

SACRE National Updates from RE Today: Spring 2021

Government launches review into Faith Engagement

From Gov.uk website: On 10 October 2019, the government announced that Colin Bloom had been appointed as the Faith Engagement Adviser at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

As Faith Engagement Adviser, Colin is leading a review into how best the government should engage with faith groups in England. He will make recommendations to the Communities Secretary about how the government can best celebrate and support the contribution of faith groups, break down barriers and promote acceptance between faiths, and promote shared values while tackling cultures and practices that are harmful.

Colin Bloom's initial proposal is to structure the review around 4 main sections:

- the first section asks the question, "Are faith groups, places of worship and people of faith a force for good in society?"
- the second section explores the extent to which government and its agencies have sufficient faith literacy and considers the partnership between faith groups and the State
- the third section looks at some aspects where harm might be caused through religious or faith-based practices and a review of the government's role in tackling them
- the fourth and final section will be a set of recommendations for the government to consider and respond to

This survey closed on 11th December 2020 SACRE will receive an update on the next steps in due course.

Ofqual – consultation on proposed changes to GCSE and A level examinations 2021

In light of the recent government announcement about the 2021 exams, NATRE has already been in contact with officials, and will continue to engage positively and constructively with both Ofqual and DfE as they consult about the replacement for exams. The consultation on the replacement for exams has not yet reported.

Subject knowledge Enhancement

Following the disappointing news that bursaries had been cut for most subjects including RE, it was really good news that Religious Education had been selected for funded subject knowledge enhancement courses. The funding will be available from April 2021 but hopefully will help support those people wishing to apply to teach RE who do not have a first degree in the subject. This decision follows intensive lobbying to make the point that about 84% of trainee secondary RE teachers do not have a degree in Theology or Religious Studies and therefore need support in developing their subject knowledge.

<https://getintoteaching.education.gov.uk/explore-my-options/teacher-training-routes/subject-knowledge-enhancement-ske-courses>

Independent Evaluation of the Understanding Christianity Resource

This report was published on 11th December. It presents findings and analysis from a study that examines the impact of Understanding Christianity in schools across England. The study, conducted by Dr Rachael Shillitoe at the University of Birmingham, seeks to evaluate the impact of RE Today's Understanding Christianity teaching resources amongst pupils and teachers across primary and secondary schools, with a particular focus on schools without a religious character.

This study aims to find out the extent to which the resource has 'made a difference' to teaching and learning about Christianity in RE.

"Overall, the response to [Understanding Christianity](#) has been extremely positive, from both pupils and teachers, particularly in relation to the 'Big Story', pupil engagement and increased teacher confidence. Both pupils and teachers noted, in particular, the impact the frieze had on engagement and understanding. Teachers found pupils had an increased awareness of the big story in Christianity and pupils demonstrated their ability to connect this to core theological concepts.

Understanding Christianity was valued for its promotion of pupil agency and individual reflection. Both teachers and pupils found the lessons to be inclusive with pupils from a range of religious and nonreligious backgrounds finding the lessons enjoyable and accessible. Pupils felt their lessons encouraged discussion, individual reflection and debate with a range of different viewpoints considered.

There was considerable/noted improvement of textual understanding and knowledge of core concepts after using [Understanding Christianity](#). The ability of pupils to articulate, discuss and reflect on core theological concepts was significantly improved when the [Understanding Christianity](#) resources, such as the Big Frieze and the Core Concept icons were used."

The full report can be viewed on the [Understanding Christianity](#) website, [available here](#).

RE Today is really pleased to be moving into a new phase of working with the resources of Understanding Christianity, focusing on delivery to community schools. We have done some successful fundraising and have generous funds to support new school users of the resource during the next three years. This money will mean that we can offer thousands of primary and secondary community schools and academies hugely discounted prices to be trained in using Understanding Christianity in their schools – typically this may cost a school just £60 instead of up to £300. This is an excellent resource and a great opportunity for schools to get on board. This year courses have been offered online and they are going down really well as you can follow the trainer then use break-out rooms to have a more in-depth discussion.

NATRE curriculum symposium

NATRE are excited to announce that we will be running a 24 hour residential curriculum symposium in Autumn. We have been planning to run this for almost a year but took the decision to wait until it can be run as a face to face event as we want to create a curriculum learning community.

There will only be 25 places for delegates therefore we will be running an application process as we want to attract delegates from a variety of school types and at a variety of stages on their curriculum design journey for RE/Religion and worldviews.

As part of the symposium we will hear from both experts and practitioners in the area of curriculum design generally and curriculum design in for RE/Religion and worldviews. As part of the process there will be tasks to complete before the symposium that will be shared with other delegates to prepare for our time in the learning community. There is also an expectation that all delegates will provide a write up of their learning and subsequent curriculum development in early 2022.

Parts of this event will be filmed and written up so that this symposium, or aspects of it, can be replicated in NATRE local groups, departments and local hubs. This face to face event and the subsequent legacy materials for use by others is generously supported by Westhill and CSTG.

[Curriculum Symposium Expression of Interest Survey \(surveymonkey.co.uk\)](#)

How can we encourage Walsall schools to consider this event?

New NATRE Executive

It is exciting that after elections for the new NATRE executive last year the first (virtual) meeting of this group of RE activists took place. The executive is made up of mainly practising teachers and the group is made up of a balance of primary and secondary teachers. Please take a look at the NATRE executive web page (insert link) to see who is representing you.

NATRE is primarily a responsive organisation. This is a necessary result of the chiefly voluntary capacity of our work, and the often fast changing educational environment in which we work.

However, alongside this responsive work, we aim to prioritise certain tasks and projects over the course of the life of an Executive Committee.

Below you will read the principal aims, objectives and outcomes which frame our work.

Aim: NATRE aims to support the development of high quality teaching and learning in RE/Religion and Worldviews for all pupils in all schools

Key objectives:

1. To support and improve classroom practice

This includes promotion of the understanding and application of substantive, disciplinary/ways of knowing and personal knowledge in RE, support for quality, efficacy and understanding of medium and long-term planning, improving teacher subject knowledge and awareness of research amongst teachers.

2. To influence the influencers

We will focus on promoting informed conversations about the National Plan for RE and lobby government and other stakeholders about the need for action to strength the level and quality of provision of RE. Continuing our work to campaign broadly to improve public perception and develop more appreciation of the nature of RE and its importance in a broad and balanced curriculum. NATRE will continue to challenge government and others to invest in raising the standard of the workforce: to ensure all children in all schools are taught by well trained and qualified teachers whilst also providing support for teachers of RE working to secure space for religious education in school curriculums:

3. To increase membership of NATRE

We will particularly work to promote the value of NATRE membership in 'hard-to-reach' schools, including primary, secondary, ITE.

4. Develop fit for purpose structures and processes

This work will include support and development of NATRE local groups.

Free Lockdown home learning from NATRE and RE Today

As a response to the amazing work that teachers and school staff are doing teaching pupils both in school and remotely NATRE and RE Today would like to offer our support by making all the home learning resources that were created for use by NATRE members in the last lockdown free to all schools. These multi-faith resources are all available on our website and offer support for home learning about religious and non-religious worldviews for primary and secondary school pupils.

We will be offering further support by creating more member and free home learning resources over the next few weeks.

www.natre.org.uk/about-natre/free-resources-for-you-and-your-pupils/

How can we share this information with our schools?

“Good News for Everyone (formerly known as Gideons)” has worked with RE Today to develop a range of free resources for school assemblies and lessons.



All our visitors to schools have been trained by Lat Blaylock of NATRE. The offer of a free copy of the New Testament and Psalms (now including the Book of Proverbs) to pupils is a benefit to schools as it helps to ensure that all pupils know about and understand a range of religious beliefs. Here's the link:

<https://goodnewsuk.com/node/778>

For many years we have been invited to speak to school pupils at school assemblies and lessons, and offer each pupil a copy of the New Testament and Psalms. That offer still exists. If

you are in a school that we have not visited, either as a teacher, a governor, or in any other capacity, and would like suitably qualified members to come and speak at an assembly in your school and offer Testaments to pupils, or if you would like to know more about what we offer please fill in the contact form via the link, and we'll be in touch."

Anti-racist RE – free project resources from NATRE for primary and secondary schools

NATRE and RE Today, working with the Free Churches Group and Methodist Schools are launching a project to help teachers tackle racism in RE lessons. The project aims to:

- Enable a team of 60+ black, Asian and minority ethnic teachers of RE and members of different communities to articulate perspectives on the contributions of RE to anti-racist education, accessible for all teachers of RE
- Provide challenging and well planned resources, case studies, plans and lessons for teachers of RE in both primary and secondary schools to use in RE that challenge and confront racism and are also good RE, mounted and free from web platforms hosted both by RE Today and by the Free Churches Group and the Methodist Schools.
- Create a forum for teacher education and development in relation to anti-racist RE, recognising that practice in RE in this area is patchy and inconsistent (also online)
- Disseminate better practice in anti-racist RE widely, using the wide range of contacts and networks available to RE today

Wide partnerships to maximise the impact of the project have been used, including for example with NATRE and the Jo Cox Foundation. Teachers can access a planned unit of six topics for primary and of 8 topics for secondary RE, including ready to use resources and a wide range of support materials.

www.natre.org.uk/anti-racist-RE

Can our SACRE publicise this to schools? Primary training is being offered on this in the network meeting- should we run a session for secondary teachers?

Art in Heaven 2020 and 2021

- The 2020 Art in Heaven and Spirited Poetry competitions attracted record entries – lots of teachers set it in lockdown! flagship for 'Spirited Arts', our strategy to make RE more imaginative and creative.
- The latest website update is excellent – take a look! The relaunched 2020 section includes many amazing responses to last year's themes, and our YouTube video to encourage entries had about **15000 views last year**. We will be doing another of these for 2021.

- A Climate Justice theme features again this year: ‘God’s good earth?’ The most popular theme, overtaking the hardy perennial ‘Where is God?’
- We have international interest – e.g. from Indonesia, Poland, Australia, India, South Africa, Ireland, Cyprus and New Zealand.

Promote further study to your examination classes with these films of Graduates in Theology and Religious Studies

To study for a degree in Theology or Religious Studies is to open up a vast range of options for worthwhile careers. TRS-UK is launching a set of recently-filmed interviews with TRS graduates in jobs as varied as television documentary-making, law, local government, public relations, education, and many more. These high-quality YouTube films are to be made available as ten individual (3-minute) filmed interviews and two 5-minute compilations, where graduates speak about the value of their degrees and show how they put their skills and knowledge to work in their jobs. They do not advertise a specific University, only the value of the degree and the doors it has opened for them.

These films (which can be selected at will) would be ideal for showing to pupils wondering about taking a degree in this subject, but unsure about where it might lead, or pressured to answer that question by parents. The answer is: it could take you in a myriad of exciting directions, and employers are intrigued and delighted to have applicants with a degree in this subject. TRS graduates have some of the highest employment rates of any University graduates, as they acquire multiple skills and a varied knowledge-base that is crucial for navigating our complex world.

There are ten individual profiles and two compilations.

[View careers playlist](#)

[YouTube TRS-UK](#)



The Culham St Gabriel’s Leadership Programme: Finding your voice as a leader of Religion and Worldviews 2021-22

Following a successful pilot programme in 2020-21 CSTG are now inviting applicants to be part of a new Cohort of Leaders for Change in 2021-22. This is an amazing opportunity for teachers.

Programme Outline

The funded programme aims to develop leaders in the following four areas; research, curriculum, classroom and politics

Programme Partners

The programme builds on the hugely successful AREIAC Revitalise scheme. It is funded by Culham St Gabriel’s and the Jerusalem Trust. It brings together the following organisations who all have representatives on the steering group which oversees the programme:

- Association of RE Advisers, Inspectors and Consultants (AREIAC)
- Association of University Lecturers on RE (AULRE)

- Learn, Teach, Lead RE (LTLRE)
- National Association of SACREs (NASACRE)
- National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE)
- RE Council of England and Wales (REC)

Stage 1

This stage is for those local or regional leaders who are beginning to work across more than one school. For example, leading Religion and Worldviews across a MAT or supporting other schools in a Federation and/or leading a local group or hub. Some NATRE Regional Ambassadors, SLEs, REQM Gold award RE leads or LTLRE Hub leads might find this Stage of CPD helpful.

Stage 2

This Stage is for teachers who have completed Stage 1 and/or for those who already have a regional/national role and would like to develop their expertise further. This stage is particularly for teachers/advisers who are likely to continue their specialism into senior leadership roles within or outside of their school situation. Those who are seeking to become advisers, ambassadors or an Executive member of one of the RE Organisations are particularly encouraged to apply.

Please go to the website for more details, participant guides and the application form. Applications need to be in by March 31st. Find out more [on the RE:Online website.](#)