

SACRE Professional Update

CORE Report gone very quiet!

New OFSTED Framework now in play. We have spoken about it before, but the connections to RE can be found here:

<https://www.natre.org.uk/uploads/Additional%20Documents/Ofsted%20Framework%202019%20article%20final.pdf>

Biggest potential impact:

Paragraph 172

“All pupils in maintained schools are expected to study the basic curriculum, which includes national curriculum, religious education and age-appropriate relationship and sex education. Academies are expected to offer all pupils a broad curriculum⁶⁸ that should be similar in breadth and ambition.”

Footnote 68 “... academies must include English, mathematics, science and religious education in their curriculum.”

In our opinion, this paragraph has the potential to have the greatest impact on the issue of accountability in RE. It is perhaps unsurprising to see a clear statement of the law in relation to the curriculum in this context. However, in relation to standards, the expectation is that even given academy freedoms, (see 173 below), the curriculum should be similar in breadth and ambition as the curriculum offered in maintained schools.

NATRE intends to seek clarification of the meaning of this paragraph. The implication is that just as the national curriculum is to be used as a benchmark for ‘breadth and ambition’ for the core and foundation subjects, so the curriculum for RE must be as broad and ambitious as that required of LA maintained schools.

Evidence online of a number of secondary schools only being awarded Requires Improvement due to lack of quality RE curriculum.

Ben Wood (Chair of NATRE) spoke on BBC Radio 4 about the need for high quality RE teaching.

Mentioned the NATRE Secondary Survey (infographic provided; full report available at <https://www.natre.org.uk/uploads/Free%20Resources/NATRE%20EBacc%20Survey%202019%20FINAL%20v3.pdf>)

KS3

Almost 17% (over 1 in 6) community schools are failing to meet legal requirements

Almost 14% of academy schools without a religious character are failing in this regard

In schools and academies with a religious character, compliance with legal requirements at Key Stage 3 was over 90%.

KS4

More than 40% of community schools were failing to meet legal requirements at Key Stage 4. This is a rise from just over 34% in 2015-6.

50% of respondents in academy schools without a religious character do not meet their legal requirements at key stage 4 (14-16-year olds). This figure has not improved from a similar figure in 2015-16

More than 88% respondents in schools with a religious character claim that legal requirements are met although, smaller numbers of responses in certain groups of schools of this type mean that too many claims should not be made about these figures.

Teachers

Three quarters of respondents reported that RE was taught by teachers who spent most of their timetable teaching another subject. In 36% of cases more than 1 in 5 lessons is taught by these teachers. Part of the reason for this is lack of RE specialists in the workforce. In 3/4 of schools, these teachers teach some Religious Education. These teachers are not those who teach a number of subjects for a significant part of their timetable but instead those with a small number of unfilled lessons.

Even though the government finally reintroduced bursaries for teachers training in 2018-19 to teach RE, these bursaries were significantly below the value offered to those training to teach other subjects.

This finding is consistent with the data provided by the Department for Education's own School Workforce Survey which found that over half of those teaching Religious Education had no post A level qualification in the subject; almost twice as many as for History for example.

Exams

Short Course numbers dwindling; content pressure, EBacc.

Full Course rising.

In year 11, 64% of schools offer no recognisable RE provision outside the examination course, which there should be.

More than $\frac{3}{4}$ of all schools teach the GCSE across three years (9-11).

Time constraints mean RE is being taught to the course, rather than for all its wider value.

Around 45% of our respondents reported that RS is compulsory for all pupils at Key Stage 4. This is common practice in schools with a religious character. In more than a third of schools, GCSE Religious Studies is an option. Note that the evidence in table 9 above is that in almost two thirds of the schools that make RS an optional GCSE, there is no other provision for the subject and pupils who do not opt for GCSE RS, effectively end their Religious Education at the end of year 9 (age 13) or even year 8 (age 12).

Withdrawal

Almost one in three respondents reported that parents withdraw pupils from Religious Education in their school.

Many of the reasons given were individual and could not be categorised. A number of themes emerged. For example, in one in five cases, pupils had been withdrawn for a curricular reason, such as wishing their child to study a different area or spend extra time in a core subject. **It is not clear if these cases were initiated by the parent or the school but they are not reasons for withdrawal that are meant by the law and should not be granted by the school. Also difficult to categorise as you don't have to give a reason.**

In another one in five cases, the family religion was cited as the reason for the withdrawal. In almost one in five cases, the parents stated they did not want their child to learn about any religion, something specific within RE or about Islam.