

GOVERNMENT EDUCATION STRATEGY – IMPLICATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Report By: Lead Officer for SACRE

Purpose

To receive an update on the latest position concerning the government education strategy and consider possible implications for Religious Education.

Report

1. The Education White Paper, *The Importance of Teaching*

In the White Paper the government outlines among its proposals its intention to reform the school curriculum, qualifications and Ofsted inspection.

2. 2011 Review of the National Curriculum

The Secretary of State has set up an expert group to review the National Curriculum. There will be a phased timetable for the implementation of new programmes of study, core subjects and PE from 2012 and other subjects from 2014. The programmes of study will specify the core knowledge and understanding expected for each subject at each key stage. Schools will decide how to teach the programmes, there will be no guidance requiring particular approaches and the Government proposes to abolish the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA).

Religious Education is NOT included in the remit for the review. The DfE states that this exclusion is due to the nature of the programmes of study for RE that are locally agreed to reflect local circumstances.

Additionally, the DfE states in the remit for the review that the Government does not intend to make any changes to the statutory basis for religious education.

The National Curriculum will represent a benchmark core curriculum. Academies and Free Schools will retain the freedom they have currently to depart from aspects of the National Curriculum although they are required to teach a broad and balanced curriculum.

All state schools will be held accountable for their performance in tests and exams which will reflect the National Curriculum.

3. School performance tables - a new national measure for comparing secondary school performance, the English Baccalaureate

This academic year when the government published the test and examination results for schools they included a new measure for judging the success of secondary schools, the English Baccalaureate. The publication of this measure was in advance of the finalisation of their proposal to establish an English Baccalaureate, an award for students who achieve GCSE passes at grades A*-C in 5 traditional subjects, English, mathematics, science, a modern or classical language and a humanities subject.

Religious Studies was NOT included in the list of eligible humanities subjects.

4. Ofsted inspection focus

The current Ofsted Framework inspects schools under 27 headings, many reflecting previous government initiatives. From September 2011 Ofsted will focus inspection on 4 aspects: pupil achievement, the quality of teaching, leadership and management and the behaviour and safety of pupils.

5. Implications for religious education

RE teachers and the RE community including NASACRE have been campaigning in recent months, urging the Secretary of State to recognise religious studies full GCSE as an eligible humanities subject for the English Baccalaureate.

Areas of concern for the RE community include:

- the risk of reduced GCSE provision of religious studies;
- the risk of a diminished status for RE in the curriculum;
- the focus on knowledge not skills in the remit for the revised National Curriculum;
- the risk of school non-compliance with the statutory requirement to teach RE;
- the risk of reduced funding on local authorities' support for SACREs.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT SACRE note the position and that it be kept informed of any further developments concerning Religious Education arising from changes to the governments education strategy.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None identified.