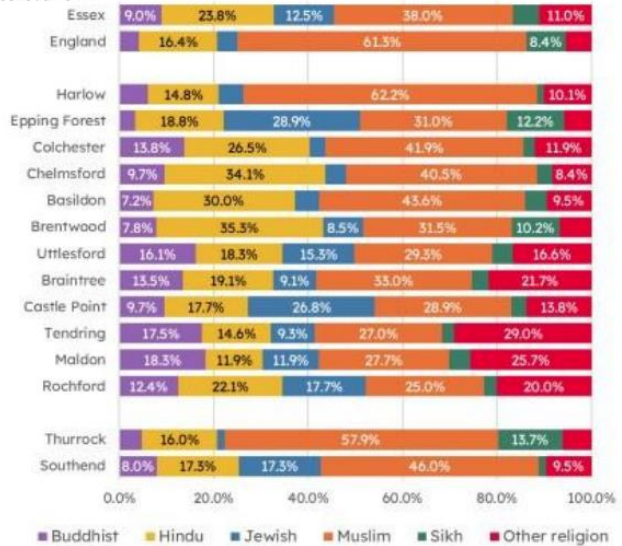
- The chart shows the main religions in the "All other religions" group across Greater Essex after removing the three most common responses (Christianity, No Religion & Not Answered).

Overall this accounts for less than 5% of residents.

The numbers in the chart have been rebased to sum to 100% to show the relative scale of religious groups within Essex. The percentage figures do not, therefore, relate to the percent of the total population.

Numbers and percentages for all groups are available in the appendix.

Main religion in the "All other religions" group only
(not showing Christianity, No Religion, or No Answer)
Census 2021



Note: This chart shows the proportion of 'other religions', not including Christianity, No Religion, and No Answer. These three groups account for 95.7% of all religions of Essex residents. They have been removed from the chart to better show differences in the other groups which would not otherwise be visible. See the table in the appendix for more detailed numbers.

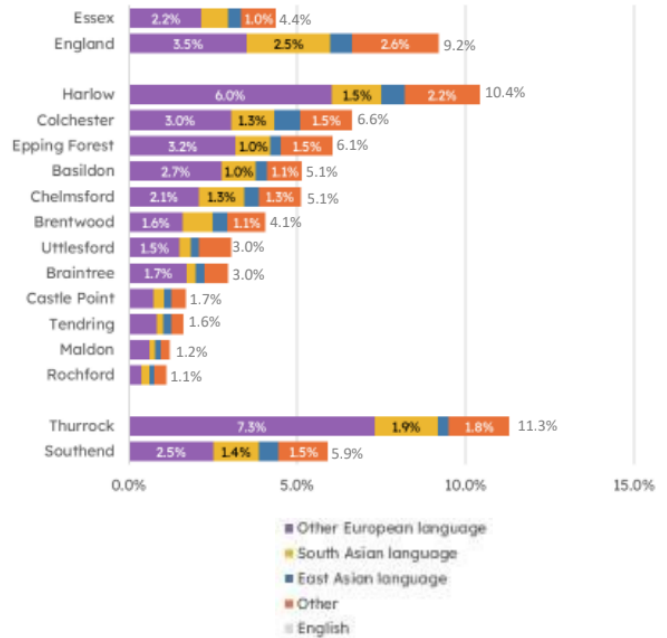
Main language

- Removing English from the chart opposite allows us to see more clearly the variation in other languages spoken across Greater Essex
- Other European languages are the second most common main languages spoken.
- The table below shows the top 10 main languages (other than English) spoken in Essex.

Common main languages	Number	Percent
Romanian	10,534	0.70%
Polish	7,730	0.51%
Lithuanian	2,725	0.18%
Turkish	2,376	0.16%
Portuguese	2,363	0.16%
Spanish	2,217	0.15%
Malayalam	2,069	0.14%
Bulgarian	1,920	0.13%
Italian	1,770	0.12%
Tamil	1,767	0.12%

Main language (English not shown)

Census 2021

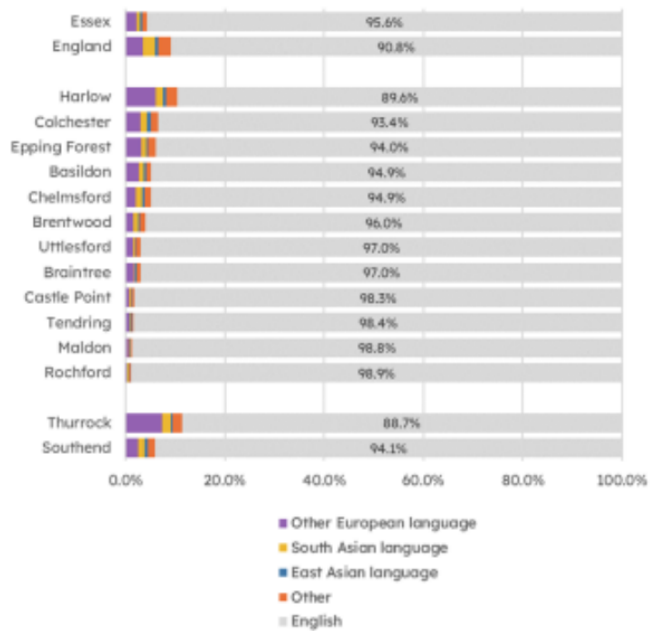


Main language

- Language diversity is increasing across Essex. 95.6% of Essex residents have English as their main language, compared to 97% in 2011.
- The change between Census 2011 and 2011 is similar in scale to that seen across England as a whole.
- But Essex residents are more likely to have English as their main language than across England as a whole (95.6% compared to 90.8%).

Main language

Census 2021



Meetings in 2023-2024

SACRE will meet at the following times/ dates/ locations:

Meeting	Date	Time	Location
1	7th November	1400	Teams
2	27th February	1600	Teams
3	8th July	1600	ARU Chelmsford