

# National News for SACREs, Autumn 2018

[The Commission on RE: final report, 12<sup>th</sup> September.](#)

This independent report, funded and supported by the RE Council, has spent over a year developing its perspective and recommendations, and has been observed keenly by DfE and government. SACREs are very interested in its conclusions, not least because it has considered questions about local determination of RE and Agreed Syllabuses, recommending in its interim report a new national entitlement for RE, on which all future syllabuses should be based, and which should eventually be statutory.

**See separate exec summary.**

## Funding from Government for SACRE

SACREs will be funded through the central school services block (CSSB) from 2018-19, which is one of the blocks of funding in the national funding formula. For further information, see the [NFF Policy Document](#) and the [2018-19 Operational Guidance](#) (specifically paragraph 133). SACRE is only one item that is funded from this block.

## 'A new settlement revised: Religion and Belief in schools'

A recent report by Professor Linda Woodhead and former Education Secretary Charles Clarke suggests that our more diverse society makes reform to current legislation even more overdue.

At the launch Stephen Timms MP welcomed everyone and reflected that we are all shaped by our experience of religion at school, legislation that was set in this place, Parliament, in 1944.

Professor Woodhead introduced the report she noted that when the 1944 act was first read in 1943 the country was at war but education was still considered to be important. She explained the morphing of the subject from RI to the official renaming in 1988 of Religious Education. She characterised RE as learning about others and suggested in 2018 it is time to learn about us in the diverse context we live in. She said, '...change is overdue RE like any other academic subject needs no longer to be exceptionalised and parents should no longer be allowed to withdraw pupils from RE.

Other recommendations in the report are around collective worship and 'faith schools'.

## RE Teacher recruitment

This has been a particularly challenging year for teacher recruitment and especially so for RE. After missing the target for recruitment for training of teachers of RE to begin in 2017, the DfE failed to take an action to incentivise recruitment for 2018. In contrast, bursaries were increased or maintained at a higher level for those choosing to train in other subjects. These higher level bursaries are offered for many subjects including subjects who had been more successful in recruiting 2017. We should not be surprised therefore, that at the time of writing, of all secondary subjects, RE the fourth worst level of recruitment at just over 50% of the target.

**Stop press: NATRE/REC and RE Today have been pressing the government to provide better bursaries and yesterday RE had the bursary increased.** 'NATRE is very pleased to note that the DfE is taking positive action to recruit RE teachers. An increase to £9,000 for those with a 2:2 or above is a great first step. We welcome the move towards greater parity between Geography and RE.

We look forward to continuing to work with the DfE towards fulfilling the remaining recruitment recommendations from the Commission on RE'. Fiona Moss, NATRE Executive Officer

NATRE and others have also been pressing for RE ITE students to receive funded Subject knowledge enhancement grants by the time of the meeting we will know if we have been successful.

**What is happening with ITE providers in our area?**

## Primary ITE

NATRE has been meeting with a number of MPs and raised the issue of the limited training provided for primary teachers in relation to RE. We have informed them that primary teachers have responded to our surveys that they do not feel confident about teaching the subject when training is either minimal or non-existent. William Wragg MP, asked a parliamentary question and received a reply from Nick Gibb; Minister for Schools as follows

### Religion: Teachers:Written question - 172515

Q Asked by **Mr William Wragg** (Hazel Grove) [N] Asked on: 10 September 2018

Department for Education

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#### Religion: Teachers

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the quality of initial and continuing teacher training in religious education for primary school teachers.

A Answered by: **Nick Gibb** Answered on: 13 September 2018

It is for Initial Teacher Training (ITT) providers to determine the content and structure of courses, but they must be designed so that trainees can demonstrate that they meet all Teachers' Standards to an appropriate level. To be awarded Qualified Teacher Status trainees must "have a secure knowledge of the relevant subject(s) and curriculum areas" and "demonstrate a critical understanding of developments in the subject and curriculum areas." This includes Religious Education for primary school teachers.

Ofsted inspects ITT programmes for compliance against the ITT Criteria, and for the quality of ITT teaching and trainee outcomes. At the end of June 2017 99% of all ITT partnerships inspected by Ofsted were judged either good or outstanding. In the 2017 Newly Qualified Teacher Survey, more than 80% of newly-qualified teachers surveyed rated the overall quality of their training as 7-10 out of 10, with 32% rating it as 9-10 out of 10. The full ITT Criteria can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/initial-teacher-training-criteria>.

Once qualified, decisions relating to teachers' professional development rest with schools, head teachers, and teachers themselves, as they are in the best position to judge their own requirements.

The Government has a number of initiatives to ensure that all teachers have access to high-quality professional development.

#### What are ITE providers in our area providing?

#### Youth Debate: England's young people challenge MPs at Westminster

On Monday 9th July 2018, 80 Year 10-12 students from schools across England came to Parliament to debate some of the key issues around the teaching of Religious Education (RE). The students discussed some of the fundamental issues facing the subject, such as whether, in an increasingly secular society, RE is still a vital component of balanced, modern curriculum, and whether pupils learn more by studying other people's belief than your one.

Numerous MPs, Parliamentary researchers, policy advisers and other interested parties witnessed the debate, which showcased the students' engagement with the subject through their range and depth of thinking around these complex questions.

Students were welcomed to Westminster by William Wragg MP, Liz Twist MP, and historian of religion and broadcaster, Professor Francesca Stavrakopoulou.

In a wide-ranging discussion – covering topics as diverse as the role of religious literacy in combatting extremism, the need for RE in an increasingly secular society, and whether or not students learn more by studying their own religion and belief than they do by studying their own – United Nations debating rules were firmly applied in the chamber by the co-chairs, students from Mulberry School for Girls in Hackney, London. Both young women were clearly and expertly trained in handling opinionated peers...and politicians!

Professor Francesca said, "The level of debate was extremely impressive - the pupils were bright, passionate and rigorous in their arguments'.

A report can be accessed [Here](#)

### **NATRE's Strictly RE: bigger and even better for 2019: should SACRE sponsor some local delegates?**

Bookings are open now for the national annual NATRE conference in London on January 26<sup>th</sup>. Subscribers to RE Today may be eligible for discounts on their fees to Strictly –check the website for details. The conference brings together about 250 people in the largest gathering of RE professionals in the year. If you have never been, or if you've come each year, then plan to join us for an inspirational and exciting day of lectures, seminars, exhibits, connections and opportunities: all the exam awarding bodies and major publishers will be there too.

### **Could SACRE support a teacher to go and cascade information with other schools?**

### **NATRE's New2RE project: mentoring, support and conferences for those starting teaching secondary RE**

NATRE runs a funded programme called 'new2RE' for those who are secondary NQTs, over the first three years of their careers. A small number of places may still be available: does SACRE know any new teachers in secondary RE who it could refer to this programme, rated excellent by a big majority of its participants every year?

### **Do local schools know about this offer?**

### **BBC's recent and new RE programming: can SACRE draw attention to these programmes for schools?**

The well-loved BBC Bitesize site has a major review and renewal underway, with 10 new KS4 programmes nearly ready to use, and major innovations around the new GCSE for 14-16s. These 'A day in the faith of...' clips will present the lives of young members of the 6 principal religions, as they talk about some of the key ideas and concepts of GCSE and Scottish RE

Now broadcast and available free via BBC Teach (all these have notes written by RE Today to accompany them):

- For 5-7s, 10 animated short films of key stories of faith from 6 different religions, series title: 'Religions of the World'.
- My Life, My Religion 5 x 30 minute programmes. Featuring lots of original filming from across Britain using child presenters with diariycams, one each on being Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Sikh in today's Britain. Online as clips in segments of 2-4 minutes.
- For 11-14s, 'An A-Z of Religion' with notes for students to use the 26 programmes from RE Today (written as supported self study materials for homework).
- For 14-16s, A Question of Faith 5 x 12 minute programmes for GCSE and Standard Grade in 2014 on sexuality, marriage, death, revelation and suffering, with notes on RE Today and clips on BBC Bitesize.

### **Additional relevant documents on NATRE website relating to SACREs**

1. **30+ things a SACRE can do**
2. **Exemplar SACRE letter RE provision in LA maintained schools**
3. **Exemplar SACRE letter RE provision in academies**
4. **Funding for SACREs 2017**
5. **Exemplar SACRE follow up letter about RE provision**
6. **How to make a complaint about the RE curriculum in a local authority maintained school**