

## Regional and National updates

### Religion and Worldviews Project

The RE Council has published its Draft Handbook which sets out a rationale for a religion and worldviews approach, building on the developments since the 2018 Commission report. The handbook incorporates a revised National Statement of Entitlement (NSE), which gives a clear description of an education in religion and worldviews, and sets a benchmark for high-quality teaching and learning. The handbook then offers practical guidance, including how to use the NSE to develop a syllabus or curriculum, applying ways of knowing, developing pupils' personal worldviews, and what progress looks like in a worldviews approach.

**Stephen Pett**, REToday Adviser contributed to developing the handbook for syllabus writers and curriculum developers to support them on translating the REC's vision of an excellent education for all in Religion and Worldviews into practical resources for teachers.

Sections include:

- What do people mean by 'religion'?
- What do people mean by 'worldview'?
- The value of worldviews
- Purposes for RE in a religion and worldviews approach
- Revised National Statement of Entitlement
- Developing pupils' personal worldviews
- Making good progress
- Applying disciplinary methods
- How to use the NSE to develop a syllabus
- How to use the NSE to develop questions and construct units of work
- Making good progress: three models

The Draft Handbook is primarily written to inform three Framework Development Teams, who will work over the next 18 months to apply the NSE and the Handbook guidance to their own contexts. During this process, the handbook will be tested and revised as necessary, before the publication of a final Handbook, three example frameworks, sample units of work and pupil responses, in 2024. The handbook can be downloaded from the REC website <https://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/projects/draft-handbook-and-nse/>

### White paper on Education and RE

NASACRE is aware that members will be asking questions about the current [White Paper on Education](#). NASACRE is in touch regularly with the DfE about government policies and proposals, including the White Paper. They have another scheduled meeting soon to find out more about the likely impact of the proposals on SACREs, RE and collective worship.

Janet Daby MP asked a parliamentary question about this. Robin Walker reply said 'the department is aware that the ambition for a fully trust-led system will have an impact on SACREs. This is something that will be considered as we move towards greater academisation'.

The RE Policy Unit are planning further parliamentary questions on the white paper.

## REThinkRE media release and report card on RE

### **MEDIA RELEASE School and government performance on religious education failing record number of students, says landmark data review**

*Neglecting RE leaves 'gaping hole in the school curriculum', says Father of the House Sir Peter Bottomley in the wake of the Government's commitment to level up education across the country.*

The number of students taking a Religious Studies GCSE in England has risen by nearly a third in the last decade despite the subject being underfunded and poorly taught in many schools across England, a new 'state of RE' data analysis has revealed.

Despite the increase in students taking the subject, no government money has been spent on the subject in the last five years, while many academies fail to offer the high-quality RE provision that according to Ofsted 'affords students the opportunity to make sense of their own place in the world'.

The comprehensive review of data, carried about by a team from the Religious Education Council of England and Wales (REC), the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE), and RE Today Services, comes from a variety of sources, including an Ofsted subject report, public surveys, school workforce data, freedom of information requests, and interviews with teachers and students. It is the biggest 'state of RE' report for five years. We've graded the performance of schools, government and the subject itself in a review of five years of data.

The most significant findings are:

- A 50% increase in A-level entries for Religious Studies (RS) since 2003, beating Geography and History
- Higher Attainment 8 scores than average in schools with higher rates of entry for GCSE RS
- 46% of academies without a religious character have reported an increase in time to teach RE

However:

- Almost 500 secondary schools are still reporting zero hours of RE provision in Year 11
- Around 34% of academies are reporting no timetabled RE

Teaching RE is a legal requirement for all schools in England. All maintained schools have a statutory duty to teach RE while academies and free schools are contractually required through the terms of their funding agreement to make provision for the teaching of the subject.

NATRE Research Officer, Deborah Weston OBE, who led the data review, said: "With record numbers of students taking the subject, it is a great shame that RE is being neglected by the Government, and marginalised by some schools, particularly in the academy system. In the Queen's Speech we saw the Government's commitment to "help every child fulfil their potential, wherever they live". The data has shown us that high-quality RE enables precisely this, being a key marker for both academic achievement and a vital part of young people's development in making sense of their own worldview as part of the diverse and pluralistic nature of belief in the 21st century."

“The planned changes outlined in the Queen’s Speech provide a once in a generation opportunity to address most of the issues highlighted in this data. However, without a properly funded National Plan and a system of accountability for high-quality RE under the Government’s academy vision for all schools, we risk denying a generation of students access to this vital subject. A high-quality education in religion and worldviews must now be part of their plans to help every young person fulfil their potential in school, society and the world of work.”

In March, a parliamentary roundtable met to discuss the future of the subject, with the Father of the House, Sir Peter Bottomley, calling for a ‘National Plan’ for the subject.

Responding to the latest data, Sir Peter Bottomley said: “Looking at the performance data on this report card, too many young people are not getting a fair deal when it comes to religious education. In neglecting the subject, we leave a gaping hole in our school curriculum. At its best, RE prepares young people for the ethical, moral and religious debates that influence life in modern Britain and the wider world.”

The report card summarising the data review can be accessed here: [www.rethinkre.org/re-report-card](http://www.rethinkre.org/re-report-card)

### **NATRE report on RE in Secondary Schools**

Last summer NATRE reported that the revised Ofsted framework triggered a significant review of the curriculum in most schools, 23% of schools reported an increase in provision for RE. After years of decline, almost certainly caused by changes in performance measures and the subject being left out of the English Baccalaureate, this was a very welcome piece of good news.

However, looking at the posts advertised in the Times Educational Supplement, on Friday 27 May, just under 100 RE posts appeared, continuing the pattern of a buoyant recruitment season this year. You can read the full report here: <https://www.natre.org.uk/news/latest-news/snatching-defeat-from-victory/>

### **NASACRE conference**

Please find attached a one page summary of the recent NASACRE annual conference. Further information from the workshops and speakers can be accessed by using your members logon on the NASACRE website.