

National RE Updates for SACRE from RE Today Autumn 2024 for Herefordshire SACRE

Calls for a National Plan for Religious Education

The number of students taking full course Religious Studies in England and Wales at GCSE has remained stable at 233,288 following a 0.5% rise in entries from 2023 making it one of the most widely studied humanities at GCSE.

223,034 students took RS GCSE (full course) in England, an increase of 0.3%. In Wales 10,254 students took the subject, an increase of 6.4%. For the third year running, the number of students taking a GCSE short course rose in England, this year by 9.5% to 20,627. In Wales however, entries fell by 27.1% to 2,201.

This is despite an ongoing challenge in recruiting specialist teachers amidst a gulf in government funding. Recruitment targets were missed in 11 of the last 12 years during which time school workforce data show that 51% of those teaching RE mainly teach another subject and also that the number of teachers of RE has remained roughly the same since 2011, despite the number of entries growing.

The Religious Education Council of England and Wales (REC) and the National Association for Teachers of RE (NATRE) have now called on the new Education Secretary, Bridget Phillipson MP, to introduce a National Plan for RE that provides a fair allocation of resources and prioritises the subject as part of Labour's plans to recruit more specialist teachers.

RE has recently seen a restoration of the teacher training bursary, but a shortage of specialism in schools remains a challenge given the long-term growth of the subject. The number of those recorded as teaching RE has remained roughly the same since 2011 at 16,200, while those delivering Geography and History lessons has risen by 1,700.

Religious Studies remains a popular GCSE despite specialist teacher recruitment challenge

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A Level Religious Studies steady in England

The overall trend in A level entries for Religious Studies over the last 5 years has been fairly stable in England. Since 2020 entries in England had a fall of just under 0.5% from 14,564 to 14,499.

Even though the trend for entries in England is downwards, this is within a context where most Humanities subjects have experienced a fall in entries and most science, technology, engineering and maths subjects have seen an increase. It is worth noting that financial incentives for schools will have boosted these entries including the advanced maths premium scheme and a number of schemes established to boost science learning in schools.

Of the Humanities, Religious Studies in England was one of the smallest decreases between 2023 and 2024 at 1.3%.

RE Teaching in English Secondary Schools

Just under one in six schools tell the DfE that they provide no RE in year 11 – a breach of the law. But there are rarely any consequences.

NATRE has been reporting on the data from the workforce census for the last nine years. Its agreement with the DfE allows them to share this information with school providers, SACREs and Academy Trusts.

This year's data shows slightly fewer schools offering no RE in year 11, but it is still the case that just under one in six schools told the DfE that they do not offer RE to this year group at all and far more admit to not providing RE to pupils who do not choose a GCSE Religious Studies as one of their options. In both these cases, this means that effectively, pupils' religious education ends when they are just 13 or 14 years old, when the law in England requires that the subject be taught to age 18.

You can read the full report here: [NATRE-School-Workforce-Report-2024](#)

DfE Curriculum and Assessment Review

The DfE has set up a Curriculum and Assessment review and is looking for evidence to guide it as it reviews the national curriculum, statutory assessment and qualification pathways.

the Review will seek to deliver:

- An excellent foundation in core subjects of reading, writing and maths.
- A broader curriculum, so that children and young people do not miss out on subjects such as music, art, sport and drama, as well as vocational subjects.
- A curriculum that ensures children and young people leave compulsory education ready for life and ready for work, building the knowledge, skills and attributes young people need to thrive. This includes embedding digital, oracy and life skills in their learning.
- A curriculum that reflects the issues and diversities of our society, ensuring all children and young people are represented.
- An assessment system that captures the strengths of every child and young person and the breadth of curriculum, with the right balance of assessment methods whilst maintaining the important role of examinations.

They are calling on anyone with an interest in education to respond. To help them analyse the responses, they ask that we use the online system wherever possible.

Visit www.gov.uk/government/calls-for-evidence/improving-the-curriculum-and-assessment-system to submit your response. Deadline is 22 November.

NASACRE has written a response that it is keen for SACREs to consider. Its summary points are:

1. **NASACRE is passionate about high quality RE and seeks this for all pupils across England**, as a subject that enriches all school curriculums.
2. **NASACRE seeks to support all SACREs around the country**; evidence from [SACRE funding in England 2023](#) provides a national education picture which has changed dramatically in the last 15 years.
3. **NASACRE supports the non-statutory [National Content Standard for RE](#) as a first conversation between all education providers in England**. Through the curriculum review, we would like the government to build upon this work in order to provide a clear framework for all schools to be held accountable for the RE they provide for their pupils.
4. **NASACRE supports RE continuing to make a vital contribution to statutory requirements for schools to promote SMSC development and community cohesion**. RE, along with other curriculum subjects, can provide helpful experiences, knowledge and understanding of diversity and difference within a local community, and regionally, nationally and globally in terms of religious literacy.
5. **NASACRE is concerned about the local funding of SACRE's work and its impact on syllabus development**. NASACRE would like to see ring-fenced funding for the support for RE and SACREs. The [2023 FOI report](#) provides evidence of SACREs not being funded, nor given adequate professional support in order to review and publish an Agreed Syllabus.
6. **NASACRE is also concerned about how a SACRE's work can be limited through a lack of budget to provide local high quality CPD** around implementing the agreed syllabus and engagement with local communities.

7. **NASACRE has concerns from its analysis of SACRE annual reports** about LAs meeting the legal requirement to submit their annual report to the DfE.
8. **NASACRE is working well in partnership with [RE Hubs](#)** and this is improving our ability to bring SACREs together.
9. **NASACRE looked at how SACREs function and what could be improved through its 2022 report [Still Standing](#)**. NASACRE would want to see the 1988 / 1996 legislation reviewed to ensure it is fit for purpose in a 21st century education system.

NASACRE Exec, October 2024

- NASACRE is urging all SACREs to consider submitting evidence they have about their local RE.
- NASACRE point out that it is essential that SACREs do not copy the sentences above; points must be phrased differently to be read - the DfE has systems that review submissions, and anything copied is deleted.

It is important for Herefordshire SACRE to consider its response. How should we respond to this national review?

Interfaith Week 2024

Interfaith Week will be taking place from 10th – 17th November 2024.

A consortium of organisations, former members of the IFN, are working in partnership to ensure that the week can run this year. Further partners will be engaging as the week becomes nearer and more detail will be available in the autumn term. In the meantime, colleagues from the consortium suggest schools and SACREs plan to raise the profile and celebrate the importance of Interfaith dialogue. The suggested theme educational establishments might use is ‘sharing my story – building our future’. Further information can be seen [here](#).

Open University Religion, Belief and Worldviews Hub

The Open University Religion, Belief and Worldviews Hub can be accessed by all interested parties [Religion, belief and worldviews hub | OpenLearn - Open University](#) . The Hub provides resources for schools and educational settings to support the delivery of RE in classrooms from Early Years through to post 16 education. The focus of the Hub is ‘Religion and Belief’ as a protected characteristic in UK legislation. Materials on the Hub have been provided by colleagues from The Open University, with classroom resources and online CPD opportunities for leaders and teachers of RE.

Strictly RE 2025

The annual NATRE conference for all RE professionals returns on 25th January 2025 and will be face to face following recent online conferences. This has become the annual date in the diaries of those within RE and will be held at Leonardo Hotel in Birmingham. Click on the link to register interest in attending Strictly RE 2025. [NATRE Strictly RE 2025: National Religious Education Conference](#)

Upcoming RE Today Courses for the Autumn Term

For more details on any of these courses, click here: www.natre.org.uk/courses-events/upcoming-courses-events/?page=1

PRIMARY

cREative primary RE – Julia Diamond-Conway 20/11/2024 and 19/3/2025

How can I ensure children are engaged in RE lessons? What strategies can I use to make sure pupils are inspired during RE? This session is packed full of ready-to-use ideas for anyone who wants to engage pupils more fully in RE sessions. There will be a focus on the Spirited Arts competition 2024. Perfect for all primary practitioners who teach RE including Early Career Teachers, Subject Leaders and Teaching Assistants; with a wide range of practical classroom ideas for primary RE, there is sure to be something for everyone.

SECONDARY

Understanding Christianity - Secondary (Online) – Stephen Pett 05/12/2024

This course will help you with the implementation and delivery of Understanding Christianity - a substantial resource for teaching Christianity for 11-14s.

GCSE RS – better thinking, better writing, better results – Angela Hill 10/02/2025

This session offers practical strategies to help pupils to avoid some of the some common pitfalls of the GCSE RS examinations. We consider ways to approach teaching the GCSE that will encourage deeper, more critical and analytic thinking, along with ideas to keep everyone engaged. This session will offer tips for refining pupils' exam technique, too.

Peaceful and purposeful discussion in RE – Angela Hill 3/3/2025

The best RE is not afraid of controversy! This session will explore practical strategies for helping pupils engage in peaceful and productive discussion of contested issues in RE.

Cross PHASE

NEW! Introducing a Religion and Worldviews approach 12/2/2025

What is a religion and worldviews approach? How is it different from current RE practice? What are the benefits to teachers and pupils? A practical introduction, drawing on the new RE Council Handbook and Frameworks, including resources and strategies, to show how to enrich and deepen pupils' understanding of religious and non-religious worldviews.

National RE News
RE Today/NATRE
November 2024