

SACRE updates Spring 2019

RE Today Services

Commission on RE: A response from Damian Hinds

The secretary of state for Education recently replied to the commission on RE report. The letter can be seen [here](#), along with the RE Council response. The response is disappointing however the door is not closed to change. Further meetings are going on with members of NATRE and the REC which may result in some of the recommendations being met in the medium term. It is clear that there will be no legislative change in the current parliament but that does not mean there will not be further smaller scale support for instance on training or withdrawal. NATRE continues to push in these areas.

A recent meeting of the APPG for RE heard from teachers about the view from the classroom and the need for change. There have been a whole host of questions in the Commons and Lords. There have also been a series of letters to MPS. One letter from sixth form students to Nick Gibb, Schools Minister elicited this reply



This is what Minister for Schools; Nick Gibb MP wants your Headteacher to know about RE provision. Are they "acting unlawfully"?

It is compulsory to teach RE in state funded schools at all key stages up to age 18, even if pupils have not chosen to study religious studies at GCSE or A level. Schools that are not teaching RE are acting unlawfully or, in the case of academies, are in breach of their academy funding agreements. Where the Department is informed that a school is not fulfilling their legal duty, they will investigate accordingly.

With best wishes.

Nick

NATRE
National Association of Teachers of Religious Education

How can we continue to share this information with schools in Walsall?

NATRE Primary Survey results: what would be the response from your schools?

Nearly half of trainee primary teachers have had between zero and three hours of RE training, new research by the National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE) has revealed.

NATRE has launched the results of its national **NATRE Primary Survey 2018**. The survey of over 500 primary teachers from across the country has revealed some worrying truths about the provision for RE in primary schools.

A quarter of teachers report that colleagues within their schools have a lack of confidence in teaching RE, both in terms of what to teach, but also how to teach RE.

NATRE's research found:

- Nearly half of trainee primary teachers have had between zero and three hours of RE training
- 30% of primary RE teachers have had no subject specific training in the last year, not even in a staff meeting
- 1/3 of teachers who started teaching in the last 5 years have no qualification at all in RE, not even a GCSE.
- Over 50% of schools have a HLTA taking some of their RE lessons
- Many primary schools do not give adequate time for RE

This demonstrates the need for teacher training in line with recommendation six and seven of the Commission on Religions Education report '*Religion and worldviews: The way Forward – A national plan for RE*'.

Furthermore, though many teachers report no instances of withdrawal from RE, too many are reporting that selective withdrawal is being used, either to withdraw students from learning about Islam, or so that students only learn about Christianity.

Ben Wood, NATRE Chair, has commented:

'It is undoubtedly disheartening to hear such news, but not surprising. We know there are wonderful examples of high quality RE going on in primary schools, with excellent teachers who use the subject to help their students grow up with a broad understanding of and open-minded attitude to the world and the people who inhabit it. But we also know that there are too many students who don't get the quality of RE they deserve and are entitled to receive. This not only risks students' own futures but also the future cohesion of our wonderfully diverse country.

And these concerns are not limited to primary education. A similar account emerges about secondary schools. It angers me that young people are being denied an important part of their education, that colleagues are losing their jobs, that the superb examples of high quality RE in some schools are not replicated in the school down the road and that government that speaks warm words about the value and importance of RE, but then does little to correct the situation.'

To read the survey results go to

www.natre.org.uk/uploads/Free%20Resources/NATRE%20Primary%20Survey%202018%20final.pdf

What would Walsall schools say?

OFSTED Draft inspection framework

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/772065/Schools_draft_handbook_180119.pdf

At first sight the new framework could be good news for RE with a clear focus on a broad and balanced curriculum. Page 13 will be of interest to schools and SACREs as it refers to RE and Collective Worship. Curriculum narrowing is warned against on page 42, this is good news for RE. Perhaps the most interesting part is p41, para 159 which asserts

Curriculum flexibility

158. The curriculum sets out the aims of a programme of education. It also sets out the structure for those aims to be implemented, including the knowledge, skills and understanding to be gained at each stage. It enables the evaluation of pupils' knowledge and understanding against those expectations.
159. All pupils in maintained schools are expected to study the national curriculum subjects, religious education and age-appropriate sex education.⁵⁸ Academies are expected to offer all pupils a curriculum that is similar in breadth and ambition to the national curriculum, including the requirements to teach English, mathematics, science, and religious education.⁵⁹
160. Schools taking radically different approaches to the curriculum will be judged fairly. The inspectorate recognises the importance of schools' autonomy to choose their own curriculum approaches. If leaders are able to show that they have thought carefully, that they have built a curriculum with appropriate coverage, content, structure and sequencing and are able to show that it has been implemented effectively, then inspectors will assess a school's curriculum favourably.

NATRE are meeting with the deputy director of OFSTED and RE HMI to discuss this in detail in early February.

Will any schools in Walsall fall foul of curriculum narrowing?

Withdrawal information

In all NATRE surveys, through conversations and in conversation with schools, places of worship and teacher unions we know that withdrawal from RE has become a more frequent and tricky issue for schools to deal with.

NATRE have written guidance and have made this available, jointly with the NAHT, to all schools. We can also send you the full document for free if you fill in the boxes with your details

<https://www.natre.org.uk/membership/guidance-on-withdrawal/>

This guidance has been endorsed and shared by the DfE.

Do you know what parents can and can't withdraw pupils from? Do you know how many schools in Walsall have pupils withdrawn?

New secondary survey

NATRE is conducting this secondary survey (its seventh) to obtain information about the current state of RE in all types of schools so that it can continue to support the teacher in the classroom by raising awareness of the impact of government policy on RE.

Please invite schools in your area to take a few minutes to answer as many of the questions on the survey as they can. It could make all the difference. As our thank you to you for taking the time to complete this survey, schools will receive a £5 voucher code to use on all RE Today publications at the end of the survey.

NATRE will treat the responses with complete and absolute confidentiality; no schools or teachers will be identified in any use NATRE makes of the information provided.

Information from previous surveys has been used with the DFE, OFSTED, MPs, quoted in parliament and by unions. This is the best opportunity to show what the picture is in schools to decision makers.

Closing date: Friday, 12th April 2019

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/JY9WMWW>

How can we share this survey with Walsall Schools?

Year of Belief and values BBC

This year the BBC has set out to produce a whole series of programming across its platforms on religion and belief that may prove supportive to RE teachers. There will also be new animations on a series of religions for Primary schools on BBC Bitesize. For secondary schools there will be new programmes for KS3 RE and extensive information for students studying GCSE on BBC bitesize.

Primary 1000 Support for schools

NATRE has a new project to help schools who recognise the need to improve their RE provision. This innovative project responds to a very significant need in RE: that thousands of primary schools struggle to provide good RE for all pupils. The project will enable 1000 primary schools to offer 'Better RE' – which means: RE for thinking, creativity, standards and challenge.

The project has been designed to challenge, support and inspire primary schools where RE provision needs to change and improve the RE opportunities they give to pupils.

The three-year project has two phases. We have already raised funds for and commenced phase one.

Schools who get involved will be able to register as project members with the support of their senior leaders and a named teacher who will champion RE in the school.

Better RE will give schools targeted help and practical support, an online RE resource pack which includes a plethora of high-quality resources including the best online materials, great practical lesson ideas, planning guidance and support with subject knowledge, a sample policy statement, an audit tool and numerous ready to use learning ideas. We will aim to connect schools involved to their local NATRE teacher group and years two and three will see regional RE conferences for the teachers involved as well.

NATRE has wide and long experience in supporting schools and responds to research and inspection findings about the low quality of RE in too many schools. We want all pupils to have access to good RE. A strength of this project is that it has been developed from the ideas of primary NATRE executive members, serving teachers of RE, local group leaders and grassroots activists.

Which schools could we nominate? We need to know a named RE subject leader?

Regional Ambassadors

At the end of October 2018, Naomi Anstice was appointed the National Ambassador for Religious Education Networks. She is an Assistant Head Teacher in Cheshire where she teaches RE to the whole school as part of the PPA provision. Naomi is also the RE Primary adviser for Cheshire West and a member of the NATRE Executive.

She will be working on this project a day a week. Here Naomi explains the project she will be leading for the next two years and introduces the regional ambassadors who have now been appointed:

'The aim of this project is to build a long-term sustainable structure to provide local support for RE teachers.'

- Connecting teachers to other teachers, local groups, hubs, advisers, SACREs and to a range of available opportunities and RE initiatives.
- Connecting teachers to both classroom-based and academic research
- Connecting teachers to regional and national CPD opportunities as well as resources which will inspire their classroom practice

This will be done through the creation of ten regional areas, each of which will have its own ambassador. These ambassadors will be developing, creating, co-ordinating local RE structures. Areas which already have strong support structures will be embraced and promoted whilst others may need creation and development according to local need.

These ambassadors bring a wealth of experience with them from a range of educational settings and will be working to network across their own areas, looking to support the creation of local groups where there are currently gaps. Each region will have web provision, so you can see what is happening in your area and to keep in touch with others in your area.

The regional ambassadors are allocated a day a month to support their region, so we will need to be realistic about what can be achieved in this time! The areas and their ambassadors are as follows:

London – Claire Clinton
North – Katherine France
North East – Suzanne Tomlinson
North West – Joanne Harris
East Midlands – Julie Childs
West Midlands – Chris Giles
South Central – Sarah Payne
South East – Justine Ball
South West – Laura Harris
East Anglia – Revd. Kate Moore

Read more about the Regional Ambassadors [here](#)

Central to the success of the project is increasing teacher involvement with a range of RE organisations (including AREIAC, NATRE, The REC, NASACRE and local SACREs) through both membership and engagement.

You can follow and contact Naomi through twitter [**@naomianstice**](#) or email [**naomi.anstice@natre.org.uk**](mailto:naomi.anstice@natre.org.uk) who will pass on emails to the regional ambassadors.