

AGENDA

Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)

Date: **Wednesday 6 July 2011**

Time: **2.00 pm**

Place: **The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road,
Hereford**

Notes: Please note the **time, date** and **venue** of the meeting.

For any further information please contact:

Paul James, Democratic Services Officer

Tel: 01432 260460

Email: pjames@herefordshire.gov.uk

If you would like help to understand this document, or would like it in another format or language, please call Paul James, Democratic Services Officer on 01432 260460 or e-mail pjames@herefordshire.gov.uk in advance of the meeting.

Agenda for the Meeting of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)

Membership

Chairman	Councillor J Stone	Local Authority
Vice-Chairman		
	Councillor CNH Attwood	Local Authority
	Mrs. C. Ault	Bahai faith
	Mrs L Barker	Secondary School Teachers
	Revd. P. Barlow	Church of England
	Mr. P. Bowen	Church of England
	Mrs S Bryant	Church of England
	Councillor EMK Chave	Local Authority
	Venerable Tsuiltrim Tenzin Choesang	Buddhist
	Mrs A. Daniel	Primary School Teachers
	Miss Emilie James	Special School Teachers
	Mrs Gurmit Jutle	Sikh Faith
	Rev DT Meachem	Churches Together in Herefordshire
	Sr. D. O'Donnell	Roman Catholic Church
	Mr. Z. Pandor	Muslim Faith
	Ms C Wolfe	Jewish Faith
Non Voting	Mrs S Catlow-Hawkins	Co-opted member
	Ms. K. Mayglotling	Co-Opted Member
	Miss Allyson Taylor	Co-opted Member

GUIDANCE ON DECLARING PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS AT MEETINGS

The Council's Members' Code of Conduct requires Councillors to declare against an Agenda item(s) the nature of an interest and whether the interest is personal or prejudicial. Councillors have to decide first whether or not they have a personal interest in the matter under discussion. They will then have to decide whether that personal interest is also prejudicial.

A personal interest is an interest that affects the Councillor more than most other people in the area. People in the area include those who live, work or have property in the area of the Council. Councillors will also have a personal interest if their partner, relative or a close friend, or an organisation that they or the member works for, is affected more than other people in the area. If they do have a personal interest, they must declare it but can stay and take part and vote in the meeting.

Whether an interest is prejudicial is a matter of judgement for each Councillor. What Councillors have to do is ask themselves whether a member of the public – if he or she knew all the facts – would think that the Councillor's interest was so important that their decision would be affected by it. If a Councillor has a prejudicial interest then they must declare what that interest is. A Councillor who has declared a prejudicial interest at a meeting may nevertheless be able to address that meeting, but only in circumstances where an ordinary member of the public would be also allowed to speak. In such circumstances, the Councillor concerned will have the same opportunity to address the meeting and on the same terms. However, a Councillor exercising their ability to speak in these circumstances must leave the meeting immediately after they have spoken.

AGENDA

		Pages
1.	LOCAL AUTHORITY MEMBERS AND CHAIRMAN OF SACRE To note that following the Local Authority elections in May 2011 the Council's political group leaders have appointed Councillor CNH Attwood, Councillor EMK Chave and Councillor J Stone to serve on SACRE. In accordance with the SACRE Constitution the Chairmanship of SACRE is drawn from the Local Authority membership. Councillor Stone has been appointed Chairman.	
2.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE To receive apologies for absence.	
3.	NAMED SUBSTITUTES (IF ANY) To receive details any details of Members nominated to attend the meeting in place of a Member of the Committee.	
4.	MINUTES To approve and sign the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2011.	1 - 6
5.	RESPONSE TO WRITTEN PUBLIC QUESTIONS (IF ANY) To answer any pre-received written questions from members of the public.	
6.	NEW AGREED SYLLABUS LAUNCH AT SACRE ANNUAL CONFERENCE To report on the launch of the new Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education at the SACRE Annual Conference held Friday 10 June 2011 at the Queen Elizabeth Humanities College, Bromyard and report on progress with the introduction of the Agreed Syllabus into schools in September 2011.	
7.	PROVISION OF RE CONSULTANCY SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS FROM APRIL 2011 To advise SACRE of the position concerning the provision of RE Consultancy support for schools from April 2011.	
8.	GOVERNMENT EDUCATION STRATEGY - IMPLICATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION - UPDATE To report any further changes to the government's education strategy that may affect the teaching of Religious Education in Herefordshire schools.	7 - 28
9.	NASACRE / WESTHILL AWARDS 2011/12 To report the successful bid to NASACRE / Westhill Awards 2011/12 (Local Young Inter-Faith project) for funding towards the 'Looking for Meaning: bringing schools, faiths and communities together' project.	

10. NASACRE EXECUTIVE MEMBER

To note that The Venerable Tsuiltrim Tenzin Choesang has been elected to the NASACRE Executive and will report on any national issues raised.

11. MINDFULNESS IN SCHOOLS PROJECT

The Venerable Tsuiltrim Tenzin Choesang to report further on her involvement in the Mindfulness in School Project.

12. SACRE E-MAIL CONTACT DETAILS

To consider whether SACRE Members want to formally exchange e-mail contact details to facilitate communication between meeting dates.

13. MRS VICKY WARD, SECONDARY SCHOOL ADVISOR

To note that this will be the last SACRE meeting for Mrs Vicky Ward who has acted as the Lead Officer to SACRE since March 2010 as she will be leaving the Local Authority at the end of July 2011.

HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford HR1 1SH on Monday 28 March 2011 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor WU Attfield (Chairman)

Mrs C Ault, Revd. P. Barlow, Mrs S Bryant, Mrs S Catlow-Hawkins, Venerable Tsultrim Tenzin Choesang, Mrs A Daniel, Ms. K. Mayglothling, Rev DT Meachem, Sr. D. O'Donnell, Mr Z Pandor and Miss A Taylor

In attendance: Councillors WLS Bowen (Chairman, Children's Services Scrutiny Committee)

52. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor J Stone (Chairman), Mrs L Barker, Mr P Bowen, Councillor Brig P Jones CBE, Mrs G Jutle and Ms C Wolfe.

53. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no named substitutes.

54. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held 22 November 2010 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

55. RESPONSE TO WRITTEN PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No written questions had been received.

56. SACRE MEMBERSHIP

SACRE were informed of three changes to the membership.

SACRE welcomed Reverend David Meachem, leader of the Methodist circuit of Herefordshire, to Group A; Mrs Angela Daniel as the full voting Member to represent Primary School Teachers on Group C, and Miss Allyson Taylor, Headteacher, St Mary's Fownhope, as non-voting co-opted teaching Member.

RESOLVED: That the changes to the membership be noted.

57. NEW AGREED SYLLABUS FOR RE - UPDATE

SACRE received an update on the production of the new Herefordshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education.

The Lead Officer for SACRE reported that on 22 November 2010 the Herefordshire Agreed Syllabus Conference had unanimously recommended the new Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education to the Local Authority. The Local Authority had subsequently agreed the new syllabus for introduction into schools from September 2011.

SACRE wished to place on record its appreciation to everyone that had contributed to the new Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education. SACRE particularly thanked Stephen Pett, the Consultant for RE, for his technical advice and excellent work in drafting the new Agreed Syllabus for RE.

The Lead Officer reported that the new Agreed Syllabus was at the final proof stage and would very shortly be sent to the printers. Due to financial constraints the work had to be resourced from the 20010/11 budget. The Syllabus would be printed as a booklet with one copy being provided to each of the schools. The new Syllabus, together with supporting guidance material, would also be made available via dedicated RE web pages within the Council's website. Schools would therefore have easy access to the Syllabus should they need to download or print sections. She thanked schools for providing appropriate photographs for inclusion, however, they had not been included for technical reasons.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

58. SACRE ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2011

SACRE received an update on arrangements being made for the SACRE Annual Conference 2011 on 8 June at the Queen Elizabeth Humanities College, Bromyard.

The Lead Officer for SACRE reminded Members that in order to support teachers in preparing to plan RE for September 2011 in line with the revised Agreed Syllabus the 2011 SACRE Annual Conference had been brought forward so that the event could be used to launch the new Herefordshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education.

She commented that the Queen Elizabeth Humanities College, Bromyard had kindly offered to host the event. The event would open with a four minute 'power meditation' lead by the Venerable Tsultrim Tenzin Choesang.

In relation to resources she reported that the Children's Services Directorate workforce development strategy manager had agreed to provide a subsidy for the event as a contribution to the statutory development requirement. No free places may be allocated other than to official speakers and each delegate would be charged in the region of £100, however, this may be slightly reduced if a high number of delegates register and attend the conference.

On conference day early registration will be essential (8.40am) so as not to interfere with the working of the school.

Arising from debate on the format for the Conference SACRE noted that it was the 400th anniversary of the authorised King James Version of the Christian Bible, started 1606 and completed in 1611. SACRE were also reminded that Canon Miles Smith (1554-1624) of Hereford Cathedral was involved in the translation of the King James Version of the Bible and composed the preface which accompanies the authorised version. Mrs Daniel reported that she had submitted a short article concerning the anniversary to the Hereford Times and that many of the diocesan schools would be marking the event.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

59. SACRE BUDGET 2011/12

SACRE received an outline of the 2011/12 budgetary position.

The Lead Officer for SACRE reported that all Council budgets were under severe pressure and further uncertainty had arisen following recent government changes to reflect budgets for Academies and Free Schools. She confirmed that SACRE would have a budget in 2011/12 but that the actual figure was still to be confirmed. She anticipated that it was likely to be slightly lower than the 2009/10 figure. The 2010/11 figure had been uplifted slightly to take account of the work associated with the new Agreed Syllabus. If that was the case then the limited resources would need to be used to support SACRE's role of monitoring and supporting schools in their delivery of RE and she recommended that this could best be achieved through employing the RE Consultant to work with schools and teacher network groups. There would be very little flexibility to support other activities.

SACRE debated the resources involved in supporting teacher network meetings and how the increased use of websites could reduce the pressure on resources. A comment was made regarding the possibility of developing video conferences for network meetings thereby enabling a wider audience to travel smaller distances to a centre with video conference facility. SACRE noted that only a limited number of schools currently have video conferencing facilities.

RESOLVED: that

- a) **the report be noted and it was agreed that the use of the 2011/12 budget be focused on monitoring and supporting schools in their delivery of RE.**
- b) **the possibility of some network group meetings being conducted via video conferencing be kept under review.**

60. NASACRE/WESTHILL AWARDS 2011/12

SACRE's support was sought in submitting a funding bid to NASACRE/Westhill Awards 2011/12 for a Local Young Inter-Faith project.

The Consultant for RE reported that the Westhill Foundation Trustees had again allocated a sum of money for further awards to SACREs of up to £5,000 during the academic year 2011/12 for projects comparable to the previous young Inter-Faith projects.

In the very short time available a bid had been compiled by the Herefordshire Multi-faith Development Group, lead by Mrs Joyce Mackley, for funding towards:

- running a conference event to bring together secondary aged students from two predominantly Muslim Birmingham schools (Bordesley Green and Al Hijrah) and at least 2 schools from rural Herefordshire (Wigmore and Fairfield High Schools in the first instance).
- The event would develop compelling learning activities for use in the conference and beyond through using a consultant to work with teachers (i.e. RE subject leaders at the participating schools) and with faith community workshop leaders. The aim would be to develop activities which would:
 - Engage students as they explore things they have in common and recognise differences;
 - Stimulate interaction between students helping to break down barriers; and
 - Enable participants to share insights on the theme of "Where is the meaning in my life?"
- The project would also disseminate the compelling activities and guidance developed in the course of the project to other schools, so that they might organise similar events in their schools.

The meeting noted that in accordance with the requirements of the bid process a provisional outline of the funding requirements had been included. Also as part of the bid Herefordshire SACRE may need to allocate additional consultant time to support the activities as needed, beyond those stated in the bid. The reimbursement of the consultant travel expenses would also be supported to enable his participation in local meetings.

Members commented that due to the predominantly rural nature of the County, students had extremely limited opportunities to engage with other faith communities and therefore this project should be supported whole heartedly.

Comment was made that while there were very knowledgeable people in the faith community they also needed to have the capability and confidence to engage with students. The fact that the project would also disseminate the compelling activities and guidance developed in the course of the project to schools and faith community workshop leaders was also highly commended.

The Buddhist Member particularly noted that Buddhism had not been included in the proposed activities for students indicated in the proposed project details.

RESOLVED: that the funding application to NASACRE/Westhill Awards 2011/12 be approved.

61. GOVERNMENT EDUCATION STRATEGY- IMPLICATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

SACRE received an update on the latest position concerning the government education strategy and considered possible implications for Religious Education.

The Lead Officer for SACRE reported that the Secretary of State had set up an expert group to review the National Curriculum. Religious Education had not been included in the remit for the review as the Secretary of State had stated that the exclusion was due to the nature of the programmes of study which were agreed locally. It had also been stated by the Department for Education that in the remit for the review the Government did not intend to make any changes to the statutory basis for religious education. Academies and Free Schools will retain the freedom they have currently to depart from aspects of the National Curriculum but they will be required to teach a broad and balanced curriculum. Current understanding is that this will include the Locally Agreed Syllabus for RE.

The Consultant for RE commented that, from his knowledge, a number of the concerns listed in the agenda report were already materialising. Unless there was clear and unambiguous government guidance, there was a strong temptation for secondary schools and academies to focus on the Humanities subjects of history and geography that would improve their performance outcomes, reported under the English Baccalaureate (EBacc), rather than teach RE since the Secretary of State proposed that RE is not included as an eligible subject. He also questioned whether there was in fact a need to raise the status of Geography and History through the EBacc as was currently intended. The number of entrants to RE teacher training was already down and may reduce further if the status of RE within the curriculum was further eroded. He was aware that within weeks of the government's EBacc announcement a number of schools had plans to reduce their teaching provision for RE from September 2011.

SACRE debated the fact that Religious Studies had not been included in the list of eligible humanities subjects and questioned whether government had missed the point that current day teaching of RE covers, not just what is in the Bible, but makes a

valuable contribution to a person's breadth of knowledge, values and understanding. RE teaching could contribute to a major element of the government's Big Society agenda.

SACRE noted that the NASACRE website contains further information and template letters to local Members of Parliament on the E Bacc issue, requesting that MPs support an Early Day Motion to get the issue debated in parliament and lobby the Department for Education to have the place of RE assured by having it included as an eligible subject in the English Baccalaureate. SACRE agreed that the local MP's be requested to support the Early Day Motion. It was also noted that the Bishop of Hereford was taking a keen interest in view of his position in the House of Lords.

RESOLVED: that

- a) **the Chairman write to the local Members of Parliament to request that they support the national lobbying of the Department for Education to have the place of RE assured by having it included in the English Baccalaureate;**
- b) **individual members of SACRE be encouraged to lobby their own MP on the issue; and**
- c) **SACRE be kept informed of any further developments concerning Religious Education arising from changes to the government's education strategy.**

62. PROVISION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN HEREFORDSHIRE SCHOOLS 2010-2011

SACRE considered the findings following the School Improvement Partnership (SIP) survey into schools provision for RE.

In presenting the agenda report the Lead Officer for SACRE reported that unfortunately the response rate from schools had been low, however, she appreciated that the School Improvement Partners (SIPs) had needed to cover a wide range of issues when visiting schools and had not always been able to include the RE questions in all the interviews.

In relation to the primary school sector she reported that there was evidence of extremely good RE teaching being delivered, not always by specialist teachers, with most teachers in the survey showing great commitment to the subject.

In relation to the secondary school sector in recent years there had been a high level of entry to GCSE examinations. She had ascertained that of the 13 high schools: one had not responded; one would not be, and one was unclear about, entering students for RE examination. There remains at this stage a high level of commitment to the subject with a good number of committed and dedicated specialist teachers. So far little change in the subject status had been detected at a local level.

A number of schools had changed, or were in the process of changing, to academy status and their commitment to teaching RE would need to be kept under review.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

63. MINDFULNESS IN SCHOOLS PROJECT

SACRE noted the Venerable Tsultrim Tenzin Choesang's involvement in the 'Mindfulness in Schools Project.

Venerable Tsultrim Tenzin Choesang informed SACRE that she is going to undertake a course in The Mindfulness in Schools Project with the intention that she become the local teacher and co-ordinator for mindfulness. The Mindfulness in Schools Project is a non-profit organisation whose aim is to engage, support and research the teaching of

secular mindfulness in schools. She would provide further information on the project to a future meeting.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and further information be provided to a future meeting.

64. FUTURE MEETING DATES

SACRE noted the future meeting dates as listed in the agenda.

65. LATE ITEM - POSSIBLE NOMINATION TO NASACRE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Chairman allowed the late item on the grounds that any nomination had to be made before 20th April 2011.

The Venerable Tsuiltrim Tenzin Choesang requested at the meeting that she be considered for nomination to the Executive Committee of the National Association of SACRE (NASACRE).

The Clerk's representative confirmed that nominations to the Executive needed to be signed by the Chairman and submitted by 20 April. It was currently unclear whether there would be any resource implication for SACRE in making the nomination and in view of the earlier report on the severe resource limitations he recommended that, subject to further investigations and there being no implications for Herefordshire SACRE, the nomination be supported.

RESOLVED: That subject to there being no resource implications to Herefordshire SACRE the nomination of The Venerable Tsuiltrim Tenzin Choesang to the NASACRE Executive Committee be supported.

The meeting ended at 3.41 pm

CHAIRMAN

GOVERNMENT EDUCATION STRATEGY - IMPLICATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION - UPDATE

Report By: Democratic Services Officer

Purpose

1. To report any further changes to the government's education strategy that may affect the teaching of Religious Education in Herefordshire schools..

Report

2. SACRE requested that it be kept apprised of the government's education strategy and any associated issues. The appended documents are brought to SACRE's attention that have just been issued by the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE). The Lead Officer for SACRE will provide any further commentary at the meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT SACRE note the national situation concerning the teaching of Religious Education in schools

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None identified.

Embargoed until 00.01am, Friday June 24

NEWS RELEASE

Religious Education in schools is being killed off

A report published today warns that Religious Education is already being marginalised as a consequence of being left out of the 2010 English Baccalaureate and is set to disappear altogether from the curriculum of many secondary schools. Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove is expected to make an announcement on RE's inclusion in the EBacc by July 19.

RE has been a core subject for all pupils since 1870, but this could soon end. Michael Gove's rapidly implemented plans to shake up the educational system are set to shake out RE. This may not be deliberate but is the inevitable unintended consequence of government actions.

Being left out of the 2010 EBacc is already having devastating consequences in schools. A survey by the National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE) based on evidence from over half of all state maintained secondary schools in England reports:

- A quarter of all academies and community schools are not providing statutory RE for 14 – 16 year olds.
- This non-compliance is predicted to increase during 2011 – 12.
- GCSE RE entries between 2010-11 and 2011-12 have dropped by more than a third in academies and community schools
- In those schools where entry levels have dropped, over half attribute the drop to the impact of RE being excluded from the EBacc.

Ed Pawson, Chair of NATRE, said, "GCSE Religious Studies is a subject that requires high standards of knowledge and evaluation of evidence. It explores religious and cultural topics and engages in debates over issues of diversity and conflict, ethics, philosophy and social change. It has grown massively in popularity over recent years because students recognise it as a subject of significant relevance to the world they encounter. By excluding RS from the EBacc Michael Gove is effectively squeezing it out of the curriculum in many of our schools across the country. This truly is a cruel blow."

In the light of new hard evidence about the negative effects of RE having been excluded from the 2010 EBacc, The Religious Education Council of England and Wales (REC) and NATRE, along with the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church, calls for:

- **Religious Education to be included in the English Baccalaureate**

RE in schools today

RE's exclusion from the EBacc has already caused an avalanche of protest including:

- A steady stream of press articles and letters
- An Early Day Motion in the Commons signed by 111 MPs from all parties
- Tabled questions and debates in both the Commons and the Lords
- Strong disquiet being expressed by the Parliamentary Select Committee on Education
- Bulging postbags of letters to ministers
- A 130,000 signature petition to the Prime Minister

Other evidence on the effects of the EBacc excluding RE on schools, students and teachers:

- Two surveys reveal serious concern about the level of compliance in many schools with their local authority's RE syllabus regarding the following of GCSE courses.
- Current application rates for secondary RE teacher training are down 25% compared to geography down only 9% and history actually up 3%.
- Analysis of Government data reveals that 862 state secondary schools entered no candidates for GSCE Religious Studies in 2010, compared with 137 for Geography and 70 for History
- A further analysis reveals that 25% of academies without a religious character entered no pupils at all for an RE GCSE compared with only 10% of other schools. Given the academy expansion policy, unless remedial action is taken, the future of RE in the school curriculum looks bleak.

- ends -

For further media information:

Colin Hallmark / Harriet Johnson, 3:nine Communications

Tel: 0207 736 1888; 07745 914170; email: info@3nine.co.uk

Notes to Editors

1. The NATRE research was carried out over a 10 day period in May 2011. Responses from 1,918 schools were gathered. Excluding the independent school responses, this represents over half (53%) of all maintained secondary schools in England. The analysis focuses on the 1,157 sub-set of academies, community schools and grammar schools.
2. NATRE is the subject teacher association for RE professionals in primary and secondary schools and higher education, providing a focal point for their concerns, a representative voice at national level and publications and courses to promote professional development.

3. Established in 1973, the Religious Education Council of England and Wales brings together some fifty national organisations. These comprise academic and professional associations specialising in religions and religious education, as well as the individual religion and belief organisations inclusive of the range of faith communities found nationally. The REC's shared priority is to strengthen the quality of provision for the subject throughout the educational system.

An analysis of a Survey of teachers on GCSE change and RE in light of the EBacc changes

A Second Survey – June 2011 (v2.2)

Summary and conclusions

An online survey of religious education (RE) teachers was conducted over a ten day period in May 2011. The aim was to examine the impact of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) proposals on RE in English secondary schools.

Responses from 1,918 schools were gathered. Excluding the independent school respondents, this represents over half (53%) of all maintained secondary schools in England and as such provides a very satisfactory sample from which to generalize. For a breakdown of total numbers see Table 1.

This analysis has focused on the 1,157 sub-set of academies, community schools and grammar schools. The survey results demonstrate that in all three of these school types:

1. Statutory provision for RE was not being met at Key Stage 4 (KS4) in 24% of academies, 24% of community schools and 31% of grammar schools [Table 1].
2. Non-compliance is predicted to increase in 2011-12. This is especially true in academies where the number of such schools not complying with funding agreement contractual requirements at KS4 is expected to rise by 10% from the current 24% to 34% in 2011-12. [Tables 1 and 2].
3. Many schools also reported a drop in entries between 2010-11 and 2011-12 for both Religious Studies Short and Full Course GCSEs. Particularly concerning is that 38% of academies, 40% of community schools and 34% of grammar schools reported a drop in Full Course entries. [Table 3].
4. In those schools where entry levels had fallen, 57% of academies, 57% of community schools and 64% of grammar schools gave as the reason the impact of the introduction of the EBacc [Table 3].
5. 26% of academies, 30% of community schools and 25% of grammar schools also reported reductions for the coming year in specialist RE staff [Table 4].
6. 14.1% of academies, 13.6% of community schools and 10.4% of grammar schools reported that the statutory requirements for Key Stage 3 (KS3) will not be met in 2011-12. This is an increase from 2010-11 [Tables 5 and 6].

Methodology

This is an analysis of the data gathered from an online questionnaire examining changes in RE in English schools in light of recent policy announcements concerning the English Baccalaureate (EBacc).

The survey was launched on 22 May 2011 via a number of teacher networks supported by the National Association for Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE) and RE Today Services, and publicised via Social Media networks and via the electronic networks of other RE organisations including AREIAC, AULRE, and NASACRE. The almost overwhelming take-up and response rate, with responses exceeding 2000 within 48 hours, and 2800 within 10 days, is indicative of the level of feeling currently held by RE teachers on this issue.

The responses represented 1,918 schools once duplicates were removed. This is approximately 53% of all state maintained secondary schools – a significant and statistically valid sample. For the breakdown of school types, see Table 1.

It is reasonable to assume that the majority of responses come from schools with enthusiastic and active RE teachers. Schools without subject specialists and where little RE is taught are less likely to be represented in the sample. Therefore the overall picture and in particular the negative effects of the EBacc proposals on RE are very likely to be even more damaging than this survey reveals.

The analysis is based on self-reported data from RE teachers in schools. An on-line data gathering tool (Survey Monkey) was used.

Acknowledgement

NATRE is very grateful to Paul Hopkins of the NATRE Executive for analysing the data on its behalf.

Table 1

In the current school year [2010-11] are legal requirements with regard to RE provision for all in KS4 being met?

	Number		No		Yes		DNA		Totals	
	Value	Percent	Value	Percent	Value	Percent	Value	Percent	Value	Percent
Academy	284		68	23.9%	201	70.8%	15	5.3%	284	100.0%
Community	777		183	23.6%	555	71.4%	39	5.0%	777	100.0%
Grammar	96		30	31.3%	62	64.6%	4	4.2%	96	100.0%
Independent	148		34	23.0%	99	66.9%	15	10.1%	148	100.0%
Other	131		37	28.2%	85	64.9%	9	6.9%	131	100.0%
VA [CofE]	88		10	11.4%	75	85.2%	3	3.4%	88	100.0%
VA [RC]	327		10	3.1%	303	92.7%	14	4.3%	327	100.0%
VA [Other]	40		8	20.0%	30	75.0%	2	5.0%	40	100.0%
VC	27		4	14.8%	22	81.5%	1	3.7%	27	100.0%
Overall	1918		384	20.0%	1432	74.7%	102	5.3%	1918	100.0%

Given that RE is a legal requirement for all pupils up to the age of 19 – it is a concern that should be addressed that overall a fifth of pupils are not receiving this entitlement at Key Stage 4 – if VA / VC and independent schools are excluded from this then it rises to a quarter (24.3%).

Table 2

In the next school year [2011-12] will the legal requirements with regard to RE provision for all in KS4 be met?

	Number		No		Yes		DNA		Totals		Change
	Value	Percent	Value	Percent	Value	Percent	Value	Percent	Value	Percent	
Academy	284		98	34.5%	177	62.3%	9	3.2%	284	100.0%	10.6%
Community	777		219	28.2%	530	68.2%	28	3.6%	777	100.0%	4.6%
Grammar	96		31	32.3%	62	64.6%	3	3.1%	96	100.0%	1.0%
Independent	148		40	27.0%	101	68.2%	7	4.7%	148	100.0%	4.1%
Other	131		41	31.3%	83	63.4%	7	5.3%	131	100.0%	3.1%
VA [CofE]	88		12	13.6%	74	84.1%	2	2.3%	88	100.0%	2.3%
VA [RC]	327		15	4.6%	298	91.1%	14	4.3%	327	100.0%	1.5%
VA [Other]	40		7	17.5%	31	77.5%	2	5.0%	40	100.0%	-2.5%
VC	27		5	18.5%	21	77.8%	1	3.7%	27	100.0%	3.7%
Overall	1918		468	24.4%	1377	71.8%	73	3.8%	1918	100%	

The indicative column in these figures is the last; it can be seen that in ALL school types [except for VA(Other)] for the next 12 months an **INCREASE** in non-compliance is predicted. In academies this is almost 11% where non-compliance will rise to over a third of all pupils. Where a reason was indicated for the change in provision of legal requirements the overwhelmingly most common was the introduction of the EBacc into the school's curriculum framework.

Table 3

Where there has been a drop in GCSE entries in 2011-12 what is the main reason for this?

	GCSE [Full Course]										GCSE [Short Course]										
	E-Bacc			No Drop			Other			DNA			E-Bacc		No Drop		Other		DNA		
	Number	Value	Percent	Value	Percent	Value	Percent	Value	Percent	Value	Percent	Value	Percent	Value	Percent	Value	Percent	Value	Percent	Value	Percent
Academy	284	62	21.8%	143	50.4%	47	16.5%	32	11.3%	15	5.3%	191	67.3%	46	16.2%	32	11.3%				
Community	777	177	22.8%	374	48.1%	133	17.1%	93	12.0%	98	12.6%	459	59.1%	127	16.3%	93	12.0%				
Grammar	96	21	21.9%	53	55.2%	12	12.5%	10	10.4%	8	8.3%	68	70.8%	10	10.4%	10	10.4%				
Independent	148	19	12.8%	86	58.1%	22	14.9%	21	14.2%	8	5.4%	106	71.6%	13	8.8%	21	14.2%				
Other	131	22	16.8%	65	49.6%	29	22.1%	15	11.5%	11	8.4%	79	60.3%	26	19.8%	15	11.5%				
VA [CofE]	88	5	5.7%	60	68.2%	12	13.6%	11	12.5%	4	4.5%	64	72.7%	9	10.2%	11	12.5%				
VA [RC]	327	14	4.3%	247	75.5%	22	6.7%	44	13.5%	12	3.7%	246	75.2%	27	8.3%	42	12.8%				
VA [Other]	40	5	12.5%	26	65.0%	5	12.5%	4	10.0%	1	2.5%	29	72.5%	6	15.0%	4	10.0%				
VC	27	3	11.1%	19	70.4%	2	7.4%	3	11.1%	2	7.4%	17	63.0%	5	18.5%	3	11.1%				
Overall	1918	328	17.1%	1073	56%	284	14.8%	233	12.1%	159	8.3%	1259	65.6%	269	14.0%	231	12.0%				

If we look at the reasons for drops in entries for both SHORT (SC) and FULL COURSE (FC) entries we can see that the EBacc is significantly the highest reason for the drop in Full Course entries indicating that the non-inclusion of RE in the EBacc is a significant threat to the FULL COURSE Religious Studies – the more academic – GCSE with the ensuing impact on AS/A2 and degree entries in related subjects.

Table 4

Reported RE specialist staffing reductions for 2011-12

	Number		Reporting reduction	
	Value	Percent	Value	Percent
Academy	284	73	26%	
Community	777	231	30%	
Grammar	96	24	25%	

Given that Tables 1 and 2 indicate an additional 4.4% of schools predict they will be non-compliant in KS4 in 2011-12, and a slightly less marked reduction can be identified at KS3 (Tables 5 and 6), a drop in demand for RE teachers is inevitable.

Table 5

In the current school year [2010-11] are legal requirements with regard to RE provision for all in KS3 being met?

	Number		No		Yes		DNA		Totals	
	Value	Percent	Value	Percent	Value	Percent	Value	Percent	Value	Percent
Academy	284		36	12.7%	239	84.2%	9	3.2%	284	100.0%
Community	777		83	10.7%	666	85.7%	28	3.6%	777	100.0%
Grammar	96		6	6.3%	87	90.6%	3	3.1%	96	100.0%
Independent	148		11	7.4%	130	87.8%	7	4.7%	148	100.0%
Other	131		13	9.9%	111	84.7%	7	5.3%	131	100.0%
VA [CofE]	88		5	5.7%	81	92.0%	2	2.3%	88	100.0%
VA [RC]	327		18	5.5%	295	90.2%	14	4.3%	327	100.0%
VA [Other]	40		4	10.0%	34	85.0%	2	5.0%	40	100.0%
VC	27		1	3.7%	25	92.6%	1	3.7%	27	100.0%
Overall	1918		177	9.2%	1668	87.0%	73	3.8%	1918	100%

Given that RE is a legal requirement for all pupils up to the age of 19 – it is a concern that should be addressed that overall a tenth of pupils are not receiving this entitlement at Key Stage 3 – if VA / VC and independent schools are excluded from this then it rises slightly to 10.8%

Table 6

In the next school year [2011-12] will the legal requirements with regard to RE provision for all in KS3 be met?

	Number		No		Yes		DNA		Totals		Change
	Value	Percent	Value	Percent	Value	Percent	Value	Percent	Value	Percent	
Academy	284		40	14.1%	235	82.7%	9	3.2%	284	100.0%	1.4%
Community	777		106	13.6%	643	82.8%	28	3.6%	777	100.0%	3.0%
Grammar	96		10	10.4%	83	86.5%	3	3.1%	96	100.0%	4.2%
Independent	148		15	10.1%	126	85.1%	7	4.7%	148	100.0%	2.7%
Other	131		17	13.0%	107	81.7%	7	5.3%	131	100.0%	3.1%
VA [CofE]	88		7	8.0%	79	89.8%	2	2.3%	88	100.0%	2.3%
VA [RC]	327		20	6.1%	293	89.6%	14	4.3%	327	100.0%	0.6%
VA [Other]	40		3	7.5%	35	87.5%	2	5.0%	40	100.0%	-2.5%
VC	27		2	7.4%	24	88.9%	1	3.7%	27	100.0%	3.7%
Overall	1918		220	11.5%	1625	84.7%	73	3.8%	1918	100%	

Again the indicative column in these figures is the last; it can be seen that in ALL school types [except for VA(Other)] for the next 12 months an **INCREASE** in non-compliance is predicted. In academies this rises to over 14% where non-compliance will be highest for all school types. Where a reason was indicated for the change in provision of legal requirements the overwhelmingly most common was the introduction of the EBacc into the school's curriculum framework.

Some indicative comments

From Academies

As a result of the EBacc our school is no longer offering RE examinations at KS4 and has reduced the amount of time that year 8 will be allocated.

Currently the school has chosen to ignore the EBacc, but RE for all at KS4 has been moved aside to allow for Functional Skills. We now offer full course GCSE as an option only. This year 39 students have opted to take the subject but many of those will instead be entered for AS Philosophy and Ethics and this is why numbers are so high as we are the only subject to stream more academic students. We fear that as EBacc becomes more established the school will no longer be able to ignore it and RE will suffer.

The EBacc will kill Religious Studies if it isn't included.

The students and parents seem to believe that Geography and History have the importance as indicated by the attitude of the government. RE and Citizenship are part of a compulsory course offered, one hour per week, and no exam at the end.

I feel that RE is being marginalised in schools with less teaching time for this crucial subject. It makes me so angry that the EBAC is pushing RE out. I know of schools where there will be no RE. If pupils are now aware of religion or ethics then how can we stand a chance fighting against discrimination and stereotypes? It is an absolute disaster in an already moral-less society. Well-done, Mr Gove.

As a Church academy there is pressure to keep RE central, however as there is pressure from parents questioning the value of studying RE particularly as it is not included in the EBacc.

The damage caused to RE by its omission from the EBacc is in terms of perceived value. Its omission tells students that it is not a worthwhile course of study within Humanities. I do not believe the government has done sufficient research to say that RE is less academically valid than History or Geography.

My school, despite widespread support for RE among senior staff, has removed Full Course GCSE RE as an option for next year's Year 10. They have taken this decision purely because RE is not included in the new EBacc. RE is now way down the list of priorities for the school in terms of full course exam success because of the new system by which the school will be judged.

I have been made redundant as Head of RE because of this EBacc. Thanks Mr Gove, enjoy your salary when I no longer have one.

Within our school R.S is seen as a humanities subject. Not including it in the EBacc tells pupils this is not an 'equal' or valuable subject. Our short course results are excellent and inclusion in the EBacc will only strengthen the school's results.

This Academy enters all students on either the Full Course or Short Course depending on ability and other courses. This will not change because of our Christian ethos, however our specialist subject, Business and Enterprise, has been reduced and is now no longer compulsory because of the EBacc focus! It would appear ridiculous that a subject can be a statutory obligation but then the results not assessed. This will mean that schools with no religious ethos or focus will drop the subject in favour of other Humanities subjects in order to achieve good EBacc figures.

From Community Schools

The EBacc will have a destructive impact on offering RE in any way. We had to sacrifice RE time this year to our Year 11's to English, and only entered the 2 top sets for short course exam. The rest of year 11, that wanted to be entered had no lessons in RE from January (RE lesson went to English). There was a report recently, highlighting why the teaching of RE/Ethics is so important in our society, as some children feel it's ok to steal, cheat, lie etc... and some grow up with bigoted views.

I was making in-roads into the subject which was previous neglected and was meeting with a lot of success however all of it has been undone and the department as of next year looks the weakest it has been and all because RE is not part of the EBacc. RE was fast becoming a favourite subject in the school and now it's going to be scrapped for all top and second set year 8 and 9s. This will lead to it not being offered (short or full) in GCSE because pupils will not have the skills and knowledge needed.

The school has removed the position of Head of RS; there is now no TLR position in the RS department. There is one full time teacher of RS, and a 0.5 teacher, to teach 1,200 students. The RS department is now run by the Head of History, who has no interest in furthering the RS department, or maintaining the progress made with getting exam classes at KS4 and KS5 over the past 2 years. The EBacc has led to RS provision being removed at KS4 - all students will not be able to access any RS at all. The Headteacher does not believe it is necessary to fulfil the legal requirements for RS, as he feels that the EBacc will supersede previous requirements.

The school places high regard for RE in the curriculum and the department have usually got very good results. Up until this year RE was a very popular subject alongside History and Geography. With the introduction of EBacc our numbers have decreased - nothing else has changed except what is perceived to be more important in terms of subjects - those subjects in the EBacc are now seen as the 'gold standard' anything else outside this are 'second rate options'.

Students pick up the importance of the subjects due to the new EBacc. Therefore parents do and thus RE is considered a less desirable subject in comparison with Geog and Hist.

In a multicultural school the teaching of RE is imperative! Not including it in the Ebacc reduces its importance, how can we allow this in our multicultural society?

This school is looking to drop RS entirely from yrs 10 and 11, promote the GCSE exam to year 9 in order to focus on EBacc subjects and English literature.

As a direct consequence of the omission of RE from the EBacc and the inclusion of triple science, RE has suffered. The students at this school have been withdrawn from the only lesson they were statutorily entitled to. Staff have been asked to complete the legal requirement after school / on rotation / instead of something else - PSE. This is simply not acceptable - breaking the law and failing students. RE has massive value and is a traditional academically valuable subject. This must be included if looking at the bigger picture for a "Big Society"!

The Ebacc is directly responsible for our course not running next year. Without it we would undoubtedly have had a good sized group for full course RS. Accelerated pupils will no longer study the full GCSE due to time cuts for the RE department. Full course RE will only be available as an option subject; all pupils follow a short course put on a 1 lesson a week allocation compared to 2 before the EBacc was brought in. Concerned about future impact on A level numbers and full course RE numbers.

From Grammar Schools

I cannot emphasise enough just how bad this has been. Both myself and the student cohort have been treated abominably! The imposition of the EBacc without any consultation has been catastrophic for the RE department at my school. We have gone from a situation where there were 2 specialist RE teachers to a situation where there are none from Sept 2011. The Head of RE had 19 years experience of teaching RE and was going to be doing an MPhil in RS at Kent University but can't do it because she has no job next year and therefore cannot fund it. RE has been taken over by the PSHE department! Since when has PSHE been an academic subject? The damage is wide and far reaching and the Westminster Debate allowed the Education Minister yet another dig - History and Geography the subjects of choice - forget RE! The RE department takes the lead in delivering Holocaust Education in KS3 & KS4, mandatory since 2000 - this too is gone from Sept 2011- I find this particularly heart-breaking. We have no idea what we have done to deserve such treatment.

Religious Studies is an academic subject in the school that is able to stand as an equal alongside other academic subjects across the curriculum. It has the support of SLT but they have been reluctantly forced to advise students that RS may not be the best option to take in a University application perspective because the EBacc may become significant for this and they may be disadvantaged. Staffing and recruitment have been affected; standards of teaching remain high as does the subject's popularity.

RE has suddenly become the more 'disposable' subject - until this year it had parity with the humanities (in terms of timetabling) and all requirements were met. A level is now to be taught in far fewer hours - but the same syllabus!

All pupils are entered for a full course GCSE, with a total of 4 lessons spread over 3 years. (1 in yr 9, 1 in yr 10 and 2 yr11) Other departments get 9 lessons over the 3 years.

My school fully supports the teaching of RS/RE as an academic subject and openly supports the delivery of it. The Senior Leadership Team understand and support the concerns raised by the department and also believe that RE should be included in the EBacc. I have seen how it has affected other schools around the LA and that concerns me a great deal. KS3 provision has been halved and in some cases replaced with curriculum enrichment days - how does that deliver the legal requirement?

Whilst my school has not suffered any loss of time etc for RE at Key Stage 4 this year, I am concerned that the EBacc may lead to problems in the future and I know that RE in other schools is being reduced as a direct consequence.

There is no RS offered in Yr 10 but students now study full course in Yr9 and complete in Yr 11. Take exam in short course module at end of Yr9 then another module in Yr 11. No RS provision in Yr 10

The subject has been reduced in the last three years from two full-time to one full time member of staff; it is not offered within curriculum time at all in year 11. Full course is done with a small number in year 11 after school, which shows there is interest but not the curriculum time support.

From Independent Schools

I have had many parents asking me if I felt that because RS was no longer a humanity was it considered a 'soft subject'.

Working in an independent school I am a little shielded from the full impact of the EBacc as our school is not opting to follow it. However, our numbers have significantly dropped as this year's option numbers have come in. Current Year 10 cohort is 40, whereas upcoming numbers are 17. Geography and History are thriving and have taken on extra staff. Of course there may be other reasons for this but our parents are aware of what goes on the state system and I think this is having a knock on effect. It was raised by parents at options evening and our Deputy Head tried to alleviate worries but the comment was already made.

Although there has been no change in the way the school has treated RE this year, there is a definite change in perceptions of students thanks to the kudos being given to History and Geography and not RE as humanities. This will only get worse as time continues and GCSE RS will undoubtedly become eroded by this.

In a place with such religious diversity as Great Britain, it would be a serious error to discourage young people from the religious tolerance and understanding provided by the Religious Studies GCSE course.

25

It seems to me that the Sec of State does not know what the schemes of work for Philosophy and Applied Ethics contain. If he did their usefulness would speak for itself. The reply I saw from Darlington was completely at odds with reality as they said that RS did not need putting in the EBacc as it was taught by law throughout the country anyway! Can he be made to look at content? How can he think the study of WW2 is more relevant to our young people?

Religious Education is the most popular option at the school where I work, with over 60% of all sixth formers opting for it at A level. Independent schools have been able to avoid the pressure of the EBacc and have been able to keep subjects like RE that engage students and promote academic study and critical thinking. Other schools do not have the option of promoting RE in this way because the government has decided it is not a subject worth protecting. However, if students are not encouraged to take the subject at GCSE they cannot take it at A level without huge difficulties and certainly not at university. If Oxford and Cambridge take Philosophy seriously, why can't the government take it seriously at GCSE?

EBacc will significantly hamper our ability to recruit good RS teachers for the school if teaching colleges respond (as they are) to the fall in demand in the state sector by reducing their teaching programme. It does not encourage our students also to pursue this as an academic subject for the betterment of our society.

If RE is not included in the EBacc then it will be devalued as a subject and in an academic school like ours students will be less likely to opt for it. It covers a wide range of issues relevant to life in 21st century society and should therefore be promoted.

RE has become an option subject from year 8. The pupils were told before the staff. Most pupils have complained that the change has been made just 1 week before option deadline date. After most had already made their decisions.

From Voluntary Aided Schools

There have been a number of changes in the GCSE, which do not show up on this survey that have been impacted by the EBacc. There was a temporary blip in entries due to timetabling that was going to be picked up next year. 2009/2010 had 50 pupils doing full courses. This is now not possible because of the EBacc

Whilst there have been no changes this year, there will be in the future. Parents are already asking about the value of RE.

The main impact for us will take effect in 2012-2013 when the then Y11 will only have 1 lesson per week after having only one lesson per week in Y10. The full course will have to start in Y9 for all pupils and the enhancement of the curriculum for Gifted and Talented in Y11 will have to disappear

The full impact of the EBacc may not be felt in voluntary aided schools as yet. If RE is not included then 2012 onwards will feel the impact. This may take the following forms: 1) Being forced to offer short course as an alternative to full course so that students can take geog/hist. 2) Reduction in students opting for full course therefore the subject status is compromised. 3) Incentive to staff with specialists will go leading to poorer quality teaching and poorer quality ITT training. 4) A-Level uptake will be dramatically reduced as students and parents will have learnt the subject is an "add-on" lower down in the school, of no real academic value

In the long term the EBacc will have a negative effect on the number of pupils taking RS GCSE.

RE currently has two-thirds the time of equivalent subjects (History Geography). There have been attempts to remove the option to take full course. As of yet, this has not had an impact on time allocation.

If we were allowed to have the RE subject as part of the EBacc it would allow a much more free hand in delivering the EBacc content. At the moment, being a small school with limited resources, it is painting us into a very difficult and restrictive curriculum.

School is already trying to manipulate the figures i.e. dropping the most successful subject which is sociology as it isn't part of the EBacc and in terms of RS they aren't going to let the 'clever' kids study it so they can focus on EBacc subjects then make everyone else do it as it's a Catholic school! A joke!

There will be huge changes if RE is not included in the EBacc. We are already not able to meet the 5% curriculum time that the Diocese recommends we have in KS3 as we have 4 lessons a fortnight. Next year KS4 is being reduced from 5 to 4 lessons too. This will decrease the importance of the subject in the eyes of the students and this will only get worse if we are excluded from the EBacc. RE is critical to students' thinking skills and the decreasing of time and opportunity to study this subject is a real loss for our students.

The EBacc will have a massively detrimental impact on the status of RE across all our schools. I have written at length to my local MP and have urged others to do the same. Nick Gibb, from the Department for Education replied to me stating that it's excluded because it's compulsory - but so too are English, Maths and Science! With the best will in the world, pupils are primarily going to focus on the 5 subjects in the EBacc - RE will not be a priority for them so I fear results nationally will suffer. I also worry that in some schools the hours time-tabled for RE may be reduced and that there may be redundancies.

From “other” schools

R.E. is now regarded as a subject of no value. I am the Head of Department, but teach four other subjects while R.E. is taught by 16 other staff. The pupils are told to study subjects in the new English Bac. I have 12 students in my option group. Previously I had 32. No Short Course is offered.

By not including RE in the E-Bacc, our prospective number of students taking full course GCSE RE dropped from 63 to 24! Interestingly History and/or Geography gained the majority of these students!

RE definitely under threat at both Key Stages as the subject is treated as less and less of a priority.

RE at KS3 has been reduced by 50%. The introduction of the EBacc has resulted in students being reluctant to opt for the subject at both GCSE and AS/A2. If we don't get sufficient students, the AS/A2 courses will be cancelled. Once we change this, we shan't recover from it. We currently have approx 15 students in each AS/A2 class. In the past 5 years, at least one or two students have gone on to study the subject at University - either Philosophy or Theology or RS.

Numbers are significantly lower for next year in GCSE and A-level isn't running. History and Geography have quadruple numbers.

I have fought hard this year to meet statutory requirements but met with no change. I have tried to increase KS3 to 2 lessons per week (other humanities have 4) but to no avail. We are an even poorer cousin than PSE and seen as a minor inconvenience on the timetable. Omitting RS from the EBacc has created a deeper ideological issue: its value, which is often pretty low in many schools, is now at rock bottom. This does not help in trying to convince our students of the merit of our subject.

The impact of RE not being part of the EBacc has caused serious recruitment problems onto our full course GCSE programme. Many parents were encouraging students to take a subject like History or Geography, which they liked less, simply for the fact that it was part of the EBacc. Furthermore, the EBacc has prioritised some Humanities subjects over others and I have struggled to be allowed funding to recruit a desperately needed second specialist because RE isn't part of the EBacc and therefore perceived as not being worth spending money on.

The changes proposed seriously damages the place of RE in the curriculum. It will be much more difficult to negotiate funding, staffing ratios will not be given parity of esteem with other bacc subjects. Consequently classes will be larger; there will be reduced opportunities for students to discuss the big questions. The position of RE will be further eroded under the present proposals.

Although my school is very supportive of the contribution R.E makes I am hugely aware of the rarity of my position and know of several schools in my work as an RE AST where time is being cut and where Year 7 follow a skills based curriculum with no explicit R.E and option numbers dropping.

At my school RE has joined with other subjects in Year 7 and has been cut totally in Year 11. There were 2 RE teachers - now we only need one full time, and one on one day a week.

