

National Updates Relating to Education and RE

A level Religious Studies numbers drop for first time in 20 years

After two decades of growth, numbers of students taking an A level in RS dropped by 2.7% in 2021. The National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE) and the Religious Education Council of England and Wales (REC) have warned this period of growth is now under threat after a five-year funding gap that has impacted current and future young people taking the subject.

www.natre.org.uk/news/latest-news/a-level-religious-studies-results-prompt-call-for-government-support/

This comes as research demonstrates that, in state schools in England, RS A level is one of the most likely subjects to be taken by disadvantaged students (fourth after sociology, psychology and English Lit), and that it is more accessible to students with lower prior attainment than many (11th out of 31). See <https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2022/04/do-disadvantaged-students-choose-different-subjects-from-their-peers-at-key-stage-5/> and www.natre.org.uk/news/latest-news/

How can SACRE respond?

GCSE numbers

- The number of students in England and Wales taking a GCSE course in Religious Studies GCSE has risen to 253,225, an increase of 0.6% from last year.
- The increase was largely driven by a surprise rise in the short course in England, up 16.5% from 15,672 to 18,257.
- In Wales, amid an overall 5% drop in pupils taking GCSEs, the number of entries to RS courses fell by 11%.

The strong entry results in England saw the Religious Education Council of England and Wales (REC) and the National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE) reiterate their call for a National Plan for the subject. They warn that an ongoing funding crisis and lack of a specialist teacher recruitment strategy now seriously threatens the provision of high-quality learning for the quarter of a million students who take the subject annually.

Joining the call for a National Plan was Lord Karan Bilimoria, CBE, DL, Vice President of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and Chancellor of the University of Birmingham who pointed to the number of disadvantaged students going on to take the subject at A level. A study in April (see above) found they were twice as likely to take the subject than their peers, favouring it over history and geography:

"When it comes to levelling up education, the latest data shows that giving more support to religious education students at GCSE is an easy win. If RS is the humanity that disadvantaged young people are most likely to take, then backing this up with a properly funded National Plan is a must. The subject will provide those young people with the crucial skills of analysis, curiosity and intellectual confidence as part of a broad, balanced education and give them a headstart in the global workplace."

www.natre.org.uk/news/latest-news/take-action-on-re-say-leading-politicians-as-more-students-take-the-subject-at-gcse/

How can SACRE respond?

RE report card 2022

The reactions to the above information on examination numbers draw on the report cards mentioned in previous news updates. The RE Policy Unit from the RE Council has gathered together data on RE from the last five years and written a report card on the state of RE. There is some excellent news (such as how schools with higher rates of GCSE RS entry get higher Attainment 8 scores!) but far too much bad news (34% of academies report no timetabled RE).

The full set can be found here: www.rethinkre.org/re-report-card

How can SACRE respond? Should SACRE alert local MPs to the information here, with particular reference to the lack of Government funding given to the subject in the last 5 years (see graphic on the right)? How else can we use the data?

**£0 SPENT ON RE
PROJECTS BETWEEN
2016-2021**

AT A TIME WHEN: "

ENGLISH:
**£28.5
MILLION**

MUSIC:
**£387
MILLION**

MATHS:
**£154
MILLION**

SCIENCE:
**£56
MILLION**

Online responses to the state of RE:

Kate Penfold Attride, primary Deputy Headteacher, makes the case for RE

- www.theheadteacher.com/attainment-and-assessment/teaching-practice/making-the-case-for-stronger-re-lessons-in-the-primary-curriculum

Imam Sabeh Ahmedi urges a rich RE curriculum:

- <https://schoolsworld.co.uk/poor-or-no-re-is-a-gaping-hole-in-the-curriculum/>

Proposals and Consultation on plans for new GCSEs in Wales!

Qualifications Wales has set out proposals for new GCSEs in Wales, designed with the Wales' new curriculum in mind. People across the UK are invited to participate in the consultation, and can submit comments relating to individual subjects as they choose. The deadline for which is 14th December 2022. The proposed changes will have significant impact on teachers and students not only in Wales, but in England also. For instances, questions are being raised around the equivalence of identically named qualifications that in practice will be very different in terms of content and how they are assessed. There are implications, too, for the future of GCSE RS in Wales.

Headline proposals relating to GCSE RS:

- The qualification will no longer be purely exam-based, but will be 30% coursework and 70% exam
- There will be a new Social Studies GCSE, which may compete with RS in terms of entries
- There will no longer be a short course GCSE RS, but there will be alternative Level 1 and 2 qualifications, e.g. Agored Cymru's 'Exploring Worldviews' and 'Equality and Diversity' courses, which have equivalence to GCSE, whilst being purely coursework-based.

GCSE RS proposals: [GCSE Religious Studies | Have your say - Qualifications Wales](#)

Overview of all the proposals for 26 GCSE subjects: [Have your say - Qualifications Wales](#)

Toolkit: [4e4027a4a0040f9799ac7dd7080b5e51 Toolkit.pdf](#)

Proposals for Humanities GCSE subjects: [Humanities | Have your say - Qualifications Wales](#)

Regional RE Hub leads in place and ready to go!

Under the leadership of Claire Clinton, Lead Director, a fantastic team of Regional Leads will be supporting ten regions of England and Wales. They have been recruited to build relationships with advisers, dioceses, universities, SACREs, LAs, governors, MATs, teaching school hubs and more. The Regional Leads will also act as conduits between the regional providers of research, CPD, resources, places of worship and so on for the benefit of all RE/Religion and Worldview stakeholders.

The Regional Hub structure aims to increase accessibility for all teachers to local and regional professional development and research, and to enable teachers to teach with greater confidence through their access to the support, knowledge, training and resources available in their region.

Details and the list of Regional Leads:

www.natre.org.uk/news/latest-news/the-regional-re-hubs-team-is-ready-to-go/

Wokingham comes under South East, whose Hub Leader is Justine Ball.

How can we help connect teachers to SACRE training and resources, and other local opportunities?

Culham St Gabriel's 'In conversation' series

Conversations are programmed for the autumn:

- 17 Oct: Christian ethics, animal welfare and the religion and worldview classroom (Prof David Clough and Scarlett Hayward)
- 21 Nov: Understanding understanding! What do we mean by understanding? (Prof Trevor Cooling and Dr Kate Christopher)
- 19 Dec: Conceptualising religion and worldviews for the school (Dr Kevin O'Grady)

Details and booking info here: www.cstg.org.uk/activities/events/in-conversation/

Extensive back catalogue here: www.reonline.org.uk/research/in-conversation/

How can SACRE respond? Perhaps a SACRE member volunteers to watch an 'In conversation' event and to report back on its implications for SACRE and local schools.

Inclusive Judaism: resources from the Jewish Museum of London

Classroom resources, including an extensive image library, open up the diversity of Jewish communities. Developers, Shereen Hunte and Eliana Mendelsohn, say:

The teaching of Inclusive Judaism is important for many reasons and ensures that:

- *The Jewish community is represented authentically.*
- *Students truly understand what it means to be Jewish, in all its diversity.*
- *We are able to connect to each other's experiences with empathy and compassion.*

See: [Inclusive Judaism - The Jewish Museum London](http://www.jewishmuseum.org.uk/inclusive-judaism)

How can SACRE enable schools to access this rich resource?

NATRE's annual Strictly RE conference returns on 28-29th January 2023

Taking place online for the third year, the conference themes explore: **depth, diversity and Abrahamic worldviews**

Before the weekend: 13 weekday seminars

On the weekend: 3 keynotes, 21 workshops, seven virtual staffrooms

Workshops include:

- Thinking out loud- joining the dots to help children think more critically (Primary)
- Introducing Philosophy and Philosophers to the Primary Classroom (Primary)
- Dharmic Lenses on the Climate Crisis (Secondary)
- Creating a core RE Programme for KS4 (Secondary)
- Interfaith conversations - exploring creative projects that deepen pupils' understanding in RE (Crossphase)
- Special RE (Crossphase)
- Championing and advocating for RE with parents (for SLT's)

Pay for the weekend, get access to recordings and downloads for ALL sessions!

Details and booking info:

www.natre.org.uk/courses-events/strictlyRE-2023/

How can SACRE respond? Could a SACRE member attend and report back?

NATRE Spirited Arts 2023 – new themes announced

Will schools from our area join hundreds of schools from around the world taking part in this year's Spirited Arts competition? Entries are welcomed in (almost!) any art form pupils can think of. Winning entries will provide a good response to one of the 5 themes, and judges will be asking is it original? Is it well-crafted? And (most importantly!) is it excellent RE?

The 6 themes

1. "We have more in common than that which divides us."
2. Green faith, green future? ['God's good earth?']
3. Where is God today?
4. Faith in action, values in action.
5. Sacred space and holy buildings
6. All God's Creatures?

Find out more details here www.natre.org.uk/about-natre/projects/spirited-arts/spirited-arts-2022/

2022 results will soon be available on the NATRE website

How can SACRE encourage schools take part in this competition? Can this link in with anything going on locally? Some SACREs have held local Spirited arts competitions and worked to display entries in a local museum. Is this something this SACRE might consider?

Visits, videos and other resources for the classroom

Birmingham faith visits

The Arts Society Birmingham has worked with six faith communities to provide guidance and materials on six places of worship. Teachers can find a 4-page booklet, three videos introducing the building and community, and a related quiz for each place of worship.

Supported by a generous grant from Westhill Endowment Trust, The Arts Society Birmingham has collaborated with six different places of worship, Birmingham Faith Leaders and other organisations to produce resources designed to enhance a school visit, or to support a virtual visit, to a place of worship for children 8 to 13 years.

Actual visits to the places of worship may be arranged by contacting them directly. Contact details are provided on the Illustrated Guides.

<https://birmingham-faith-visits.theartsociety.org/>

Free webinars for primary and secondary ECTs – a taster for NATRE ECT membership

Early Career Teachers have access to a range of free support through a series of online sessions. ‘Café’ sessions give you a chance to talk with experienced teachers and experts from different worldview backgrounds. The taught sessions offer expert input with a focus on practical classroom strategies.

| Date – All Mondays 4.00-5.30pm | Topic |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 10 Oct | Café NATRE – Subject knowledge Islam |
| 14 Nov | Taught session: Focus on Disciplinary RE |
| 12 Dec | Café NATRE: Subject knowledge Buddhism |
| 9 Jan | Taught session: Focus on Non-religious worldviews |
| 13 Feb | Taught session: Focus on Hindu Dharma |
| 13 Mar | Café NATRE – Subject knowledge Judaism |
| 8 May | Taught session: Focus on Worldviews |
| 12 June | Taught session: Focus on Sikhi |
| 10 July | Café NATRE: Subject knowledge Christianity |

ECT webinars booking link <http://ow.ly/VupG50KG3cP>

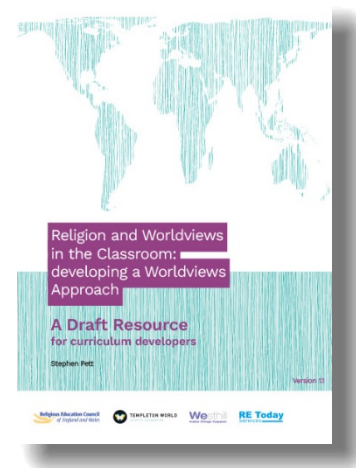
Draft Resource for Religion and Worldviews in the Classroom

As part of a three-year Worldviews project, the RE Council of England and Wales (REC) has published a draft resource for Religion and Worldviews in the Classroom.

The resource sets out a rationale for a religion and worldviews approach, building on the developments since the 2018 Commission report. It 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 resource 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.

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 resource is primarily written to inform three Framework Development Teams, who are currently working to apply the NSE and the guidance to their own contexts. During this process, the draft resource 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.

You can download copies of here: www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/projects/draft-handbook-and-nse/

This is a next step towards a worldviews approach in our subject. How might SACRE consider this and its implications for our local syllabus?

NASACRE update Autumn 2022

NASACRE Ambitious SACREs Conference

NASACRE held its **Ambitious SACREs Conference and AGM** on 23rd May 2022, online. The Programme included a keynote address by Dr David Hampshire who produced NASACRE's report on the Analysis of SACRE Annual Reports (see below). The programme also included a talk by Dr Richard Kueh, Ofsted Lead for RE who spoke on the substance of the curriculum: high quality RE and Ofsted's Inspection Frameworks, and Ed Pawson who spoke about the REC and its work to ensure high quality education in religion and worldviews.

NASACRE online training programme

NASACRE is continuing its training and support for SACREs and SACRE members. Here are the sessions coming up in the next 4 months:

- 13 Oct: 7.00-8.30 Applying for and gaining a Westhill/NASACRE award
- 17 Nov: 7-8pm SACREs – a way forward...?
- 19 Jan 2023: 7-8.30 om Being an effective Chair, part 2

Full details of all sessions and costs: <https://nasacre.org.uk/training-and-support/>

Are any of these sessions a priority for SACRE members?

NASACRE Analysis of SACRE Annual Reports (2020-2021)

NASACRE has completed its **Analysis of SACRE Annual Reports 2020-2021** and the full report written by Dr David Hampshire is now available here [ANALYSIS OF SACRE ANNUAL REPORTS 2020-2021 FOR THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STANDING COUNCILS ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION \(NASACRE\)](#)

The link to the report was emailed to SACRE members on 07/10/2022. The report provides an overview of what SACREs around the country have achieved, along with the barriers they have faced. There is an executive summary on page 2.

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