

<b>2 November 2022</b>		<b>ITEM: 7</b>
<b>Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education</b>		
<b>Update on National Developments and Opportunities</b>		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Non-Key	
<b>Report of:</b> Deborah Weston, Associate Adviser for Religious Education		
<b>Accountable Assistant Director:</b> Michele Lucas, Assistant Director Learning Inclusion and Skills		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Shelia Murphy, Corporate Director of Children's Services		
<b>This report is:</b> Public		

## **Executive Summary**

This report details the key national developments that impact on Religious Education with suggestions for actions by SACRE

### **1. Recommendation(s) that SACRE:**

- 1.1 Review the information collected (Appendix 1)**
- 1.2 Evaluate the relevance of each section for RE in Thurrock**
- 1.3 Share the attached update with schools and their governing boards**

### **2. Introduction and Background**

- 2.1 In the period since the last SACRE meeting, a number of developments have taken place. These are presented to SACRE for consideration in support of the duties of SACRE and in accordance with the work plan.

### **3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options**

- 3.1 Schools need to be informed about national developments and opportunities available to them but it is important not to overload them with information.
- 3.2 Likewise, SACRE needs to be aware of the national context for information they receive that applies just to Thurrock.
- 3.3 SACRE needs therefore to decide on which information to share with schools and which reports and national data is most relevant to the situation in Thurrock

#### **4. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 4.1 According to the non-statutory guidance – RE in English Schools (2010), SACRE should provide advice and support on the effective teaching of RE. This advice and support includes keeping stakeholders include SACRE members and schools informed about current developments that impact on the subject.

#### **5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)**

- 5.1 Not applicable

#### **6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact**

- 6.1 The Local Authority reviews its Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education on a regular basis;
- Publishes an Annual Report of its work;
  - Offers guidance on resources and methods of teaching and in consultation with Thurrock Schools;
  - Monitors the quality of provision for RE and Collective Acts of Worship in Thurrock.

This exercise falls under the third element of this programme.

#### **7. Implications**

##### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **David May**  
**Strategic Lead Finance, Corporate Finance**

There are no financial implications to this report since the actions recommended in this report, if approved will be conducted by the Associate RE Adviser as part of her work

##### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Sarah Dawkins**  
**Barrister (Consultant) on behalf of the Chief Legal Officer**

I confirm that this report along with the appendices referred to has been read in full. The legal functions of the SACRE are set out in section 391 of the Education Act 1996. Those functions, amongst others, includes the requirement to advise the local authority upon such matters connected with religious worship in county schools and the religious education to be given in accordance with an agreed syllabus as the authority may refer to the council

or as the council may see fit. The matters referred to includes methods of teaching, the choice of materials and the provision of training for teachers. The recommendations set out within the report are consistent with the functions of the SACRE, accordingly, there appears to be no adverse external legal implications arising from the recommendation.

### 7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**  
**Community Engagement and Project**  
**Monitoring Officer**

The aim of this report is to provide information about issues that support the provision for RE in Thurrock, to address concerns and to celebrate success. Higher standards in the teaching of RE will help schools to fulfil their statutory duty to promote community cohesion and to encourage better respect and tolerance for those with different religions and beliefs.

### 7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder or Impact on Looked After Children

- Not applicable

### 8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None

### 9. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1 - National news update Autumn 2022

#### **Report Author:**

Deborah Weston, Associate Adviser for RE

## National news update Autumn 2022

### A Muslim reflects on the Queue

Former journalist, now head of RE in Birmingham, Waqar Ahmedi reflects on the experience of being in the queue during the Queen's lying in state.

[www.reviewofreligions.org/39865/the-queen-the-queue-and-the-quran/](http://www.reviewofreligions.org/39865/the-queen-the-queue-and-the-quran/)

### A level Religious Studies numbers drop for first time in 20 years

After two decades of growth, numbers of students taking an A level in RS dropped by 2.7% in 2022. The National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE) and the Religious Education Council of England and Wales (REC) have warned this period of growth is now under threat after a five-year funding gap that has impacted current and future young people taking the subject.

[www.natre.org.uk/news/latest-news/a-level-religious-studies-results-prompt-call-for-government-support/](http://www.natre.org.uk/news/latest-news/a-level-religious-studies-results-prompt-call-for-government-support/)

This comes as research demonstrates that, in state schools in England, RS A level is one of the most likely subjects to be taken by disadvantaged students (fourth after sociology, psychology and English Lit), and that it is more accessible to students with lower prior attainment than many (11<sup>th</sup> out of 31). See <https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2022/04/do-disadvantaged-students-choose-different-subjects-from-their-peers-at-key-stage-5/> and [www.natre.org.uk/news/latest-news/](http://www.natre.org.uk/news/latest-news/)

How can SACRE respond?

### GCSE numbers

- The number of students in England and Wales taking a GCSE course in Religious Studies GCSE has risen to 253,225, an increase of 0.6% from last year.
- The increase was largely driven by a surprise rise in the short course in England, up 16.5% from 15,672 to 18,257.
- In Wales, amid an overall 5% drop in pupils taking GCSEs, the number of entries to RS courses fell by 11%.

The strong entry results in England saw the Religious Education Council of England and Wales (REC) and the National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE) reiterate their call for a National Plan for the subject. They warn that an ongoing funding crisis and lack of a specialist teacher recruitment strategy now seriously threatens the provision of high-quality learning for the quarter of a million students who take the subject annually.

Joining the call for a National Plan was Lord Karan Bilimoria, CBE, DL, Vice President of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and Chancellor of the University of Birmingham who pointed to the number of disadvantaged students going on to take the subject at A level. A

study in April (see above) found they were twice as likely to take the subject than their peers, favouring it over history and geography:

"When it comes to levelling up education, the latest data shows that giving more support to religious education students at GCSE is an easy win. If RS is the humanity that disadvantaged young people are most likely to take, then backing this up with a properly funded National Plan is a must. The subject will provide those young people with the crucial skills of analysis, curiosity and intellectual confidence as part of a broad, balanced education and give them a headstart in the global workplace."

[www.natre.org.uk/news/latest-news/take-action-on-re-say-leading-politicians-as-more-students-take-the-subject-at-gcse/](http://www.natre.org.uk/news/latest-news/take-action-on-re-say-leading-politicians-as-more-students-take-the-subject-at-gcse/)

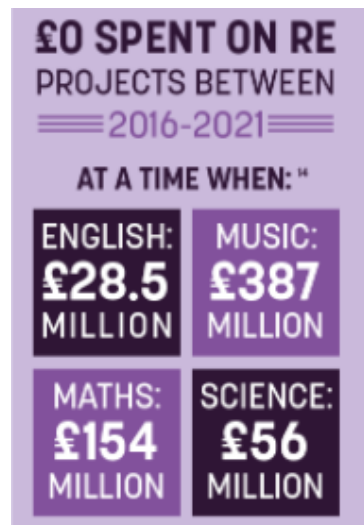
How can SACRE respond?

## RE report card 2022

The reactions to the above information on examination numbers draw on the report cards mentioned in previous news updates. The RE Policy Unit from the RE Council has gathered together data on RE from the last five years and written a report card on the state of RE. There is some excellent news (such as how schools with higher rates of GCSE RS entry get higher Attainment 8 scores!) but far too much bad news (34% of academies report no timetabled RE).

The full set can be found here: [www.rethinkre.org/re-report-card](http://www.rethinkre.org/re-report-card)

How can SACRE respond? One way is to alert local MPs to the information here, with particular reference to the lack of Government funding given to the subject in the last 5 years (see graphic on the right). How else can we use the data?



## Online responses to the state of RE:

Kate Penfold Attride, primary DHT, makes the case for RE

- [www.theheadteacher.com/attainment-and-assessment/teaching-practice/making-the-case-for-stronger-re-lessons-in-the-primary-curriculum](http://www.theheadteacher.com/attainment-and-assessment/teaching-practice/making-the-case-for-stronger-re-lessons-in-the-primary-curriculum)

Imam Sabeh Ahmedi urges a rich RE curriculum:

- <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/poor-or-no-re-is-a-gaping-hole-in-the-curriculum/>

## Regional RE Hub leads in place and ready to go!

Under the leadership of Claire Clinton, Lead Director, a fantastic team of Regional Leads will be supporting ten regions of England and Wales. They have been recruited to build relationships with advisers, dioceses, universities, SACREs, LAs, governors, MATs, teaching school hubs and more. The Regional Leads will also act as conduits between the regional

providers of research, CPD, resources, places of worship and so on for the benefit of all RE/Religion and Worldview stakeholders.

The Regional Hub structure aims to increase accessibility for all teachers to local and regional professional development and research, and to enable teachers to teach with greater confidence through their access to the support, knowledge, training and resources available in their region.

Details and the list of Regional Leads:

[www.natre.org.uk/news/latest-news/the-regional-re-hubs-team-is-ready-to-go/](http://www.natre.org.uk/news/latest-news/the-regional-re-hubs-team-is-ready-to-go/)

West Midlands Regional Lead is Chris Giles: how can he help connect Worcester teachers to SACRE training and resources, and other local opportunities?

## Culham St Gabriel's 'In conversation' series

Three conversations are programmed for the autumn:

- 21 Nov: Understanding understanding! What do we mean by understanding? (Prof Trevor Cooling and Dr Kate Christopher)
- 19 Dec: Conceptualising religion and worldviews for the school (Dr Kevin O'Grady)

Details and booking info here: [www.cstg.org.uk/activities/events/in-conversation/](http://www.cstg.org.uk/activities/events/in-conversation/)

Extensive back catalogue here: [www.reonline.org.uk/research/in-conversation/](http://www.reonline.org.uk/research/in-conversation/)

How can SACRE respond? Perhaps a SACRE member volunteers to watch an 'In conversation' event and to report back on its implications for SACRE and local schools.

## NASACRE online training programme

NASACRE is continuing its training and support for SACREs and SACRE members. Here are the sessions coming up in the next 4 months:

- 17 Nov: 7-8pm SACREs – a way forward...?
- 19 Jan 2023: 7-8.30 om Being an effective Chair, part 2

Full details of all sessions and costs: <https://nasacre.org.uk/training-and-support/>

Are any of these sessions a priority for SACRE members?

## Inclusive Judaism: resources from the Jewish Museum of London

Classroom resources, including an extensive image library, open up the diversity of Jewish communities. Developers, Shereen Hunte and Eliana Mendelsohn, say:

*The teaching of Inclusive Judaism is important for many reasons and ensures that:*

- *The Jewish community is represented authentically.*
- *Students truly understand what it means to be Jewish, in all its diversity.*
- *We are able to connect to each other's experiences with empathy and compassion.*

See: [Inclusive Judaism - The Jewish Museum London](#)

How can SACRE enable schools to access this rich resource?

## NATRE's annual Strictly RE conference returns on 28-29<sup>th</sup> January 2024

Taking place online for the third year, the conference themes explore: **depth, diversity and Abrahamic worldviews**

*Before the weekend:* 13 weekday seminars

*On the weekend:* 3 keynotes, 21 workshops, seven virtual staffrooms

Workshops include:

- Thinking out loud- joining the dots to help children think more critically (Primary)
- Introducing Philosophy and Philosophers to the Primary Classroom (Primary)
- Dharmic Lenses on the Climate Crisis (Secondary)
- Creating a core RE Programme for KS4 (Secondary)
- Interfaith conversations - exploring creative projects that deepen pupils' understanding in RE (Crossphase)
- Special RE (Crossphase)
- Championing and advocating for RE with parents (for SLT's)

Pay for the weekend, get access to recordings and downloads for ALL sessions!

Details and booking info, including Early Bird deals before 31 Oct...

[www.natre.org.uk/courses-events/strictlyRE-2023/](http://www.natre.org.uk/courses-events/strictlyRE-2023/)

How can SACRE respond? Could a SACRE member attend and report back?

## NATRE Spirited Arts 2023 – new themes announced

Will schools from our area join hundreds of schools from around the world taking part in this year's Spirited Arts competition? Entries are welcomed in (almost!) any art form pupils can think of.

Winning entries will provide a good response to one of the 5 themes, and judges will be asking is it original? Is it well-crafted? And (most importantly!) is it excellent RE?

#### The 5 themes

1. "We have more in common than that which divides us."
2. Green faith, green future? ['God's good earth?']
3. Where is God today?
4. Faith in action, values in action.
5. Sacred space and holy buildings

Find out more details here [www.natre.org.uk/about-natre/projects/spirited-arts/spirited-arts-2022/](http://www.natre.org.uk/about-natre/projects/spirited-arts/spirited-arts-2022/)

2022 results will soon be available on the NATRE website

How can SACRE encourage schools take part in this competition? Can this link in with anything going on locally? Some SACREs have held local Spirited arts competitions and worked to display entries in a local museum. Is this something this SACRE might consider?

## Visits, videos and other resources for the classroom

### Birmingham faith visits

The Arts Society Birmingham has worked with six faith communities to provide guidance and materials on six places of worship. Teachers can find a 4-page booklet, three videos introducing the building and community, and a related quiz for each place of worship.

Supported by a generous grant from Westhill Endowment Trust, The Arts Society Birmingham has collaborated with six different places of worship, Birmingham Faith Leaders and other organisations to produce resources designed to enhance a school visit, or to support a virtual visit, to a place of worship for children 8 to 13 years.

Actual visits to the places of worship may be arranged by contacting them directly. Contact details are provided on the Illustrated Guides. <https://birmingham-faith-visits.theartsociety.org/>

Culham St Gabriel's has launched a series of promotional films aimed at improving public perception of RE <https://www.cstg.org.uk/campaigns/promoting-an-education-in-rwv/promotional-film-collection/>

Can SACRE make these resources available to teachers to help at parents' meetings, options evenings and so on?



## Free webinars for primary and secondary ECTs – a taster for NATRE ECT membership

Early Career Teachers have access to a range of free support through a series of online sessions. ‘Café’ sessions give you a chance to talk with experienced teachers and experts from different worldview backgrounds. The taught sessions offer expert input with a focus on practical classroom strategies.

Date – All Mondays 4.00-5.30pm	Topic
14 Nov	Taught session: Focus on Disciplinary RE
12 Dec	Café NATRE: Subject knowledge Buddhism
9 Jan	Taught session: Focus on Non-religious worldviews
13 Feb	Taught session: Focus on Hindu Dharma
13 Mar	Café NATRE – Subject knowledge Judaism
8 May	Taught session: Focus on Worldviews
12 June	Taught session: Focus on Sikhi
10 July	Café NATRE: Subject knowledge Christianity

ECT webinars booking link <http://ow.ly/VupG50KG3cP>

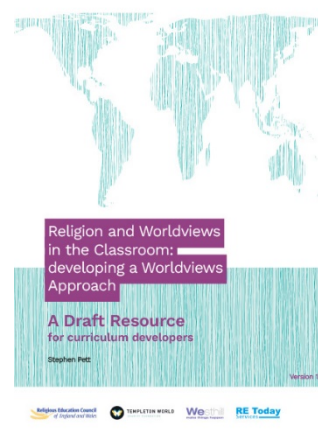
## Draft Resource for Religion and Worldviews in the Classroom

As part of a three-year Worldviews project, the RE Council of England and Wales (REC) has published a draft resource for Religion and Worldviews in the Classroom.

The resource sets out a rationale for a religion and worldviews approach, building on the developments since the 2018 Commission report. It incorporates a revised **National Statement of Entitlement** (NSE), which gives a clear description of an education in religion and worldviews, and sets a benchmark for high-quality teaching and learning. The resource then offers practical guidance, including how to use the NSE to develop a syllabus or curriculum, applying ways of knowing, developing pupils’ personal worldviews, and what progress looks like in a worldviews approach.

### Sections include:

- What do people mean by 'religion'?
- What do people mean by 'worldview'?
- The value of worldviews
- Purposes for RE in a religion and worldviews approach
- Revised National Statement of Entitlement
- Developing pupils' personal worldviews
- Making good progress
- Applying disciplinary methods
- How to use the NSE to develop a syllabus
- How to use the NSE to develop questions and construct units of work
- Making good progress: three models



The resource is primarily written to inform three Framework Development Teams, who are currently working to apply the NSE and the guidance to their own contexts. During this process, the draft resource will be tested and revised as necessary, before the publication of a final Handbook, three example frameworks, sample units of work and pupil responses, in 2024.

You can download copies of here: [www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/projects/draft-handbook-and-nse/](http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/projects/draft-handbook-and-nse/)

This is a next step towards a worldviews approach in our subject. How might SACRE consider this and its implications for our local syllabus?