

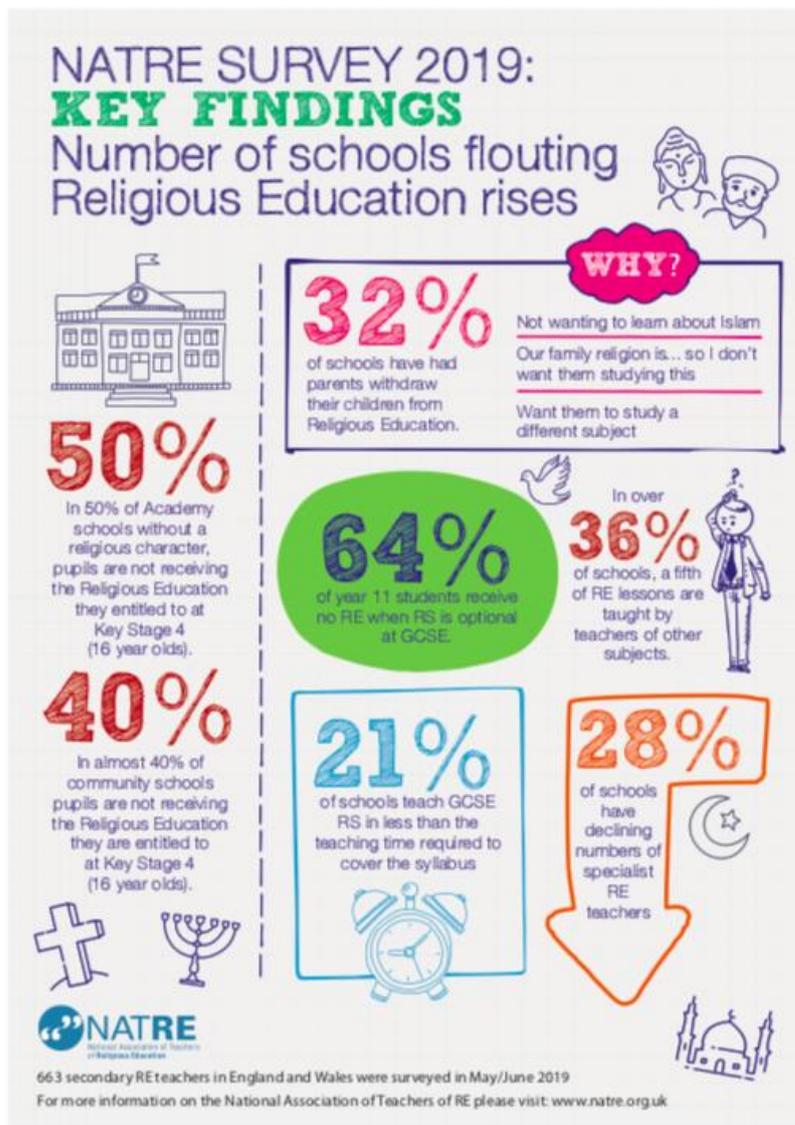
National News Update: Herefordshire SACRE November 2019

Number of schools flouting RE law rises

Half of academies without a religious character and 40 per cent of community schools are still failing to meet their legal or contractual agreements to provide Religious Education, new research by the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE) has revealed.

State schools must teach RE to all pupils, whether they are studying for a GCSE in the subject or not. However, provision has been hit by schools being able to hide behind failing accountability structures, meaning many academies and community schools breach their contractual and legal obligations.

Meanwhile, more than a third of schools reported that they have received no subject specific training in the last academic year. The new Ofsted Framework for inspection states that school leaders, including governing boards, will be held to account during an inspection where lack of training for teachers has a negative impact on pupils.



www.natre.org.uk/uploads/Free%20Resources/NATRE%20Eacc%20Survey%202019%20FINAL%20v3.pdf

GCSE Entries continue to fall

The number of pupils in England and Wales taking GCSE Religious Studies full course has fallen for the third year in a row, down 1.6% against 2018 to 237,862.

In addition, the number of pupils in England and Wales taking the short course GCSE in Religious Studies has fallen even more sharply, down 19.7% from last year to 27,384. Religious Studies remains by far the most commonly taken short course GCSE, accounting for 94.4% of all short course GCSEs taken in England and Wales.

The decline is greater in Wales than in England. In England the number of entries for GCSE Religious Studies full course has fallen by 0.6% to 227,913. In Wales the equivalent figures are down by 20.8% to 9,949.

Entries for GCSE RS (combined short and full courses) in England and Wales peaked in 2011 at 461,795. Today's figures show a decline in entries of 42.6% in eight years with almost 200,000 fewer pupils achieving a qualification in RS at the end of KS4.

The long-term picture is more positive for the full course GCSE where there has been strong growth in the number of entries for most of the last decade. In 2009 there were 170,303 entries for Religious Studies in

England and Wales. The number of entries increased every year until reaching a peak in 2016. While there has been a decline since this peak, the number of pupils receiving a full course GCSE in Religious Studies is still 39.7% greater than in 2009.

The fall in entries comes despite pupils emphasising how much they value and enjoy studying Religious Education (underlined by the overall rise in entries at A-Level and GCSE over the past decade) and despite the fact that the Government is rightly emphasising the importance for young people to have knowledge and understanding of religions and non-religious beliefs.

The key outcomes for Religious Education in England and Wales at KS4 in 2019 are as follows:

- There were 237,862 entries for the full course in GCSE RS, a fall of 1.6% from 2018 (241,749)
- There were 27,384 entries for the short course in GCSE RS, a decline of 19.7% from 2018 (34,087)
- There were 265,246 entries for GCSE RS (combined short and full courses), a decline of 3.8% from 2018 (275,836). Entries for GCSE RS (combined short and full courses) peaked in 2011 at 461,795. Today's figures show a decline in entries of 42.6% in eight years with almost 200,000 fewer pupils achieving a qualification in RS at the end of KS4.
- 29.8% of entries for the full course in GCSE RS were awarded at least an A or a 7
- 23.5% of entries for the short course in GCSE RS were awarded an A or an A*

Increase in recruitment of trainee teachers of RE

NATRE is delighted to report that based on the UCAS figures released this week, there are 505 trainee teachers of RE placed or conditionally placed which, when compared to [2018](#), is an increase of over 100 trainees, If all of these people start their training and don't change their mind at the last minute, this will be the best recruitment figures for RE in a very long time!

Ofsted: New interest in RE?

NATRE published advice for members on the new Ofsted framework for use by teachers of RE in schools. This document takes teachers through the three 'I's – Intent, Implementation and Impact – explaining what each means, and giving examples of the kinds of questions that might arise in a 'deep dive' subject inspection. Accompanying these questions are sample answers given by teachers who are members of the NATRE Executive Committee.

Ofsted Framework and Handbooks in action. The new Framework and Handbooks are available, and making teachers and heads everywhere sit up and take notice of RE

www.gov.uk/government/collections/education-inspection-framework#handbooks-and-framework

172. All pupils in maintained schools are expected to study the basic curriculum, which includes national curriculum⁶⁶, religious education and age-appropriate relationship and sex education. Academies are expected to offer all pupils a broad curriculum⁶⁸ that should be similar in breadth and ambition.

P.42 Footnote 68: Academies must include English, mathematics, science and religious education in their curriculum.

The early signs are that many schools are getting attention from OFSTED for a poor RE curriculum that lacks ambition.

Secondary Ofsted reports including reference to RE

Example 1:

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good

From the ‘What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?’ section

Most teachers are now teaching pupils the subject content that matters the most, apart from religious education, which is limited.

From the “What does the school need to do to improve?” section

Currently, some pupils in key stage 3 do not cover subject content sufficiently well to be able to draw upon their learning in the future. This is because subjects such as religious education lack prominence in the curriculum. Additionally, the time pupils spend learning new content is limited in some subjects as teachers attempt to teach a broad and balanced curriculum that is commensurate with the national curriculum. However, time is limited, and teachers sometimes gloss over important learning points. This leads to gaps in pupils’ understanding. Leaders must ensure that pupils are afforded sufficient time to learn important subject content in detail for as long as possible, including in religious education.

Example 2:

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Requires improvement

From the ‘What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?’ section

In key stage 3, pupils have too few opportunities to learn about some subjects, such as geography, history, and religious education (RE), in detail. Also, the range of subjects offered by the school at key stage 3 is narrow. For example, pupils in Years 7 and 8 do not currently get the chance to study technology. The curriculum at key stage 3 does not stay as broad as possible for as long as possible. It is not as ambitious as the national curriculum.

In key stage 4, pupils can choose to study from a wide range of subjects. However, older pupils do not have enough opportunity to study RE. Few pupils choose to continue to study a modern foreign language. Leaders have put plans in place to improve pupils’ enjoyment of this subject so that more pupils choose this as an option.

From the “What does the school need to do to improve?” section

Leaders and governors need to ensure that pupils follow a broad curriculum which is similar in breadth and ambition to the national curriculum. They should further improve the curriculum by increasing the depth of learning for pupils in different subjects in key stage 3. Leaders should also increase the opportunities for key stage 4 pupils to study RE in greater depth.

Training and support opportunities:

The next **Strictly RE 2020** national conference, takes place near Heathrow, London, on Saturday 25 January 2020. An excellent day of seminars and keynotes, with an exhibition of representative publishers, examiners, faith groups and funders.

www.natre.org.uk/news/latest-news/strictly-re-2020/

National and Regional Ambassadors for RE – including work in our region

A reminder that the National and Regional RE Ambassadors are continuing to work to support and connect teachers of RE. More details here: www.natre.org.uk/news/latest-news/regional-ambassadors-announced/

The recent West Midlands Primary RE Conference was one example of an event set up by the Regional Ambassador, Chris Giles. Held on 19 November in St Matthew’s CE Primary School, Birmingham, it had Mary Myatt as keynote speaker on Curriculum Conversations. Local teachers led sessions on creative use of

literature, using dance and drama, and teaching RE and art, including Hereford SACRE rep Tracy Westlake (Marlbrook Primary School) who led a workshop on RE and EYFS, and using the senses to experience spirituality.

Resources for schools:

British Library *Discovering Sacred Texts* resource free online

www.natre.org.uk/news/latest-news/discovering-sacred-texts-highlights-from-the-british-library-is-now-online/
www.bl.uk/sacred-texts

GCSE RS BBC Bitesize – new for KS2, 3 and 4

The BBC's support for RE continues with the launch of its Bitesize religion and belief guides – new material for KS3 is due next term as well as the recent KS2 and 4 offers

<https://www.bbc.com/bitesize/subjects/zb48q6f>

Subsidised NATRE membership for struggling primary schools

The [Primary RE 1000](#) project provides bronze membership for two years instead of the usual one-year at a highly subsidised rate.

If you have schools that you would like to recommend for eligibility, please email insya@natre.org.uk with the school name and postcode. There is no limit on the number of recommendations, but schools must pass the eligibility criteria determined for the project to receive the subsidised membership.

If you have any questions or queries, please contact the [Communications Executive](#) Insysa, or telephone 0121 415 3968.

Stephen Pett
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