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DATE: 28 November 2017

To: Members of the  
**STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

Reverend R Bristow (Chairman)

Councillors Kevin Brooks, Robert Evans, David Jefferys, Keith Onslow and Sarah Phillips

Church of England: Mrs V Corbyn, Mr C Town and Reverend S Varney

Teachers: Mrs D Angell, Ms H Arnold, Mrs A Ball, Ms S Odusola and Mr J Stone

Other Faiths: Mrs S Barnett, Mrs P Colling, Mr S Gupta, Mr R Hagley, Mr S Mahmood, Mr A Nandra and Mrs E Whitman

A meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education will be held at Bromley Civic Centre on **WEDNESDAY 6 DECEMBER 2017 AT 6.00 PM**

MARK BOWEN  
Director of Corporate Services

*Copies of the documents referred to below can be obtained from*  
<http://cds.bromley.gov.uk/>

## A G E N D A

- 1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**
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  - C.) SACRE Annual Report

D.) Commission on Religious Education – Interim Report: Religious Education for All

E.) REC / NATRE – The State of the Nation: A report on Religious Education provision within secondary schools in England

*This document can be accessed via the following link:*

<https://www.natre.org.uk/uploads/Free%20Resources/SOTN%202017%20Report%20web%20version%20FINAL.pdf>

**5 SCHOOL VISITS**

**6 SACRE DRAFT ACTION PLAN (Pages 29 - 30)**

**7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Islamic Competition

**8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2018

All meetings to start at 6pm

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## **STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

Minutes of the meeting held at 6.00 pm on 12 July 2017

### **Present:**

Reverend Roger Bristow (Chairman)

Councillors Kevin Brooks, Robert Evans and Keith Onslow  
Ms H Arnold, Mr S Mahmood, Mr C Town,  
Reverend S Varney and Mrs E Whitman

### **Also Present:**

Carol Arnfield, LBB Head of Service for Early Years,  
Schools Standards and Adult Education  
Kieran Osborne, LBB Educational Advisor

## **1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN**

**RESOLVED** that Reverend Roger Bristow be elected as Chairman, and Councillor Keith Onslow be elected as Vice-Chairman, of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education for the 2017/2018 municipal year.

## **2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor David Jefferys, Councillor Sarah Phillips, Denise Angell, Samantha Barnett, Virginia Corbyn, Arvinder Nandra and Ray Hagley.

Councillor Robert Evans apologised for having to leave the meeting early due to other commitments.

## **3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

## **4 A) MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8TH MARCH 2017**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2017 be confirmed as a correct record.

## **B) MATTERS ARISING**

### Minute 25: School Visits

The Educational Advisor had sent feedback forms to the schools following visits, and those returned had been provided to members. It was noted that the responses received had been very positive and useful.

## **5 ORAL UPDATE & PUBLICATIONS**

The Chairman advised members of an additional visit that he had made, along with SACRE member Councillor Robert Evans, to James Dixon Primary School on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2017, following an invitation from Ms Heather Hawthorne to attend their RE Day. This was a termly activity which involved some students visiting external places of worship, and representatives from the local faith communities were invited to visit the school.

SACRE members observed gentlemen from the local synagogue and mosque speaking to the students. The young man from the mosque talked about what it was like to live as a Muslim in the United Kingdom. He invited questions from the children, and it was a very positive experience. Councillor Evans said that the visit had been interesting and that the children reflected the school's achievements, being impeccably behaved throughout the presentations. The Chairman agreed that the children had been very polite and respectful, and a delight to visit.

During the visit, SACRE members also saw collective worship taking place and were accompanied on a tour of the school by the Headteacher and Chair of Governors. It was noted that no response was given when the Chairman enquired as to how RE was normally delivered at the school, and when asked if SACRE members could visit again, the Headteacher responded that another RE Day would take place the following term. Councillor Onslow said that he had been unable to attend the visit on 30<sup>th</sup> March, but he would like to attend the next RE Day at the school, and would happily pose those questions to the Headteacher again. The Chairman advised that the school seemed willing to invite SACRE members to visit and once the date of the next RE Day was confirmed it would be circulated to the group.

**ACTION: Chairman / Clerk**

## **6 SCHOOL VISITS**

SACRE members visit local schools to observe collective worship and the teaching of Religious Education. On Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2017, the Chairman and Educational Advisor had visited Blenheim Primary School, along with SACRE members; Councillor Keith Onslow, Mrs Virginia Corbyn, Mr Arvinder Nandra and Reverend Steve Varney.

A further visit was undertaken by the Chairman and Educational Advisor to Langley Park School for Girls on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> May 2017, along with

SACRE members; Mr Mahmood and Mr Nandra. A detailed report of the school visits and feedback received from Ravens Wood School and Blenheim Primary School was considered by SACRE members.

The Chairman and Educational Advisor said that attending the meetings of the Primary and Secondary Headteachers had allowed them to raise the profile of SACRE in their minds, and to reassure them of the processes that it followed. These occasions had also resulted in invitations to visit some schools.

The schools visited had shown a willingness to open up and share, which allowed SACRE members to observe that what they said was being delivered in terms of Religious Education, was actually happening and taking place effectively. It was important to acknowledge that in some schools, assemblies were a time for spiritual and moral reflection, which was not deemed as collective worship.

Blenheim Primary School allocated time for meditation throughout the school as an introduction to spirituality, and using a variation of the Agreed Syllabus, had shown good evidence of the curriculum. Religious Education in the school allowed positive encouragement for the children to ask questions, and not just the teacher delivering information. When the visit had been made to Langley Park School for Girls, the assembly had been used for the school to carry out its own version of a General Election, which had allowed students the opportunity to think through what mattered. Members considered that collective worship was not being delivered in the school as it should be. The Educational Advisor responded that the majority of school assemblies would be about morals and many schools had introduced moments of reflection to encourage students to think about a spiritual direction.

A discussion took place regarding school's legal requirement to deliver collective worship and whether the SACRE could influence this. It was considered that as the majority of the boroughs secondary schools had separated themselves from the Local Authority and become academies, the legal requirement was still there, but there was no one to enforce it. The onus would be on the SACRE to press this point, and visits to the schools would concentrate minds. It was suggested that during visits, schools could be reminded about the Bromley SACRE guidance on collective worship, and a copy of the document could be left with the senior leadership team. This would be a way of reminding them of the expertise around the table, and that there were resources available if they wanted to improve their offer. Members considered that a letter should be sent to all schools at the beginning of the academic year, with which a copy of the collective worship document could be included. It could highlight that the SACRE had visited schools and observed the delivery of collective worship in an effective way, and would welcome further visits to see good practice, or discuss the challenges schools faced in being able to deliver. Members felt that SACRE was a body to offer support, which was an experience most schools would welcome if they knew it was available.

**ACTION POINT: LBB Educational Advisor**

The Chairman advised members that he had attended the Church Schools Festival at Rochester Cathedral. Cudham CE Primary School had taken part, and had invited SACRE members to visit the school the following term. Once further details were received, the clerk would circulate to members.

**ACTION POINT: Chairman / Clerk**

**RESOLVED that:**

- (i) the report of the visit to Blenheim Primary School and Langley Park School for Girls be noted.**
- (ii) feedback regarding SACRE visits received from Ravens Wood School and Blenheim Primary School be noted.**
- (iii) the Clerk to notify SACRE members of arrangements for school visits during the autumn term.**

## **7 NASACRE CONFERENCE AND AGM**

The Chairman had attended the NASACRE Conference and AGM which was held on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2017 in York. The conference theme was 'Preparing for life in Britain today: the contribution of RE'. There were two Keynote Speakers; Dr Joyce Miller, one of the Commissioners recently appointed by the RE Council and Professor Aaqil Ahmed, from the School of Media and Performing Arts, University of Bolton. The Chairman had prepared a report on the conference which was considered by SACRE members.

The Chairman said that it had been an interesting day. The morning session had been delivered by Dr Joyce Miller, who gave an overview of the Commission for RE's history over the last few years, the work it was currently doing and the reports it had produced on RE and its effectiveness. There was an emphasis placed on the lack of religious literature in contemporary society, and the role of RE to tackle this.

The afternoon session was led by Professor Aaqil Ahmed who had previously worked as Head of Religion and Ethics at Channel 4 and the BBC. Professor Ahmed spoke passionately about the need for SACREs to help raise religious literacy amongst all sections of society. He highlighted that the media's lack of understanding was echoed by people using social media as a vocal platform to reinforce their own prejudices concerning religious belief. Editors in broadcasting and print media generally 'run scared' of stories involving religion, as they are worried about getting it wrong, so do not want to tackle it. It was noted that there were no dedicated Heads of Religion at these organisations and that it was just grouped in with other areas. It was Professor Ahmed's view that part of the reason for the lack of religious literacy was down to the failure to communicate what it means to be a person of faith within a community, which resulted in an increase of prejudice due to lack of understanding.

The Chairman advised that further information regarding the Conference and AGM could be accessed via the NASACRE website.

(Councillor Evans left the meeting at 7.05pm).

## 8 SACRE SELF EVALUATION

It was suggested that prior to the meeting, members look at the following sections of the SACRE Reporting and Evaluating Toolkit and come ready to discuss their thoughts:

Group A members (representatives of other faiths and Christian denominations) were asked to focus on Section 5 – Contribution of SACRE to promoting cohesion across the community.

Group B members (representatives from the Church of England) were asked to focus on Section 3 – Collective worship.

Group C members (teachers) were asked to focus on Section 2 – The effectiveness of the locally agreed syllabus.

Group D members (Councillors) were asked to focus on Section 4 – Management of SACRE.

The Educational Advisor would complete Section 1 – Standards and Quality of Provision of RE.

At the meeting SACRE members were invited to divide into their membership groups to discuss and come to a consensus. Results of the self-evaluation can be seen in the table appended to these minutes.

Additional points arising from the discussion are listed below.

### **Section 1 – Standards and Quality of Provision of RE**

The Educational Advisor considered that *Key Area 1F – Relations with academies and other non-LA maintained schools* met the advanced criteria and was evidenced by his meetings with Headteachers and their willingness to agree school visits. It was felt the SACRE's main successes were visits to schools and establishing communications and relationships with school leaders and the barrier to success was the shortage of RE specialists in some schools. Suggested areas for development included a survey of schools to inform the SACRE and for the Local Authority to collect KS4 outcomes.

### **Section 2 – The effectiveness of the locally agreed syllabus**

The teaching group highlighted that for *Key Area 2C – Launching and implementing the Agreed Syllabus*, only the developing criteria could be met due to the SACRE having 'little training provision for implementing the revised syllabus'. *Key Area 2E – Developing the revised Agreed Syllabus*, was considered to just meet the established criteria, and it was noted that this was an area that could be worked on.

### **Section 3 – Collective worship**

The Church of England group advised that for *Section 3 – Collective worship*, the self-evaluation criteria met was considered to be the same as 2016. It was however considered that some of the Key Areas would fit between the established and advanced criteria.

### **Section 4 – Management of SACRE**

The Councillors group considered the SACREs successes and barriers to success. They felt the main successes were visits to schools and lively discussions, and the barrier to success was the general view of RE. A wider awareness of the SACRE within schools was felt to be an area for development for the Local Authority.

### **Section 5 – Contribution of SACRE to promoting cohesion across the community**

The other faiths group considered that for *Key Area 5A – SACRE's membership*, Bromley SACRE met the advanced criteria. It was noted that this was evidenced by membership lists and attendance at meetings, which was provided in the SACRE Annual report.

The group felt that *Key Area 5B – SACRE's understanding of the local community*, could only meet the established criteria. This was due to there being no capacity for the SACRE to 'take active steps to inform itself further about the distinctive needs and opportunities' created by the 'religious, ethnic and cultural diversity in the local area', or 'develop initiatives with local Inter Faith groups'. *Key Area 5C – SACRE's engagement with the community cohesion agenda* could only be rated as developing because it was felt there was an individual grasp of 'what community cohesion means', but not a collective one. It was also believed that the SACRE was struggling to 'promote RE's contribution to schools of faith communities'. *Key Area 5D – SACRE's role within wider LA initiatives on community cohesion* was also thought to only meet the developing criteria as this was not considered to be a priority for the Local Authority.

Further discussion took place regarding *Section 5 – Contribution of SACRE to promoting cohesion across the community*, with members feeling that it was difficult to do anything with regards to this as it was not currently on the agendas of Ofsted, the Government or the Local Authority. The Chairman advised the group that Birmingham SACRE apparently had a budget of £35K to promote community cohesion, which had been allocated as a direct response following the 'Trojan Horse' investigation in Birmingham schools. Members considered that this was retrospective budgeting, with investment only happening once something had gone wrong, and asked if there was any evidence that anything had improved. It was suggested that documents and minutes of Birmingham SACRE meetings could be sourced from the internet, and that a direct question could be posed with regards to the sharing of best practice. **ACTION POINT: Chairman / LBB Educational Advisor / Clerk**

Other members said that they would prefer to see what SACREs without any budget were doing, as it was felt that Bromley SACRE was doing as well as

could be expected with the resources available, and that if good ideas were sourced there would be no capacity to deliver them anyway. Members queried if an average had been indicated for the budget that SACREs were allocated across the country. The Chairman said that had not been provided, but there were lots of SACREs with no actual budget that just requested money needed for specific tasks, and some with a definite budget, but much fewer than previously. A similar self-evaluation exercise had been carried out at the NASACRE Conference and AGM, with the consensus being that SACREs were rated as 'established', and not 'advanced', due to lack of resources.

**RESOLVED that the SACRE self-evaluation be agreed and SACRE members consider how to improve on the scores going forward.**

## **9 SACRE DRAFT ACTION PLAN**

SACRE members had been provided with a draft action plan that had been drafted in June 2017, which outlined the core activities for 2017-2018. It had been based on previous year's activities, and members were asked if they felt anything was missing, or if there were any changes to be made. Members queried if the draft action plan differed from the version provided for the previous year. The Chairman confirmed that previous versions referred to actions that were the responsibility of the RE Advisor, and as this role no longer existed those tasks had been removed.

It was recommended that objective number 4 – *'Engage with local schools to observe and understand Religious Education and Collective Worship approaches'* should be amended to read *'Annual engagement with local schools to observe and understand Religious Education and Collective Worship approaches'*. It was agreed that an annual letter could be sent to schools, encouraging them to engage with the SACRE and advising them of the resources and support available to them, as discussed under agenda item 6.

A member suggested that an additional objective be added to the draft action plan to include the sharing of best practice with local SACREs. It was considered that SACREs, such as Bexley who faced the same conundrums as Bromley, could be invited to present once a year to provide an update on how they were doing, with the offer of providing the same presentation from Bromley SACRE at one of their meetings.

**RESOLVED that the amendments to the SACRE draft action plan for 2017-2018 be noted.**

## **10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr Mahmood advised members that the prize giving for the Islamic Competition would take place at Darul Uloom on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2017. The programme of the evening would be the same format as previous

years, and further information and an invitation for SACRE members to attend would be circulated. This year marked the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Islamic Competition, and Mr Mahmood intended to invite previous participants and winners back to present a reflection of their experiences.

**11 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2017  
Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2018

All meetings to start at 6pm

The Meeting ended at 7.42 pm

Chairman

# Minute Annex

## Bromley SACRE Self Evaluation July 2017 results

Key Area		Developing	Established	Advanced
<b>Standards and Quality of Provision of RE</b>				
1A	RE provision across the LA		x	
1B	Standards and achievement		x	
1C	Quality of learning and teaching		x	
1D	Quality of leadership and management		x	
1E	Recruitment and retention of skilled specialist RE staff		x	
1F	Relations with academies and other non-LA maintained schools			x
<b>The effectiveness of the locally Agreed Syllabus</b>				
2A	Review of the Agreed Syllabus		x	
2B	The quality of the Agreed Syllabus		x	
2C	Launching and implementing the Agreed Syllabus	x		
2D	Membership and training of the Agreed Syllabus Conference		x	
2E	Developing the revised agreed syllabus		x	
2F	Making best use of National Guidance		x	
<b>Collective Worship</b>				
3A	Supporting pupil entitlement in LA's schools		x	
3B	Enhancing the quality of provision of collective worship		x	
3C	Responding to requests for determinations		x	
<b>Management of SACRE</b>				
4A	How purposeful, inclusive, representative and effective are SACRE meetings?		x	
4B	Membership and Training		x	
4C	Improvement/development planning		x	
4D	Professional and financial support	x		
4E	How well informed is SACRE to be able to advise the LA appropriately?	x		
4F	Partnerships with key stakeholders		x	
4G	Relations with the Academies sector		x	
<b>Contribution of SACRE to promoting cohesion across the community</b>				
5A	Representative nature of SACRE in the local community			x
5B	SACRE's understanding of the local community in its religious, cultural and ethnic dimensions		x	
5C	SACRE's engagement with the community cohesion agenda	x		
5D	SACRE's Links to LA initiatives promoting community cohesion	x		

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Commission on  
Religious Education

INTERIM REPORT **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

# RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR ALL

SEPTEMBER 2017





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This interim report is published with the intention of creating an opportunity for as many people and organisations as possible to engage with the Commission on Religious Education (CoRE) about our developing thoughts on RE in schools in England. The interim report explores a number of issues which have emerged during our deliberations on the evidence presented to us during the initial consultation, at the evidence gathering sessions held around the country and in written submissions received during the 2016/17 academic year. It sets out initial recommendations alongside a range of issues on which we are seeking to consult further before drawing any conclusions. We hope that there will be a full and vigorous consultation on the content of this interim report, and that this will help to inform the final report of the Commission, due to be published in 2018.

RE remains a vital academic subject for education in the 21st century. Studying RE gives young people the knowledge, understanding and motivation they need to understand important aspects of human experience, including the religious, spiritual, and moral. It gives insights into the arts, literature, history, and contemporary local and global social and political issues. It provides them with a space in the curriculum to reflect on their own worldview and to engage with others whose worldview may be different. The young people that we have spoken to have told us that RE enables them to have better friendships and to develop greater respect and empathy for others. RE is highly valued by many employers, who increasingly understand that in a globalised world, understanding others' worldviews and their impact on people's lives is essential to success.

The knowledge gained through studying RE is central to good local, national and global citizenship. It enables young people to have a nuanced and informed understanding of key political and social issues that they will need to face as they grow up in an increasingly globalised world. RE helps pupils to deal positively with controversial issues, to manage strongly held differences of belief, and to challenge stereotypes.

As local and global demographics have changed, including patterns of affiliation to religious and non-religious worldviews, today's students will encounter people with a much more diverse range of beliefs, lifestyles and backgrounds than did the previous generations. Understanding religious and non-religious worldviews, and their impact on individuals, communities and wider society, has never been more essential to good citizenship than it is now. For these reasons, we argue throughout the report that all pupils, regardless of background or the type of school they attend, are entitled to high quality RE which enables them to develop the nuanced and informed

understanding of worldviews that they will need as citizens.

We were impressed by the evidence of high quality and innovative approaches to RE that were presented during our consultations.<sup>1</sup> At its best, the subject offers great educational benefit for pupils and the British model of RE is highly regarded and has earned international esteem. Of particular note has been the appearance in recent years of local and national support networks for teachers and also the high level of examination entry at GCSE and A level.

Having said that, we are unanimous in the view that RE faces a perilous future without strategic, urgent intervention. Examination entries fell for the first time in 2017, and many who gave evidence saw this as a sign of further decline in years to come. Amongst the many challenges the subject faces, the following are identified as particularly significant:

- The changed patterns of religious and non-religious belief from the time when the current system was enacted in 1944 present a requirement to ensure that RE's structures reflect the realities of contemporary society. The religious landscape in the UK has diversified with fewer people identifying as Anglican and more identifying with other Christian denominations or other religious traditions. Moreover, the number of people identifying as non-religious has increased: in 2017, 53% of the population described themselves as not having a religion.<sup>2</sup> The global religious landscape has also been undergoing rapid change, where religion is highly significant in many societies.
- There is inconsistency in the quality and provision of RE, with increasing numbers of schools not even meeting the basic legal requirement. Pupils are experiencing a lottery in their access to high quality RE. Evidence presented to the Commission made clear the impact that the type of school had on the extent to which RE is provided: while 6.5% of schools that follow an RE curriculum determined by their religious character devote no part of their curriculum time to RE at key stage 4, the figure is 20.7% for schools required to follow a locally agreed syllabus for RE and 43.7% for academies without a religious character.<sup>3</sup> This inequality of provision means that many children are being disadvantaged by being denied RE.
- As more schools become academies, leaving ever fewer under local authority control, the current framework of determination of RE via local authorities and agreed syllabuses is ceasing to be fit for purpose. A decrease in local authority funding has exacerbated this problem.

<sup>1</sup> Please see Appendix 1: Evidence received by the Commission for details of how we collected evidence.

<sup>2</sup> NATCEN (2017). *British Social Attitudes Survey*.  
<http://www.natcen.ac.uk/media/1469605/BSA-religion.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> RE Council & National Association of Teachers of RE (2017, forthcoming). *The State of the Nation*.

Moreover, evidence submitted to the Commission makes clear that the current approach of relying on the requirements of academy funding agreements is not sufficient for ensuring the proper provision of RE across all academies. If no action is taken, there is a serious risk of increasing numbers of pupils leaving school with an inadequate level of knowledge and understanding of religious and non-religious worldviews at precisely the time when such understanding is becoming more important.

- RE has suffered from a policy environment that has not encouraged headteachers to regard it as a high-status subject. This environment includes insufficient processes to hold schools to account for their provision of RE and the omission of RE from key performance indicators published by DfE.
- There has been diminishing access to adequate training and support for teachers. This is particularly acute at primary level where the Commission heard that on average a primary trainee receives less than three hours of RE-specific training during a one-year PGCE or School Direct course.<sup>4</sup>
- The quality of RE is variable across schools. Low standards predominate across too many schools, including schools with and without a religious

character. Teachers are not always clear on the purpose of the subject and many lack the subject knowledge necessary to teach about sensitive and crucial issues with skill and nuance. Locally agreed syllabuses are also variable in quality. One

issue that we have noted is the fact that religion is often presented in an essentialist mode that fails to help pupils understand the complexity, diversity and historicity of religious ideas, institutions and practices. This was most often mentioned in relation to the Dharmic traditions (i.e. Hindu, Buddhist and Sikh traditions) in the written and oral evidence but affects the presentation of all religions and worldviews in resources and in the classroom.

The Commissioners have therefore made initial recommendations in four areas:

<sup>4</sup> *Fiona Moss, oral evidence submitted to the Commission. See also NATRE (2016). An analysis of the provision for RE in primary schools. [www.natre.org.uk%2Fuploads%2FAdditional%2520Documents%2FNATRE%2520Primary%2520Survey%25202016%2520final.docx&usg=AFQjCNFDWLUicovE8LOQEgZiiuHF7fFcAA](http://www.natre.org.uk%2Fuploads%2FAdditional%2520Documents%2FNATRE%2520Primary%2520Survey%25202016%2520final.docx&usg=AFQjCNFDWLUicovE8LOQEgZiiuHF7fFcAA)*

1. **A national entitlement for RE.** This would set out clearly the aims and purpose(s) of RE and what pupils should experience in the course of their study of the subject. This national entitlement should be for all pupils at all state-funded schools and we seek to consult with independent schools about whether they should adopt it. We are advocating RE for all not because children belong to religious traditions or not, but because in our age a nuanced understanding of the role of worldviews must be a part of citizens' intellectual make-up. It is to do with their ability to function effectively as citizens and as human beings. This is as important an aspect of education for pupils in schools of a religious character as it is in those without a religious character. It should be introduced through non-statutory guidance as early as possible with a view to it ultimately becoming statutory, either to supplement or replace the current legislation on agreed syllabuses. This national entitlement provides a reinvigorated vision for RE for all pupils in the future, drawing on the very best of the RE that we know happens in some schools. It seeks to be a basic statement of what all pupils are entitled to, but is not a national syllabus or curriculum. We hope that the flexibility of the proposed national entitlement will ensure that a diversity of high quality approaches will emerge and that this will best suit the landscape of a school-led system. We recognise that schools will need guidance and support to translate this entitlement into curriculum planning and we are reviewing where this guidance and support should come from.
2. **Holding schools to account for the provision and quality of RE.** The evidence presented to us indicates that at present too many schools are not being held to account for failing to provide adequate RE. Schools should be required to publish details on their website of how they meet the national entitlement for RE. Inspection frameworks should be revised to ensure that inspectors monitor whether schools meet the national entitlement for RE. The Commission has also given thought to how schools should provide for those Key Stage 4 pupils who are not taking the GCSE in Religious Studies and would like to consult on the possibility of a revised qualification for these pupils to ensure that their work can be accredited.
3. **A National Plan to improve teaching and learning in RE.** The Commission would like to develop a National Plan for developing teaching and learning in RE, along the lines of the National Plan for Music Education. The National Plan will bring together the Commission's recommendations for improving teacher subject knowledge and confidence and we seek to consult on how this can best be achieved.
4. **A renewed and expanded role for Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs).** The evidence we have received suggests that SACREs can have an important role in promoting and supporting RE and in promoting good community relations more broadly, but that their capacity to deliver this role fully has been diminishing in many local authorities. The Commission's suggested recommendations, which are

consultative at this stage, call for consideration to be given to adding the promotion of improved community relations to the remit of SACREs and make proposals for the securing of resources for their work. There are also recommendations that seek consideration of the composition of SACREs with a call to ensure that they are fully representative, with representatives of non-religious worldviews as full members.

The full recommendations are set out on pages 8 to 12.

In addition, the Commissioners are seeking to undertake further consultation in these areas and have set out the issues that they are particularly interested in exploring. These areas for consultation are set out on pages 12 to 14.

## LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

### A NATIONAL ENTITLEMENT FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- a. There should be a national entitlement statement for RE which sets out clearly the aims and purpose of RE and what pupils should experience in the course of their study of the subject. A draft statement for consultation is overleaf.
- b. This entitlement should become normative through non-statutory guidance as early as possible, and should ultimately become statutory, either to supplement or to replace current legislation on agreed syllabuses.
- c. The national entitlement should apply to all state-funded schools including academies, free schools and schools of a religious character.
- d. Independent schools should consider adopting the entitlement as an undertaking of good practice.

#### **The National Entitlement for Religious Education**

Overleaf is the draft text of the proposed national entitlement for RE. This draft is for consultation. We welcome comments on and refinements to the text.

## **A National Entitlement for RE**

RE in schools should enable students to engage in an intelligent and informed way with the ideas, practices and contemporary manifestations of a diversity of religious and non-religious worldviews. It should enable them to understand how worldviews are inextricably woven into, influence and are influenced by, all dimensions of human experience. It should prepare pupils for life in modern Britain by enabling them to engage respectfully with people with worldviews different from their own. RE should equip pupils to develop their own beliefs, practices, values and identity in the light of their reflections on the worldviews they have studied.

Through their study of worldviews, pupils should develop a lifelong motivation to enquire into questions of meaning and purpose, and investigate others' worldviews and what they mean for individuals, communities and society. All of this will enable them to become responsible citizens and members of diverse and changing local, national and global communities.

Throughout their period of compulsory schooling, pupils should learn about, understand and engage with:

- a. The diversity of religious and non-religious worldviews and ways of life that exist locally, nationally and globally.
- b. The ways in which communities and individuals holding different worldviews interact, change and maintain continuity in different times and contexts and as the surrounding culture changes.
- c. The different ways that people interpret and respond to texts and other sources of authority.
- d. The ways that people communicate their beliefs, experiences, values and identities through verbal and non-verbal means (eg prose, story, poetry, art, music, dance, ritual, architecture).
- e. How people seek moral guidance from religious and non-religious worldviews and how they interpret this guidance in their lives.
- f. The importance of experience, including extra-ordinary experiences, in shaping people's worldviews and how worldviews are used to interpret experience.

- g. The role of religious and non-religious rituals and practices in both creating and expressing experience, beliefs, values and commitments.
- h. The relationship between people's worldview and their thinking and actions concerning political, public, social and cultural life.
- i. Both the positive and negative exercise of power and influence resulting from people's worldviews.
- j. The important role that worldviews play in providing people with a way of making sense of their lives and in forming their identity.\*

As part of a balanced programme aimed at meeting this provision, it is expected that pupils will:

1. Experience meeting and visiting people from their local community from a range of worldviews including those different from their own and that of the school.
2. Develop core skills for researching the beliefs, values and practices of individuals and groups in society.
3. Experience a range of approaches to the study of religions (e.g. phenomenology, philosophy, sociology, textual studies, theology).
4. Engage with questions of meaning and purpose and of the nature of reality raised by the worldviews that they study.
5. Think through and develop a reflective approach to their own personal responses and developing identity and learn to articulate these clearly and coherently while respecting the right of others to differ.
6. Develop the core skills and dispositions of careful listening, critical thinking, self-reflection, empathy and open-mindedness required for making wise judgments.
7. Learn to discuss controversial issues and work with others (including those that they disagree with) with the intention of securing a healthy and peaceful society in the context of significant diversity.

*\* We are indebted to Barbara Wintersgill, who presented her project on Big Ideas in RE. Her work has informed much of the content of this list.*

## HOLDING SCHOOLS TO ACCOUNT FOR THE PROVISION AND QUALITY OF RE

- a. Schools should be required to publish on their website details of how they meet the national entitlement for RE.
- b. Inspection frameworks should be revised to ensure that inspectors monitor whether or not schools meet the national entitlement for RE, in the light of schools' duty to provide a broad and balanced curriculum.
- c. The DfE should either monitor, or give SACREs or other approved bodies the power and resources to monitor, the provision and quality of RE in all schools, including free schools, academies and schools of a religious character.
- d. The government should consider the impact of school performance measures, including the exclusion of RS GCSE from the EBacc, on GCSE entries and on the provision and quality of RE, and consider reviewing performance measures in the light of the evidence.

## A RENEWED AND EXPANDED ROLE FOR SACRES

We seek to consult on all our recommendations relating to SACREs. (See page 12)

## A NATIONAL PLAN FOR IMPROVING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RE

We are considering developing a National Plan for developing teaching and learning in RE, along the lines of the National Plan for Music Education. This plan is likely to include the following recommendations:

- a. A minimum of 12 hours should be devoted to RE in all primary Initial Teacher Education (ITE) courses.
- b. Leading primary schools for RE should be identified and all primary trainees should be given the opportunity to observe RE teaching in such a school.
- c. Include under the Teachers' Standards, part 1, section 3 (Demonstrate good subject and curriculum knowledge), the requirement that teachers 'demonstrate a good understanding of and take responsibility for the sensitive handling of controversial issues, including thoughtful discussion of religious and non-religious worldviews where necessary.'
- d. Restore funded Subject Knowledge Enhancement (SKE) courses for those applying to teach RE and for serving teachers of RE without a relevant post A-level qualification in the subject.
- e. Restore parity of bursaries for RE with those for other shortage subjects.

- f. The government and relevant funding bodies should consider how funding of grassroots teacher networks can be made more sustainable.
- g. SACREs and local authorities should review existing good practice in developing and sustaining these grassroots networks and start their own if such a network does not exist in their local area.
- h. University performance measures should be updated to credit universities for their engagement with schools, including the provision of continuing professional development (CPD) and resource materials.
- i. University staff conducting research in areas related to RE should be encouraged to contribute to grassroots networks, lead teacher development days, develop resource materials or become SACRE members. This may provide opportunities for them to demonstrate the impact of their research or increase student recruitment.

## LIST OF AREAS FOR CONSULTATION

### A NATIONAL ENTITLEMENT FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

1. The entitlement is not a national syllabus or curriculum. It is a basic statement of what all pupils are entitled to, whatever type of school they attend. Many schools will need guidance and support to translate this entitlement into curriculum planning, particularly in relation to progression. We are still reviewing where this guidance and support will come from. We seek input on what bodies would be best placed to translate the entitlement into detailed programmes of study and how best to support schools to plan their curriculum in line with the entitlement. Several possibilities have been discussed by the Commission so far:
  - a. Removing the requirement for local authorities to hold Agreed Syllabus Conferences (ASCs). In a context where every school will eventually become an academy, this requirement is no longer proportionate for many local authorities and will become even less so over time. However, it might be possible for programmes of study to be developed at regional levels. It would also be possible to include regional universities on this model. A regional system might not provide sufficient support to academies unless they were explicitly included. If the requirement for local authorities to develop a locally agreed syllabus were to be removed, it would not preclude those local authorities that had the resource and expertise from convening ASCs and developing programmes of study that could be adopted by those schools that chose to, within or outside that local authority.
  - b. Recommending the development of a national set of programmes of study compliant with the entitlement. This may or may not be government-funded. This has the advantage of providing consistency

across localities, which was requested by some teachers in the written and oral evidence. However, there are a number of potential difficulties with it. First, there is the vexed question of who develops programmes of study. Second, there is the justified criticism that in the era of a school-led system a nationally agreed set of programmes of study is too rigid and leaves schools insufficient freedom to undertake RE that is appropriate for their pupils and immediate community. Third, there is the question of how to ensure that the syllabus is appropriately independent of political interference. Many of those who gave oral and written evidence were concerned about excessive political interference in the scope and content of RE.

- c. Leaving the market open for schools, groups of schools, dioceses, SACREs, commercial providers and other relevant groups to write their own programmes of study. This would allow maximum freedom for schools but might not resolve the inequality in provision and quality discussed above. Non-statutory guidance or a range of model programmes of study might also be developed to support relevant groups in writing their own programmes of study.
2. There is likely to be a range of possibilities within these broad categories and other possibilities that we have not yet considered. We seek views on what would be most helpful to support schools with curriculum planning and ensure that all schools can meet the entitlement effectively.
3. The question also remains as to whether the entitlement statement should replace or supplement the current legislation on agreed syllabuses, which requires that they must ‘reflect the fact that religious traditions in Britain are in the main Christian, whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain’ (UK Parliament, Education Act 1996, Section 375.2). This legislative statement remains a statement of historical and social fact. Of those who identify themselves as having a religion, the majority are Christian, and Christianity has played a particular role in the history of Great Britain. However, the statement in and of itself does not specify how much time should be spent on any worldview. It also does not include non-religious worldviews. We seek views on whether the entitlement should specify a number and range of worldviews, or a minimum time to be spent on one worldview.
4. We have also discussed whether the name of the subject should be changed, to signify the renewed vision for the subject. It is difficult to find an alternative name that appropriately captures the breadth and depth of the subject as outlined in the entitlement statement. We have discussed a number of options. A small majority of the Commission preferred to call the subject Religion and Ethics (or Religions and Ethics) while others wished either to preserve the current name, or to change its name to Religions and Worldviews or Religion, Philosophy and Ethics (or Philosophy, Religion and Ethics). We seek views on which of these options best captures the nature of the subject outlined in the entitlement. We

also seek suggestions on alternative names which fit the entitlement and the renewed vision for the subject.

## HOLDING SCHOOLS TO ACCOUNT FOR THE PROVISION AND QUALITY OF RE

1. We seek views on the most appropriate mechanisms for holding schools to account for the provision and quality of RE at both primary and secondary level.
2. We are considering recommending that a revised qualification at Key Stage 4, for those not taking Full Course GCSE RS, be developed. This would need to meet the requirements of the national entitlement for RE and have currency in school performance measures. This qualification would not be compulsory but would count in school performance measures and in individuals' applications for work or further study. We seek views on how effective this would be and what demand there would be for such a qualification.

## A RENEWED AND EXPANDED ROLE FOR SACRES

1. We seek views on the following recommendations on the role of SACREs:
  - a. The Government should publicly highlight and reaffirm the important role of SACREs in supporting and resourcing RE.
  - b. The Government should consider whether the role of SACREs should be expanded to include a duty to advise on all matters relating to religion and belief in schools.
  - c. The Government should consider ways of securing funding to resource SACREs adequately. Options for this may include:
    - i. Ring-fenced funding for SACREs.
    - ii. Funding for SACREs from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport or the Department of Communities and Local Government.
    - iii. Specifying a minimum amount of funding (perhaps per school or per pupil) to which local authorities must adhere.
  - d. The Government should consider the composition of SACREs and the law should be changed to include representatives of non-religious worldviews as full members.
  - e. The Government should publish all SACRE annual reports publicly on a dedicated website.
2. We seek views on what the duties of SACREs should be in relation to promoting good community relations, beyond matters relating to religion

and belief in schools.

3. We are still considering how the composition of SACREs should be adapted to be fit for purpose in a changed social and educational landscape. In particular, we are considering whether the committee structure should be changed or abolished. We seek views and evidence on this.
4. We seek views on which groups and organisations should be represented on SACREs.

### THE RIGHT OF WITHDRAWAL

1. We seek further evidence on the number of pupils being withdrawn from RE, and the reasons given, where these are given, as well as whether the number of cases and reasons given have been changing over time.
2. We seek views on the most effective ways to manage the right of withdrawal in practice.
3. We seek views on whether it is desirable to look to adopt an overall approach to the design of the RE curriculum in every school so that it is sufficiently 'objective, critical and pluralistic' as to render it capable of being compulsory without the right of withdrawal.

### A NATIONAL PLAN FOR IMPROVING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RE

1. We seek views on what should be included in the National Plan for RE, beyond the recommendations set out above.
2. We seek views on how the National Plan might best be implemented.
3. There are increasing expectations of teachers to be engaged with research, by keeping up to date with published research at minimum, and where possible by engaging in action research, lesson study and other forms of practitioner research. We seek views on the kinds of research which would be most helpful for RE teachers to engage with, and what mechanisms would support this.





## Commission on Religious Education

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**SACRE DRAFT ACTION PLAN 2017-2018**  
**To meet the statutory duties of a SACRE**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Success criteria</b>
1. SACRE meetings are planned and dates published annually	Agenda planning Meeting preparation Report writing Meeting attendance Minute taking Publication of meeting agendas and minutes	Clerk, Chairman, Education Services	Termly committee meetings	Effective meetings with action points carried out. Members have a working knowledge of the syllabus and an understanding of the responsibilities of SACRE
2. SACRE consider reports and initiatives from NASACRE	Consider relevant material from NASACRE	Chairman and nominated rep	As information is published	Attendance at relevant NASACRE meetings Minutes record discussions
3. Produce annual report of SACRE.	Collate information and write report based on NASACRE template	Education services to write Chairman to read Clerk to circulate.	Substantially completed by end Dec 2017, and submitted within first 3 months of 2018	Completed on time and copies provided for SACRE members, Director, Assistant Director, CYP portfolio holder, libraries, schools and their governing bodies. NASACRE and the secretary of State for Education
4. Annual engagement with local schools to observe and understand Religious Education Collective Worship approaches	1. Annual letter to schools - encouraging them to engage with the SACRE and advise of available resources 2. Invite school visits 3. Members undertake school visits 4. Committee considers school reports	SACRE members at least one per year	Up to 4 school visits - 2 per term	Meaningful visits or discussion completed and reports discussed at SACRE meetings.
5. Share best practice with local SACREs	Invite local SACREs to present once a year, providing an update on how they are doing	Chairman / Clerk	Annually	
6. Provide information on curriculum to schools	Upload resources onto the Fronter system.	Education services	Occasional updating	Schools able to access syllabus
7. Evaluate SACRE work and establish priorities	Item at each meeting - using the NASACRE self-evaluation document	All SACRE members	Summer term meeting	Evaluation identified success criteria are met
8. Preparation of Revised Syllabus	Revision of the current Bromley Agreed Syllabus for RE	Education services	By September 2018	Revised Agreed Syllabus for RE available for schools from 1 Sept 2018

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