

National SACRE Updates for Wolverhampton SACRE from RE Today Spring 2024

Religious Education in the HMCI Annual report

The **Ofsted Annual Report** published at the end of November 2023 presents the organisation's findings for the areas they inspect including schools. NATRE is pleased to see the recognition of the challenges faced by teachers of RE and the impact on children.

Ofsted found the following issues in many schools:

- schools failing to meet the statutory requirement to teach RE to all pupils in all year groups;
- pupils not being taught enough substance to prepare them to engage in a complex, multi-religious and multi-secular society,
- non-examination provision typically not being of high quality;
- schools not teaching topics in the RE curriculum deeply enough for pupils to develop a substantial understanding of the subject matter;

Ofsted recommends a coordinated effort by stakeholders to improve the quality of RE in schools including:

- the provision of high-quality professional development
- curriculum publishers identifying clearly what pupils will learn and when
- the government proving clear expectations about RE provision in schools
- non-statutory guidance for RE needing to be updated and include clear information for schools about the breadth and depth of the syllabus they are expected to teach

These findings add further weight to the call from NATRE and others for a National Plan for RE and for government support for the National Content Standard published by the RE Council last month.

See Appendix A below for extracts relating to RE – quoted in full

Appendix A

Extracts from the report relating to RE are quoted in full below:

From the Curriculum Section of the report as follows.

However, some subjects still do not receive the attention they deserve:

- in many secondary schools, pupils do not benefit from a broad and ambitious music curriculum. In physical education (PE), pupils typically experience a broad range of activities. However, schools do not always ensure that these contribute enough to developing pupils' knowledge and skills.
- in too many primary and secondary schools, the religious education (RE) that pupils receive is of a poor quality and not fit for purpose, leaving pupils ill-equipped for some of the complexities of contemporary society.

Religious education

RE in schools is generally of poor quality. Although it is a statutory subject, schools often consider RE as an afterthought. As a subject on the curriculum, it is under-valued. RE is a complex subject, and the lack of clarity and support from government makes schools' job harder.

Some schools steer through these challenges well, but most do not. We found that:

- many schools do not meet the statutory requirement to teach RE at all stages

- pupils are rarely taught enough substance to prepare them to engage in a complex, multi-religious and multi-secular society (where religion and non-religion play different parts in different people's lives)
- too often, schools do not teach topics in the RE curriculum deeply enough for pupils to develop a substantial understanding of the subject matter
- non-examined RE is typically not high quality.

All pupils should develop a broad and secure knowledge of the complexity of religious and non-religious traditions. It will take coordinated effort by stakeholders to improve the quality of RE in schools:

- schools need high-quality professional development to teach RE well
- curriculum publishers need to identify clearly what pupils will learn and when, building on knowledge over time, so that pupils develop a deep knowledge of the chosen religious and non-religious traditions
- the government should provide clear expectations about RE provision in schools. Schools should follow these. Current non-statutory guidance for RE should be updated and include clear information for schools about the breadth and depth of the syllabus they are expected to teach

We are expecting the OFSTED subject report for RE from which the HMCI comments were based on to be released in the next few weeks and this will then be discussed at SACRE.

House of Lords short debate on the Quality of RE in schools

Lord Harries of Pentregarth has tabled a short debate on the Quality of Religious Education in schools on Thursday 18th January. The RE policy unit (NATRE, Religious Education Council, RE Today) have provided a briefing for a number of interested peers.

Feedback on this debate will be given in the SACRE meeting

National Content Standard for Religious Education

NATRE is pleased that the RE Council of England and Wales has launched its **National Content Standard** for Religious Education in England. We have previously reported on the postcode lottery of RE provision in England, evidenced in the Ofsted **Research Review**, NATRE **primary** and **secondary** surveys, and **analysis of the DfE's own data**. However, until now, there has been no national benchmark to cite when we are asked, "What exactly does high-quality RE look like?"

NATRE Chair, Katie Freeman said,

"It is genuinely encouraging to see so much agreement around the need for a National Content Standard that applies to all types of school in England. I hope that those who choose to work with this benchmark will find it useful to evaluate their own RE curriculum. If this standard achieves widespread support across the sector, that will give us the greatest chance of achieving our vision of securing high-quality teaching and learning in RE/Religion and Worldviews for all pupils in all schools."

You can read the National Content Standard **here** and a blog about it by Deborah Weston **here**.

There will be a presentation on this in our SACRE meeting.

NATRE Secondary survey on RE: Results

This is an analysis of the data gathered from a questionnaire on impact of political policies on Religious Education in England, RME in Scotland and RVE in Wales. It relates particularly to the level of provision in different types of school, the experience of teachers in relation to initial teacher training and continuing

professional development and the type of examination and non-examination courses offered at key stages 4 and 5. Through publicising this survey, NATRE hopes it can be used widely seeks to make the case for more attention to be paid to the level of provision and quality of our subject in all schools and, in England for there to be a National Plan for RE as recommended by the Commission on RE in 2018.

This tenth survey was conducted during the summer term of 2023 via a number of teacher networks supported by the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE), and RE Today Services. The survey was publicised via social media networks and via the electronic networks of other RE organisations including AREIAC, AULRE, and NASACRE. Replies were received from 241 teachers in different parts of the United Kingdom. Respondents did not all respond to every question. Responses that are significantly different, according to school type of the respondent, have also been discussed.

[Access the full report](#)

NATRE Secondary Survey 2023

Advanced British Standard Consultation

The DfE are currently consulting on the Advanced British Standard, a potential new qualification framework for 16-19 year olds.

NATRE have pointed that current plans have not included the statutory position of RE for those studying 16-19 within a school setting.

Parliamentary question on RE: Supporting and funding RE

Yet another example of where what **Ofsted describes** as “the lack of clarity and support from the government makes schools’ job harder” in relation to delivering high-quality RE. Minister of State for Education; Damian Hinds, MP (Pictured to the right) **answered this written question** from Jim Shannon MP as follows:

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department plans to take steps to fund network hubs for Religious Education; and if she will make a statement.

Damian Hinds MP, Minister of State for Education responded

“Religious education (RE) is an essential part of a school’s curriculum and remains a compulsory subject in all state-funded schools, including academies, to all pupils up to the age of 18. RE develops an individual’s knowledge and understanding of the religions and beliefs which form part of contemporary society, as well as serving to inform their own values and behaviour.

Although the Department has not been involved in the establishment of the RE Hubs project, the Department welcomes its work to support teachers and practitioners. The Department currently has no plans to provide funding for the project. The Department does, however, provide support for RE in other ways.”

The answer then goes on to cite spending on the new bursary which was finally reinstated this year but is still very small in comparison to other shortage subjects such as geography and languages including Latin, the Oak National Academy materials which will eventually be rolled out to all subjects and the eight-week funded subject knowledge enhancement courses for potential trainee teachers of RE – again offered to many other subjects.

DfE’s annual report and accounts set out government policy:

“Our main levers to support schools are our Curriculum Hub programmes (music, computing, languages, English and mathematics), the Behaviour Hubs programme and our model curricula guidance ... (page 72)

Music hubs will receive £79m a year until at least 2025 and there seems to be money available for other subject support too. For example, Schools Week **reported** on 1st December 2023 that the £320 million PE and sports premium for primary schools will be extended for at least another year from September.

So NATRE's question is, if "Religious education (RE) is an essential part of a school's curriculum and remains a compulsory subject in all state funded schools" and in relation to the RE Hubs project, "the Department welcomes its work to support teachers and practitioners", why does the government not back up these fine words with action by funding the subject on a par with other subjects in the curriculum – including of course **RE Hubs**?

A question for any prospective parliamentary candidates; How will you support high quality RE for all pupils in all schools in RE?

Training, networking, and other support

RE Today Primary curriculum and NATRE Membership- direct support for teaching

RE Today in partnership with NATRE have created a primary curriculum made up of learning pathways for each half term, lesson by lesson PowerPoints, retrieval questions, knowledge organisers and much more. The materials are compatible with the Wolverhampton Agreed syllabus.

Schools will receive this if they become NATRE school enhanced members which is an annual subscription currently priced at £270 per school.

www.natre.org.uk/primary/retoday-primary-re-curriculum/

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

NASACRE Training for SACRE members

Wednesday 26th June 6.30-8.30 So you have joined your local SACRE

Description: A rerun of the September session, to help new SACRE members to understand their role, how SACRE works, its statutory responsibilities and how members make their contribution to SACRE's work.

Free

Other training and resources available on the NASACRE site:

[Welcome to NASACRE - NASACRE](#)