



City of Wolverhampton SACRE

19 October 2023

Time 4.00 pm **Public Meeting?** YES **Type of meeting** Other Committees
Venue Committee Room 2 - Hybrid

Membership

Akeel Ahmed	Representative of the Muslim Community
Tanya Athwal	Representative of Teachers' Professional Association
Jaswinder Singh Chaggar	Representative of the Sikh Community
Councillor Jacqui Coogan	Cabinet Member for Jobs, Skills and Education
Kay Cresswell-Green	Association of Teachers and Lecturers Representative
Ourmala Devi	Uplands Junior School Representative
Laura Jude	School Improvement Advisor for Equalities
Alison Smith	Representative of the Church of England
Ven. Bante Tejwant	Representative of the Buddhist Community
Rebecca Wood	Representative of the United Reformed Church
Janine Wright	Representative of the Church of England

Information

If you have any queries about this meeting, please contact the Democratic Services team:

Contact Shelley Humphries
Tel/Email Tel: 01902 554070 email: shelley.humphries@wolverhampton.gov.uk


Agenda

PART 1 – Items open to press and public

Item No. *Title*

MEETING BUSINESS ITEMS

- 1 **Welcome and Introductions**
- 2 **Election of Chair and Vice Chair**
[To elect and appoint a Chair and Vice-Chair of City of Wolverhampton SACRE for Academic Year 2023 – 2024.]
- 3 **Voting of New Members**
[To consider and approve prospective new members of City of Wolverhampton SACRE.]
- 4 **Apologies**
- 5 **Declarations of interest**
- 6 **Minutes of the previous meeting** (Pages 1 - 4)
[To approve the minutes of the meeting of 15 June 2023 as a correct record.]
- 7 **Matters Arising**
[To consider any matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2023.]
- 8 **City of Wolverhampton SACRE Annual Report 2022 - 2023** (Pages 5 - 14)
[To approve the City of Wolverhampton SACRE Annual Report 2022 – 2023 to include a review of the 2022 – 2023 Action Plan and Action Plan for 2023 – 2024.]
- 9 **Report from Religious Education (RE) Today** (Pages 15 - 24)
[To receive an update report from RE Today.]
- 10 **Local Authority Updates**
[To receive a presentation from the City of Wolverhampton Council Representative outlining ongoing work.]
 - 10a **Ofsted Findings During the Last Quarter**
[To receive an update on Ofsted findings during the last quarter.]
 - 10b **Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) and Inspection 48 Findings During the Last Quarter**
[To receive an update on findings from SIAMS and Inspection 48 Visits.]
- 11 **Dates of further meetings**
- 12 **Any other business**

 <p style="font-size: small;">CITY of WOLVERHAMPTON STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION</p>	<h2 style="margin: 0;">City of Wolverhampton SACRE</h2> <h3 style="margin: 0;">Minutes - 15 June 2023</h3>
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Attendance

Members of the City of Wolverhampton SACRE

Martin Gomberg (Chair)	Representative of the Jewish Community
Cllr Chris Burden	Representative of City of Wolverhampton Council
Laura Jude	Representative of City of Wolverhampton Council
Alison Smith	Representative of the Church of England
Rebecca Wood	Representative of the United Reformed Church

In Attendance

Lat Blaylock	RE Today
Shelley Humphries	Democratic Services Officer

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 **Welcome and Introductions**
- 2 **Apologies**
Apologies were received from Janine Wright.
- 3 **Minutes of the previous meeting**
Resolved:
 That the minutes of the meeting of 9 March 2023 as a correct record be approved, subject to ratification by consultation with Board members not present.
- 4 **Matters Arising**
There were no matters arising from the minutes from the last meeting,
- 5 **Report from Religious Education (RE) Today**
Lat Blaylock, RE Today presented the Report from Religious Education (RE) Today and highlighted key areas of interest.

It was reported that Ofsted had appointed an acting RE subject lead, Hazel Henson, and the Spirited Arts competition themes had been announced for this year.

It was announced that online RE Hubs had been launched as a platform to share subject resources and connect RE professionals.

A call was made for participation in the NATRE Secondary Teachers' Survey in order to gather data on how the subject was taught in schools.

The report also provided links to and information on a number of other resources and continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities available to teachers.

Resolved:

That the Report from Religious Education (RE) Today be received

6 **Local Authority Updates**

Laura Jude, Representative for City of Wolverhampton Council delivered the Local Authority Updates presentation which provided information updates on projects previously discussed at SACRE.

6a Finance Process Update

The Chair reported that, following points raised at the last meeting around agreeing invoice payments, conversations had taken place between colleagues in Education Excellence and Democratic Services and the recommendation has been made to pass delegation to the Authority, with approval from City of Wolverhampton SACRE. This would mean details of financials would still be included in the annual SACRE Action Plan, with any in-year financial decisions made internally and reported back to SACRE via the City of Wolverhampton Council representative, Laura Jude. This was intended to avoid delays in payment of any invoices for work undertaken or funding allocations.

Resolved:

That the proposal to delegate financial decisions to the Local Authority be approved, subject to ratification by consultation with SACRE Board members not present.

6b Westhill Project Update

Laura Jude, Representative for City of Wolverhampton Council reported on the Cross Phase Conference scheduled for 29 June 2023 which was planned to school pupils from the different faith communities of Wolverhampton and those with non-religious beliefs, to study issues from different religious perspectives about fairness, justice for all, tolerance and respect.

The Chair commended the work undertaken and it was felt that the event was good value for money in terms of CPD.

Resolved:

That the Westhill Project Update be received.

7 **Ofsted Findings During the Last Quarter**

Laura Jude, Representative for City of Wolverhampton Council reported that nine inspection reports had been published with 89% of schools rated as Good or Outstanding which included positive comments about schools in Wolverhampton:

- Celebration of festivals
- Parental involvement
- Respect and diversity

Resolved:

That the Ofsted Findings During the Last Quarter be received.

8 **Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) and Inspection 48 Findings During the Last Quarter**

Laura Jude, Representative for City of Wolverhampton Council reported on the SIAMS inspections that had taken place between March and May 2023. Pendeford St Paul's had received a Good rating overall with 'Requires Improvement for RE, however assurances were offered that support was in place. It was queried whether a nominated representative from the Diocese could attend to present the SIAMS report. Laura Jude offered to investigate this.

In answer to a query around the syllabus it was noted that Catholic schools used their own and it was uncommon for SACREs to take reports from the Catholic Diocese.

Resolved:

That Laura Jude, Representative of City of Wolverhampton Council reach out to the Lichfield Diocese for a representative to present the SIAMS report, subject to ratification by consultation with SACRE Board members not present.

9 **Dates of further meetings**

- 19 Oct 2023
- 7 Feb 2024
- 6 June 2024 (tbc)

10 **Any other business**

Councillor Chris Burden, Representative of City of Wolverhampton Council raised the point that positive Ofsted inspections were often publicised to celebrate schools' successes and suggested that perhaps positive SIAMS and Section 48 inspections could be publicised in the same way. It was agreed for Laura Jude to raise this with Paul Brown, Communications Manager and report back to SACRE.

Resolved:

That Laura Jude, Representative of City of Wolverhampton Council liaise with Paul Brown, Communications Manager to explore publicising positive SIAMS and Section 48 inspection reports in the same way Ofsted reports are publicised (subject to ratification by consultation with SACRE Board members not present).

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Wolverhampton SACRE Annual Report 2022-2023



Report produced by Laura Jude

1.0 Introduction**1.1 Table of contents**

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1.2 Words from the Chair of SACRE

In the last academic year we have again focussed particularly on support for teachers, which we feel is a strength of our SACRE. Notable among this work is the creation of a new RE Network for secondary teachers of RE, which will pilot in Autumn 2023. Our primary teacher RE Network continues to thrive.

We have also extended our highly successful **‘Multi-faith approaches to diversity and racial equality’** project which has been funded by a grant from Westhill. Our first conference in May 2022 saw pupils from secondary schools across the City come together to create resources and consider the importance of equality and diversity in both religious life and wider society. Following this success, we have developed a second project strand. This has allowed us to bring both primary and secondary pupils from across the City together at a conference that took place in June 2023. In the 2023-2024 academic year we plan to build on this success again, engaging even more of our schools in the project in a third and final strand.

Our aim for 2023-2024 is to continue our support for teachers, who are key to developing and delivering good RE across our City.

1.3 Overview of SACRE activity for 2022-2023

Membership of Wolverhampton SACRE

PANEL A

Body

Baptist Representative
Methodist Representative
Roman Catholic Representative
Buddhist Representative
United Reformed Representative
Pentecostal Representative
Hindi Representative
Sikh Representative
Jewish Representative
Islam Representative
Humanist Representative

Nominee

VACANCY
VACANCY
VACANCY
Ven Bante Tejwant
Rebecca Wood
VACANCY
VACANCY
Jaswinder Singh Chaggar (Vice Chair)
Martin Gomberg (Chair)
Akeel Ahmed
VACANCY

Panel B

Body

Church of England Representative
Church of England Representative
Church of England Representative

Nominee

VACANCY
Alison Smith
Janine Wright

Panel C

Body

NEU
NEU
NAHT
NASUWT
Teachers' Professional Association

Nominee

Kay Cresswell-Green
VACANCY
VACANCY
VACANCY
Tanya Athwal

Panel D

Body

Wolverhampton City Council

Nominee

Laura Jude

Elected member

Cllr Chris Burden,
Cabinet Member for Children, Young
People and Education

Co-options

Representing:

Uplands Junior School

Nominee

Ourmala Devi

Clerk:

Shelley Humphries

(Democratic Services – Non-member)

SACRE met three times in the 2022-2023 academic year. Details of the priorities worked on during the year can be found in Appendix 1, a review of our 2022-2023 action plan.

Appendix 2 demonstrates how new and continued priorities will be moved forward for the 2023-2024 academic year.

1.4 Executive summary

SACRE's foci for 2022-2023 have centred around supporting schools and RE teachers to provide high quality RE through the implementation of the LAS or alternatives. In particular, by providing a broad CPD and training offer for both primary and secondary schools. This has included specific provision such as CPD for colleagues teaching in Special schools and 'new to RE' leadership support for colleagues taking up their first RE lead role.

2023-2024's work will build on previous successes around teaching training and support for teachers. Continuing foci, such as recruiting to SACRE membership and CPD for SACRE members will be prioritised.

2.0 Statutory RE in Wolverhampton

2.1 The Wolverhampton Locally Agreed Syllabus in schools

The 2021-2026 LAS remains in place.

In addition to previous implementation support for teachers in 2021-2022, SACRE has funded further training for schools by type and phase (primary, secondary and special school) in 2022-2023 to strengthen support for teachers in delivering the LAS effectively. These have included:

- A new to RE package (launched October 2022)
- Termly community of practice meetings for teachers working in special schools (launched October 2022)

The following mechanisms remain in place to improve communication and support for RE teachers:

- A termly RE update in the City of Wolverhampton Council Education Provider Bulletin. This update is sent to all education settings in the City
- An RE teacher mailing list

Academies have been actively encouraged to engage with training and to utilise the LAS. Both have been accessible to academies through public access to our LAS and funded teacher training. In addition, our optional scheme of work has also been made available to academies. These resources have been well received and the City of Wolverhampton Council's School Improvement team have received a number of requests for curriculum planning support for RE in academised secondary schools as a result.

Wolverhampton SACRE have continued to work to support secondary schools to provide high quality RE which facilitates into examined RE such as GCSE pathways. To support our secondary schools SACRE have funded the creation of new units of work for Key Stage 3 which, alongside the LAS support schools in providing a solid foundation for GCSE study. These new units have been received positively by schools and are currently being used by both maintained schools and academies. More schools are making plans to move toward examination RE at key stage 4 as a result.

2.2 Monitoring the Locally Agreed Syllabus

Predominantly, the LAS has been monitored through communication with and training for schools. In 2022-2023 mechanisms put in place to collect this information in 2021-2022 have been reviewed and embedded example:

- Seeking feedback through surveys/evaluations
- Seeking verbal feedback at training events
- Discussions with individual schools

2.3 Standards and monitoring of RE in schools

RE in schools is monitored through the following mechanisms

- Feedback from the RE network
- Regular self-report surveys by schools
- Updates to SACRE about recent Ofsted, SIAMS and Section 48 inspections
- Headline findings from LA school reviews where relevant to RE/Collective Worship
- Reports from the LA regarding RE school improvement work undertaken in schools

[GCSE and A Level results analysis to be added in October 2023]

2.4 RE Quality Mark (REQM) awards

There have been no applications for REQM awards and none have been received during this time period.

2.5 Teacher training and advice for schools

SACRE support a range of training opportunities for schools, as detailed below:

- Teachers of RE in Wolverhampton have access to a termly RE network. This is a forum for sharing good practice, discussing any challenges in implementing the locally agreed syllabus and seek advice from RE specialists. The network is organised by City of Wolverhampton Council and facilitation by an RE consultant is funded by SACRE
- Working party groups
- Presentations to senior leaders
- Project work

Advice is available to schools through:

- Online drop-in sessions run by LA advisors
- Consultancy time funded by SACRE. For example, at the end of RE network sessions
- LA school reviews
- By email to/from the LA officer for SACRE

2.6 Withdrawals and complaints

There have been no withdrawals or complaints within this period.

2.7 Advice to the LA

There has been no advice to the LA issued by SACRE during this period.

3.0 Collective Worship

3.1 Monitoring

Collective worship is monitored in the following ways:

- Presentation of Ofsted, SIAMS and Section 48 findings for Wolverhampton schools at every SACRE meeting
- Feedback from LA School Improvement reviews where relevant

3.2 Determinations

There have been no applications for determination within this period.

4.0 Additional information

4.1 List of groups and agencies this report has been presented to:

- Wolverhampton SACRE
- Department for Education
- NASACRE
- City of Wolverhampton Council Education Leadership Team
- A copy of this report and associated action plan for 2023-2024 will be made public on the [Religious Education - Wolverhampton SACRE | City Of Wolverhampton Council](#) webpage.

4.2 List of acronyms and abbreviations

CPD – Continuing Professional Development

LA – Local Authority

LAS – Locally Agreed Syllabus

NASACRE – National Association of SACREs

RE – Religious Education

REQM – Religious Education Quality Mark

SACRE – Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

4.3 List of appendices

Appendix 1: Review of Wolverhampton SACRE 2022-2023 Action Plan

Appendix 2: Wolverhampton SACRE 2023-2024 Action Plan

Appendix 3: Examination results 2023 *[to be added upon publication in October 2023]*

Review of Wolverhampton SACRE action plan 2021-2022

Objective	Key details	Delivery date	Milestones			Lead	Cost estimate
			Autumn	Spring	Summer		
Increase membership and participation of SACRE	1.Ensure that all vacancies are filled 2.Review the changes to meeting arrangements in place in October 2022, seeking feedback from SACRE members 3. Continue to monitor participation in SACRE meetings termly	Ongoing	Advertise vacancies for new academi year	85% members	Full membership	SACRE/CWC	Nil
Continued development for SACRE members	1.CPD audit 2.Robust and responsive CPD offer for SACRE members	Ongoing	Develop CPD a	Member CPD offer for 2022-2023 in place	CPD audit 2 evidences an increase in CPD Draft CPD offer for 2023-2024 in place	SACRE/CWC	TBC dependent on outcome of audit
Continue to support and monitor the implementation of the new Locally Agreed Syllabus	1.Provide support and C any new RE leaders as they implement the new Locally Agreed Syllabus 2.Provide regular opportunities for feedback from teachers	Ongoing	RE Network Launch 'new to in Wolverhampton support package Autumn community of practice meetings Ongoing: Regular communication schools via the mailing list and Bulletin	RE Network New to RE 2 Communities of Practice 2 Ongoing: Regular communication with schools via the RE mailing list and Bulletin	RE Network New to RE 3 Communities of Practice 3 Ongoing: Regular communication with schools via the RE mailing list and Bulletin	SACRE/CWC/RE Today consultancy	Cost within Service Level Agreement between Wolverhampton SACRE and RE Today 2021-2022/23
Continue to strengthen the CPD offer to schools	1.Offer a broad range of CPD and training for teachers specifically	Ongoing	RE Network Opportunities through Westhill project CPD opportunit	RE Network Opportunities through Westhill project	Annual CPD evaluation and audit (online survey) Termly SACRE	SACRE/CWC RE Today consultancy	Cost within Ser Level Agreeeme between Wolverhampton SACRE

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	special school colleagues 2. Maintain improved communication with teachers of RE 3. Launch communities of practice		for schools Termly SACRE update via Bulletin/ mailing list	Termly SACRE update via Bulletin	update via Bulletin		and RE Today 2021-2022/23
Westhill Project	1.Undertake the planned project with schools	October 2021 – December 2022	Planning phase complete	Evaluation with schools	Final impact report provided	SACRE/CWC	Nil – funded through grant

KEY

Green = objective achieved

Yellow = objective partially achieved

Red = objective not achieved

Blue = postponed due to extension of the project

Wolverhampton SACRE 2023-2024 Action Plan

Objective	Key details	Delivery date	Milestones			Lead	Cost estimate
			Autumn	Spring	Summer		
Increase membership and participation of SACRE	1.Ensure that all vacancies are filled 2.Review the changes to meeting arrangements in place in October 2022 seeking feedback from SACRE mem 3. Continue to monitor participation in SACRE meetings termly	Ongoing	Advertise vacancies for new academic year	85% member	Full members	SACRE/CWC	Nil
Continued development for SACRE members	1.CPD audit 2.Robust and responsive CPD offer for SACRE members	Ongoing	Develop CPD aud	Member CPD offer for 2022-2023 in place	CPD audit 2 evidences an increase in CPD Draft CPD offer for 2023-2024 in place	SACRE/CWC	TBC dependent on outcome of audit
Continue to support and monitor the implementation of the new Locally Agreed Syllabus	1.Provide support and CPD any new RE leaders as they implement the new Locally Agreed Syllabus 2.Provide regular opportunities feedback from teachers	Ongoing	RE Network Launch new to RE in Wolverhampton support package Autumn community of practice meetings Ongoing: Regular communication with schools via the RE mailing list and Bulletin	RE Network New to RE 2 Communities Practice 2 Ongoing: Regular communication with schools via the RE mailing list and Bulletin	RE Network New to RE 3 Communities Practice 3 Ongoing: Regular communication with schools via the RE mailing list and Bulletin	SACRE/CWC/RE Today consultancy	Cost within Service Level Agreement between Wolverhampton SACRE and RE Today 2023-24

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Continue to strengthen the CPD offer to schools	1. Offer a broader range of CPD and training for teachers specifically special school colleagues and secondary non-specialists 2. Maintain improved communication with teachers of RE	Ongoing	RE Network Opportunities through Westhill project CPD opportunities for schools Termly SACRE update via Bulletin/ mailing list	RE Network Opportunities through Westhill project Termly SACRE update via Bulletin	Annual CPD evaluation and audit (online survey) Termly SACRE update via Bulletin	SACRE/CWC RE Today consultancy	Cost within Service Level Agreement between Wolverhampton SACRE and RE Today 2023-24
Westhill Project Phase 3	1. Undertake the planned project with schools	October 2021 – December 2022	Planning phase 3 Complete Final evaluation to Westhill	Evaluation with schools	Learning shared with SACRE	SACRE/CWC	Nil – funded through grant

KEY

Green = objective achieved

Yellow = objective partially achieved

Red = objective not achieved

Not highlighted = not started

National SACRE Updates for SACRE From RE Today / Autumn 23

Open letter from over 30 Parliamentarians

An Open Letter was published on the 18th September by the Daily Telegraph. More than 30 MPs and peers have written to the Education Secretary, highlighting that school pupils receive tokenistic religious education or none. The MPs are blaming this on a lack of trained teachers and funding for the poor quality of religious education. They argue that this lack of education leaves children ill-prepared to understand their own and others' worldviews, hindering their ability to participate in society. Link to the [letter](#)

NATRE provide evidence at Education Select committee enquiry session

NATRE, along with 3 other subject associations, were invited to speak to a session of the Education Select Committee to support their enquiry into Recruitment and retention of teachers. Deborah Weston, NATRE Research Officer and Chair of the RE policy unit (Joint group made up of NATRE, REC, RE Today), gave evidence in the two hour session.

The session can be viewed [here](#)

The TES wrote about the session in which [D&T teachers 'rummage in skips' for materials, MPs told | Tes](#)

Deborah Weston is quoted:

‘Deborah Weston, research officer at the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education, told MPs that “schools are very inflexible places”. She said that the “pressures on headteachers are so significant in terms of accountability...that there’s a nervousness about taking people on part time”. Ms Weston also argued for an increase in the provision of part-time training to become a teacher, arguing that this could boost recruitment and retention.’

DfE Guidance on the place of Humanists on SACREs

[Guidance for local authorities about membership of Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education \(SACREs\) \(natre.org.uk\)](#)

Following a request from NATRE, the DfE have produced the guidance below which has now been sent to local authorities. It makes clear that, in relation to committee A, it is the Local Authority who select which groups can be represented on the local SACRE and on the Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) and that this selection may include representatives from non-religious belief systems.

See DfE guidance below.

Guidance for local authorities about membership of Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education (SACREs)

This note provides information on a recent court ruling and shares the Department for Education's (the Department) view that representatives from non-religious belief systems may be appointed to Group A of a SACRE and/or to an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC).

Background

SACREs are established by local authorities, as required by legislation^[1], and their membership must consist of the following groups:

- Group A: members that represent Christian denominations and other religions and their denominations who will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area;
- Group B: members that represent the Church of England;
- Group C: members that represent the teaching profession or other relevant associations that, in the opinion of the authority, ought to be represented; and
- Group D: members that represent the [local] authority.

The recent legal case of *Bowen v Kent County Council* ^[2] (more details in the Annex) clarified that applications for Group A membership from persons who represent holders of non-religious beliefs should be considered in the same way as applications from those who represent holders of religious beliefs.

In the Department's view, the non-religious beliefs adhered to by the person to be appointed must be analogous to a religious belief. To be "analogous", the non-religious beliefs must, in accordance with case law under the European Convention of Human Rights and the Human Rights Act 1998, attain the necessary level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion, and importance to attract protection under the Convention Rights. ^[3]

The final decision on appointment of persons to a SACRE or ASC is a matter for local authorities. This may include consideration of whether such a representative would help ensure that the relevant traditions and beliefs in the local authority's area are appropriately reflected in Group A.

[1] **Section 390(4)(a) of the Education Act 1996**

2 www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2023/1261.html

3 This aligns with the policy in Wales, where a non-religious belief for the purposes of education is aligned with those philosophical beliefs that are protected following European Convention of Human Rights caselaw.

Recruitment crisis in teaching and especially in secondary RE

London, 6th March, 2023: A campaign to attract a new generation of RE teachers has kicked off with teaching groups, religious organisations and parliamentarians stressing the importance of the subject for preparing students for life in modern Britain. As of January, UCAS data show that teacher recruitment for all subjects is down 22% from last year. However RE stands out, being down a third of applicants from the last recruitment cycle.

Government inaction over recruiting teachers to RE has been blamed. The Department for Education (DfE) has so far missed its target for the recruitment of RE teachers in nine of the last ten years.

Despite this year's fall in applicants, the subject continues to grow in popularity. Over the last five years entries to the GCSE have stood around an average of 250,000 with entries to the full course GCSE rising by 30% over the last decade.

The recruitment campaign – entitled 'Beyond the Ordinary' - draws attention to the academic and knowledge rich approach of the subject to life's big questions, and will seek to attract a set of talented graduates up to the task of getting young people to grips with the complex nature of modern belief.

Kathryn Wright, Chief Executive Officer of Culham St Gabriel's Trust, which is supporting the campaign, said: "Religious education is an important curriculum subject enabling children and young people to navigate our complex multi religious, multi secular society. Everyone has a worldview, and it's important we prepare young people to become free thinking, critical participants in public discourse, who can make informed judgements about matters of religion or belief and reflect meaningfully on the big questions in life."

We are looking for ambitious graduates from a range of humanities and social science subjects who can deliver an academic and rigorous curriculum aimed at getting young people to think critically about their own beliefs and those of others."

Last March, the Father of the House, Sir Peter Bottomley MP hosted a roundtable on the future of the subject. In October, a Westminster Hall Debate saw MPs and Peers from across the House agree on its importance for life in modern Britain as well as express concern around a lack of government support for the subject.

Lord Karan Bilimoria said: "The latest teacher recruitment figures are deeply worrying. Parents are concerned, schools are concerned and so too the young people are missing out.

"As a Champion for RE, I've heard numerous times from students that this is one of the few times in the classroom where they get to say what they think about the world around them. At present we face doing a disservice to a generation of young people ill-equipped to deal with the complexities of belief in Britain and the world beyond. This campaign is about getting the best humanities graduates into the classroom to help them deliver a modern RE curriculum reflective of belief in our society."

Teacher training courses are open to graduates from a range of academic disciplines and from all sorts of diverse backgrounds, with Subject Knowledge Enhancement courses available from schools, universities or other providers.

Anyone looking for more information about training to be a RE teacher should visit <https://www.cstg.org.uk/campaigns/teacher-recruitment/becoming-a-teacher>

Do we know what this problem is like in our Secondary schools?

NATRE analysis of GCSE and A level Religious Studies data: National and regional variations

The reports linked to below cover GCSE and A level RS in both England and Wales and reveal many similarities and some differences between the two nations in relation to trends over time. It is clear that the removal of the short course from performance tables has had a devastating impact on the number of children leaving school with a qualification in Religious Studies. In many cases, the loss of the short course has coincided with an increase in the number of schools reporting zero hours of timetable time for RE in year 11 in the school workforce data. At A level, entries have remained fairly stable over recent years in England but in Wales, there is a step decline, of around 33% since 2020. The reasons for this need further investigation.

For example:

A level West Midlands % A*-C 2023 76.7 % (Nat 79%)

Uptake in West Midlands 2.4% (Nat 1.88%)

GCSE West Midlands % Grade 9-4 2023 69.9% (Nat 72.2%)

GCSE Uptake West Midlands 27.2% (National Average 25.7%)

[NATRE analysis of GCSE and A level examination data for Religious Studies reveals interesting variations between nations and regions](#)

How can we encourage more pupil entries for GCSE RS, especially as we know disadvantaged pupils often do well in the subject?

Shortage of RE Teachers ‘Dangerous cycle’ within Religious Education

The shortage of religious education (RE) teachers has been highlighted in a Religion Media Centre briefing. Only six people have come forward to train as RE teachers in Wales, and in England, no RE teacher training courses have reached their target of entries.

Hundreds have their applications pending because their degrees have not been finalised due to the university lecturers' strike action. Dr Tim Hutchings, from the University of Nottingham, told the briefing that there was a dangerous cycle emerging in the study of Religious Education, where GCSE entries are stable with RE remaining as the 7th most popular subject, A-level results show a slight dip in entries, fewer students choose to study Theology or Religious Studies at university and fewer have chosen to train to teach RE.

Teachers, academics and advisers told the briefing that Headteachers want to include RE in the curriculum as the understanding of religion is vital in a global society, but the lack of specialist teachers is an issue. The RE council is campaigning for the government to create a national plan to support high standards in RE provision and bursaries to encourage new teachers.

Link to webinar below

[Shortage of RE teachers “dangerous cycle” within religious education \(natre.org.uk\)](#)

RE at the Party Political conferences

In late September and Early October, teams of teachers from NATRE will be joining representatives from the Religious Education Council of England and Wales (REC), Culham St Gabriel's and RE Today to attend the Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat party conferences.

This lobbying work that NATRE do on your behalf is really important because it enables us to take the voices of teachers and pupils to policy makers. At the party conferences, we will be sharing the importance of high-quality RE for all pupils in all schools, talking about the need for a national standard in the subject, sharing constituency data related to RE with MPs, SACRE members, local councillors and party members and talking about what high-quality RE looks like in Primary and Secondary classrooms.

As an election comes round. Please talk to your candidates when they come to your door and write to them about supporting RE.

Fiona will update you on this at the meeting.

[Your Voice Matters: NATRE's Call to Action to ask your MP to meet us now!](#)

Training, networking, and other support

Anti-racist RE: continuing debates and widening resources

Jonathan Marshall, MBE, ran a brilliant RE and interfaith centre in Plymouth before he retired. Thanks to Jonathan for drawing attention to resources which might compliment the NATRE anti-racist RE materials (<https://www.natre.org.uk/about-natre/projects/anti-racist-re/>)

“I think teachers might find the work of the Equiano Project on anti-racist education helpful. In the true spirit of quality RE, some diversity of views might be welcome.”

This black-led project may help teachers of RE who want to understand the complexity of an anti-racist RE approach: they should be encouraged to explore a range of different voices, one of which is to be found on the excellent website of “The Equiano project” <https://www.theequianoproject.com/>

See for example the video “Understanding the new politics of race” by Prof. John McWhorter. At just under twenty minutes, this perspective is an extremely helpful and profound insight into the background and current situation of anti-racism.

Global Neighbours: school awards from Christian Aid

The Global Neighbours accreditation scheme is an award scheme for schools run by the charity Christian Aid, in partnership with the Church of England Education Office. It is open to all primary schools and has recently expanded into secondary schools too. The scheme has been running for five years and celebrates the development of global citizenship and courageous advocacy in schools. Its aim is to encourage a deeper

understanding of the world and for young people to be empowered to engage with and respond to global issues.

Schools can apply for a bronze, silver or gold award. To achieve accreditation, schools must demonstrate how they are fulfilling criteria relating to:

- Leadership, vision and values
- Teaching and learning
- Collective worship and spiritual development
- Pupil participation in active global citizenship
- Community engagement

For more information please contact Alison Brown (Global Neighbours Schools Programme Officer): abrown@christian-aid.org

NATRE Membership- direct support for teaching

NATRE is the largest membership organisation which promotes, defends and supports RE teachers and RE teaching. It does this through producing high-quality resources and CPD, lobbying government, being involved in conversations with the DfE and Ofsted, LAs and SACREs, telling teachers' stories and experiences and being a voice for all teachers.



Membership packages for students, ECTs, teachers, schools, RE professionals and RE enthusiasts!

Details: www.natre.org.uk/membership

RE Connect Teacher Fellowship Programme

This programme is designed to help deepen teachers' understanding and confidence for exploring the environmental crisis through the lens of religions and worldviews in RE. The programme is not just about getting ideas, but also enhancing your teaching practice and professional network around this theme.

After a successful pilot of the programme in 2021-22, RE:Connect will be running again from September 2023, thanks to a grant from the Culham St Gabriel's Trust. There are places for **up to 10 teachers** of RE (primary and secondary) on the 6 month teacher fellowship programme.

The initiative is run by Dr Jeremy Kidwell, Associate Professor in Theological Ethics at the University of Birmingham and Dr Ian Jones of St Peter's Sallley Trust, with input from experienced primary and secondary specialists, environmental scientists, climate activists and academic researchers in religion and environment.

The programme offers opportunities to:

- Deepen subject knowledge on the intersection of religion and ecology
- Work with cutting-edge subject specialists on religious ethics/practice, ecology, and climate change policy
- Work as part of a supportive and dynamic team to create and trial new approaches and resources for teaching on this theme
- Become a champion for teaching and learning on religion and environmental crisis

The Teacher Fellowship Programme involves monthly workshops from Autumn 2023 to Spring 2024, with tasks to undertake between workshops. Programme sessions will include one fully-funded weekend residential and 6-8 online evening sessions (roughly one per month). There is no cost of participation to the teacher or their school and Fellows receive a bursary of £500 to cover costs of participation plus travel expenses to enable attendance at in-person sessions.

Interested? Please contact Ian Jones (director@saltleytrust.org.uk) to register your interest. Selection for the programme is by a formal application process.

Philosophy of Religion courses from the FT

Jack Robertson, RE teacher in north London, is working with the Financial Times to offer free access to FT.com for all schools and colleges teaching sixteen to nineteen year old students. An FT subscription can support students in developing the broad knowledge that will help them stand out to examiners, universities and employers. A Philosophy Class page, ft.com/philosophyclass, is available for teachers and students of philosophy and ethics. It brings together relevant articles from across the FT and provides accompanying questions that prompt students to reflect critically and make connections to areas of the A-level specification. There is also an IB Theory of Knowledge page for IB students.

Recent Philosophy Class articles cover topics from the ethics of climate protests and abortion to developments in AI and quantum physics, as well as interviews with philosophers such as MacAskill, Chalmers and Srinivasan.

Participating schools receive the same level of access to FT.com as regular subscriber.

Check if your school is registered or register your interest via the Philosophy Class page or at ft.com/schoolsarefree

Jack Robertson JRobertson@qebarnet.co.uk

RE Hubs – Website now live!



RE Hubs website is now live at www.re-hubs.uk. RE Hubs aim to connect those who can provide resources with those who need them and create a neutral platform being RE professionals together.

Many organizations serve RE/RVE/R&W education in the UK, from places of worship and school speakers to CPD partnerships and resource providers. However, until now, there hasn't been a single place to equip, enable, and signpost everyone within the community.

How can we encourage speakers and places of worship to sign up to the training and appear on the site? What links do you have where you can share this?

BBC Expands early years RE resources

There are new resources for 4 and 5 year olds for RE / RME and RVE from BBC Bitesize Reception. These include some simple craft activities and some recipes for festive food with clear and simple ideas to bring the world of religion alive for small children. The subject is connected to work in the fields of expressive arts and design, helping pupils with their understanding of the world particularly in the field of religion and belief. These new materials cover Christmas, Easter, Eid ul Adha, Vaisakhi, Diwali and more and have now gone live. They include video clips made for the age group, activity sheets and information for teacher-use. Lat Blaylock, who contributed to the work says: 'I'm really pleased to see that BBC have made such a diverse and well thought out contribution to Early Years learning about religion and belief. Teachers will find this is a little treasure trove.'

Here is a link:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/z24kqyc>

Against Islamophobia: new resources free for schools

Educate Against Islamophobia (EAI) has recently published a plethora of educational materials for the Early Years, primary schools, high schools and educational practitioners across the U.K. The teaching and learning materials are reflective of the respective curriculums and national frameworks, and offer learners with learning opportunities that are applicable to their respective nations.

Early Years resources:

- Amna & Amy Storybook
- 2 lesson plans.

The storybook and accompanying lesson plans aim to support children in the Early Years to develop an awareness of equality, diversity and respectful behaviour and introduce learners to aspects of the Islamic identity.

Primary school resources:

- Unit of work

The unit of work which comprises 6 lesson plans supports KS1-KS2/P2-P7 learners in developing positive attitudes towards diversity. This unit of work also aims to introduce learners to the Islamic identity and will enable them to explore some of the similarities and differences between Islam and other faiths/culture.

High school resources:

- Unit of work

The unit of work which comprises 6 lesson plans supports KS3-KS4/S1-S4 learners in developing an awareness of Islamophobia, including its manifestations and dangers. Learners will explore the issue of Islamophobia through a range of themes and lenses including human rights, anti-bullying and media literacy.

Educator resources:

- Islamophobia awareness training session
- Equality, diversity and inclusion audit

The Islamophobia awareness training and EDI audit aims to promote an awareness of Islamophobia and equip practitioners with the understanding of how to address it in the school community. These materials will also assist educational practitioners to meet their Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act (2010).

To download your free copy of EAI's materials, visit: <https://eai.org.uk/>

If you would like to learn more about Educate Against Islamophobia's work and services contact info@eai.org.uk

Fischy Music: 25 years nurturing emotional and spiritual well being

Lots of schools use Fischy Music in RE as well as assemblies. 2023 is an exciting year for Fischy Music, this year celebrating its 25th Anniversary! Free online concerts streaming live every month throughout this year, so whole classrooms and assembly halls of children can join in with 30 minutes of uplifting songs!

Founded in 1998 by Stephen Fischbacher, Fischy Music (www.fischy.com) is a children's charity, writing songs for and with children to nurture positive mental health and help them express and manage a range of emotions.

Songs are at the heart of Fischy's work, with Health & Wellbeing and RE & Collective Worship songs and teaching resources made available to children, families, schools and churches. In addition to live events the innovative song-streaming platform, Fischy Music Online has made it easy for teachers everywhere to access over 140 songs and teaching resources, with new songs regularly added.

"Fischy Music songs open an emotional door allowing children to have the confidence to discuss issues and problems that we might otherwise not pick up on."

Teacher, St Philomena's Primary School, Glasgow

Schools can subscribe to Fischy Music Online to access over 140 songs. The RE Package includes resources created in conjunction with Lat Blaylock, RE Today, to help staff use music well in RE and connecting to significant Christian concepts (eg from Understanding Christianity). The resources can be used by all staff and are useful in all primary schools wherever you want to enable spiritual reflection and can also be used in assemblies and services for collective worship. To find out more, email: info@fischy.com

Faith inspired Art to encourage conversation, reflection and action

Cheryl Homer, Westhill Endowment, writes: RE Today and NATRE have always been great supporters of the arts and if you are wondering if using faith inspired arts in your school might be beneficial the answer is most likely 'yes'. But where do you start?

Westhill Endowment are here to help, with years of experience working with faith inspired arts. The charity has 10 art collections which are available FREE* to schools and community venues around the UK.

Many communities have already benefited from these resources which aim to encourage conversation, enable reflections, and inspire action.

A Year 10 textiles student recently reflected on her experience with the Gethsemane Garments: "I liked the green garment [representing Hope] showing the rips and tears of the fabric, but with the sides being restitched to show signs of healing and positivity."

A Primary School Teacher reflected on a creative lockdown session provided by their local vicar using the exhibition Bald Statements: "The creative artwork [the children produced in response] has been thought provoking and the children were able to speak honestly on their feelings and experiences of lockdown."

The art collections come with a variety of themes and mediums, including free standing and wall mounted works of art. Additional materials such as booklets, education packs, and films are available. Westhill will also consider funding applications for events around your exhibition.

Westhill Endowment work one to one with all exhibition hosts helping you tailor your exhibition to suit your space and your audiences. If you'd like to know more, please contact Westhill's Arts Coordinator, Cheryl Homer, on cheryl@westhillendowment.org or check the website or social media. www.westhillendowment.org

www.facebook.com/WesthillEndowment

www.youtube.com/channel/UCHKjKpunQ0C4XSXD4j88XZA

**You may incur transport and insurance costs, please ask if this is applicable.*