

New initiatives in RE: Report update for Herefordshire SACRE

- 1 The National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE) are running a survey of RE in primary schools. All schools are encouraged to fill in the survey, which provides valuable data for supporting RE in discussions with the Department of Education (DfE) and other parties. The survey is open until the end of March and can be found at:
<http://www.natre.org.uk/news/latest-news/2016-natre-primary-survey/>
- 2 The results of the NATRE annual secondary RE survey are now available and may be found at:
<http://www.natre.org.uk/uploads/Additional%20Documents/NATRE%20EBacc%20Survey%202015%20v1%202%20060116%20FINAL.pdf>

key findings include:

- a) The Provision of RE, where 90% of schools responding to the survey meet their legal requirement for RE at KS3. 30% of community schools and 40% of academies without a religious character do not meet their legal or contractual requirements for RE.
- b) The GCSE full course was very popular with schools who responded. Only 7% of schools reported that they will make no entries for the Full Course in 2015. There has been a rapid decline in entries to the GCSE short course, with 61% of the schools that responded stating that they will have no entries in 2015.
- c) More schools are offering GCSE Religious Studies courses over three years instead of two: 42% of schools compared with 25% in 2012. The two-year model is still dominant (57.7% of entries). Almost a third of the schools in the survey now attempt to deliver this course over less than the recommended teaching time.
- d) 68.5% of the schools that responded reported that they had received no subject specific training in school in the last academic year. 43.8% reported that they had attended no training outside of school and just over 16% reported that they had attended two days of training outside of school. In 38% of schools more than one in five, and in 52% of schools more than one in ten RE lessons are delivered by teachers whose main time is spent in another curriculum area.

3 Three major reports have emerged in the last 12 months:

[A New Settlement: Religion and Belief in Schools](#) by Linda Woodhead and Charles Clarke

The report explores the current situation for RE and collective worship. It strongly supports the place of RE in schools. It makes recommendations about its content and the mechanism for developing and supporting RE, calling for a national RE curriculum, devised by a National SACRE. The report also looks at collective worship and what it calls 'faith schools'. Report available here: <http://faithdebates.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/A-New-Settlement-for-Religion-and-Belief-in-schools.pdf>

[Living with Difference](#), the report of the *Commission on Religion and Belief in Public Life*. This celebrates the role that religious education plays in preparing pupils for life in 'modern Britain'. It calls for religious education to be accorded the same status as other humanities subjects, and for consideration for it to be included within the English Baccalaureate. The report sees RE as the "best and earliest chance of breaking down ignorance and developing individuals who will be receptive of the other, and ask difficult questions without fear of offending". It recognises that good RE is "vital ... for a fairer, more cohesive society".

Full report available here:

<http://www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/uploads/Living%20with%20Difference.pdf>

RE for Real: Report on RE in secondary schools from the Faiths & Civil Society Unit at Goldsmiths, University of London release a major new report on RE in secondary schools. The report highlights broad support for RE from students, parents, and employers. It calls for RE that reflects the real religious landscape, drawing on 'cutting edge theory and data in the study of contemporary religion and belief'. It calls for a National Framework for Religion and Belief Learning to establish appropriate content.

The students in the study stated that 'learning about religion and belief is becoming more and more relevant' and almost all of them stated that RE allowed to them to 'engage positively with diversity'.

4 Religious Studies GCSE Judicial Review 2015

A High Court ruling was made on the place of non-religious worldviews in the context of the new GCSE Religious Studies criteria, making it clear that the teaching of RE at KS4 in schools without a religious character must take account of both religious and non-religious worldviews.

There are implications for agreed syllabuses too. The Judgment was on the statement that the DfE criteria makes that following a GCSE course would fulfil the legal requirement for RE. Three families of Humanist teenagers challenged this, given the exclusion of Humanism from the GCSE criteria as a separate focus of study alongside the big six religions. The judgment says that GCSE RS *may* fulfil the legal requirement for RE, but does not necessarily do so.

The judgment points out that the state has a duty to take care that information or knowledge included in the curriculum is conveyed in a pluralistic manner. It says that, subject to certain threshold requirements, the state must accord equal respect to different religious convictions, and to non-religious beliefs. The state is not entitled to discriminate between religions and beliefs on a qualitative basis and its duties must be performed from a standpoint of neutrality and impartiality. However, it also points out that this does not require 'equal air-time to be given to all shades of belief or conviction'.

The full implications are not yet settled, but this issue will need to be considered in revisions/updates to local agreed syllabus.

Full judgment available here: <http://www.natre.org.uk/uploads/R-Fox-v-SSfE-2015-EWHC-3404-Admin-251115.pdf>

5 Good news for RE ITE recruitment

The number of people applying to train as RE teachers in England and Wales has soared in the first few months of the 2015/16 recruitment cycle, far outperforming applications in other subjects as a whole.

Applications are up over 30 per cent compared with the same time last year, according to the University and College Admissions Service (UCAS), while overall applications for all secondary subjects combined are down by just under 1 per cent.

The UCAS figures also reveal that the number of applicants who have been offered a conditional place has more than doubled from 80 by January 2015 to 170 at the same point this year.

The surge in applications follows the launch last year of a campaign by the Religious Education Council of England and Wales (REC) to encourage graduates and career changers to train as RE teachers. The Beyond the Ordinary campaign was initiated in March last year, highlighting the stimulating and rewarding nature of RE teaching, as well as the availability of tax-free bursaries to cover training costs. The campaign has included a promotional video, direct mail campaigns, social media promotions and media partnerships.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/uk/article4696031.ece>

6. RE Quality Mark

Westhill Funding is available to support Herefordshire schools applying for the RE Quality Mark. Details on next page; more details available from stephen@retoday.org.uk .

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