

Public Document Pack
SOUTHEND-ON-SEA BOROUGH COUNCIL

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Date: Wednesday, 28th September, 2016

Time: 2.30 pm

Place: Committee Room 4 - Civic Suite

Contact: Robert Harris

Email: committeesection@southend.gov.uk

AGENDA

- 1 Election of Chair and Vice-Chair**
- 2 Apologies for Absence**
- 3 Declarations of Interest**
- 4 Minutes of Previous Meeting**
- 5 SACRE Member Training: Statutory Duties Dealing with Determinations**
Training session to be provided by REToday
- 6 SACRE Membership**
Verbal report from the SACRE Clerk (no papers)
- 7 SACRE Advisors Report**
Report of the SACRE Advisors report (to follow)
- **** SACRE Response to Recent Reports**
- 8 NASACRE Consultation on Revised Constitution** (Pages 1 - 4)
NASACRE current constitution and revised constitution attached.
- 9 Tell MAMA Report** (Pages 5 - 6)
MAMA Executive Summary attached for discussion.
- 10 School Governors Responsibility for RE** (Pages 7 - 10)
Primary and Secondary School Briefing papers attached for discussion.
- 11 Accord Coalition Annual Award 2017** (Pages 11 - 12)
Accord Coalition Award criteria attached.
- 12 Improving Religious Literacy** (Pages 13 - 14)
Executive summary report from the All Party Parliamentary Group on Religious Education attached.
- 13 Post-Brexit Britain: Building Respectful Schools and Societies** (Pages 15 - 20)
Letter from the NASACRE Chair attached.
- 14 Date and time of next meeting**

Members:

Ryan (Chair), Cllr M Davidson, Cllr L Davies, Cllr F Evans, Cllr M Borton, Cllr J Ware-Lane, Cllr D McGlone, S Tinning, M Buckley, Ms L Hopkinson, Mrs Larkin, Mistry, Ms P Draycott, Mr G Licence, C Pegler, Mr B Maddison, Dr Khokha, Mr J Greenstein, Werrett and Werrett

NASACRE Proposed constitution 2016

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1. The Name of the Association:

The name of the Association shall be the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (NASACRE).

2. The Aims of the Association:

The aims of the Association shall be:

2.1 To assist the Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs) to fulfil their responsibilities

2.2 To represent their common concerns to other bodies

2.3 To assist in the training and mutual consultation of SACRE members

2.4 To encourage the development of SACREs

2.5 To undertake such other activities, appropriate to SACREs, as may benefit RE and collective worship

3. Basis of membership and duties:

3.1 Each SACRE shall be invited to join the Association, membership being renewable annually on payment of the annual subscription in place at that time. Representative members of each SACRE constitute the Council.

3.2 The Council shall meet at least once annually; this meeting shall be known as the Annual General Meeting (AGM). It will be deemed to be quorate when one quarter of member SACREs is represented.

3.3 Each member SACRE shall be entitled to send any number of representatives to the meetings of the Council, but on any matter on which the Council takes a vote, each member SACRE shall be entitled to cast one vote only.

3.4 The Council shall be responsible for review and amendment of the Constitution, as appropriate.

3.5 A majority of one half plus one of the Council shall be necessary for any amendment to the Constitution.

4. The Honorary Officers:

Honorary Officers shall be nominated by a SACRE and must be an officer to, or a member or co-opted member of, that SACRE.

These shall be elected for a period of two years and shall comprise:

4.1 The Chair

4.2 The Vice Chair

4.3 The Assistant to the Chair

4.4 The Secretary

4.5 The Treasurer

The Vice Chair / Chair / Assistant to the Chair is a 6 year term of office with 2 years in each Officer role, the Vice Chair being elected to automatically move into the next role after two years. At any one time, 3 officers will be on the Executive at different stages of these roles. If at any time, one of these Officers is unable to continue, the Executive may appoint a temporary substitute from the other two post holders until the next AGM, when the position will be regularised.

An Honorary Officer may relinquish their office at any time. If an Honorary Officer is absent from three consecutive Committee meetings they shall be deemed to have relinquished their office and would need to seek re-election at the next Council AGM if they so desired.

5. The Executive Committee (the Committee):

Committee members shall be nominated by a SACRE and must be an officer to, or a member or co-opted member of, that SACRE. Similarly, a person co-opted by the Committee would normally be an officer to a SACRE or a member of a SACRE, but in some cases their specific area of expertise might be deemed more significant than the aforementioned criteria.

The Committee shall comprise the elected Honorary Officers together with no more than eight other members elected by the Council. The Committee shall have the power to co-opt up to three additional members. The Committee shall include the following:

5.1 The Assistant to the Chair who shall be the previous Chair and shall assist for a period of two years

5.2 A Membership Secretary who shall monitor the membership, keep up to date records and work with the Treasurer to ensure members have paid their fees on time

5.3 A Communications Officer who shall have oversight of the Association's communications strategy and communications, including the NASACRE briefings sent to member SACREs

5.4 A Conference Organiser who shall have oversight of the Annual Conference in partnership with the Secretary and the Treasurer

5.5 A Development Officer who shall oversee the production of a development plan and report to the Executive and Council on its progress

With the agreement of the Committee, the roles set out in 5.1 – 5.5 may be shared between members of the Committee. Members of the Committee shall serve for a period of three years, at which time they must seek re-election by the Council at the appropriate AGM. Normally, members of the Executive Committee should not serve more than six years consecutively. Co-opted members shall normally serve for two years when a review by the Committee will take place; they may serve as a co-opted member for up to six years consecutively.

If a member of the Committee misses three consecutive Committee meetings they shall be deemed to have left the Committee.

The Committee shall be responsible for the planning of other activities and events in fulfilment of the aims of the Association.

6. Subscriptions and Finance:

There shall be a membership fee, which shall be fixed from time to time by the Council. This fee shall not be deemed as the payment for the Annual Conference for that part of the Conference that is not the Council.

7. Winding-up:

If for any reason the Association were to be dissolved, any assets remaining in the Association's bank account(s) shall be divided equally between those SACREs which were members at the time of the dissolution of the Association, once all other debts outstanding had been cleared.

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Tell MAMA Annual Report 2015: NASACRE Summary

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The **Tell MAMA Annual Report** was launched in Parliament on 29th June this year. It highlights hate crime against Muslims in the UK. The report, entitled: *The Geography of Anti-Muslim Hatred*, looked at where Muslims reported hate crime against them. A number of interesting things were revealed:

- The majority of hate crimes were directed at women who were visibly Muslim
- The majority were perpetrated by white males
- The majority occurred on or near an A Road or transport hub

There was no correlation between places that Muslims were attacked and places of high unemployment or social deprivation.

11% of attacks were in places of education. In relation to this one of the comments in the report is: It is important that headteachers, teachers, and safeguarding leads in schools are trained to deal with Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate (page 29).

The report also noted:

Given that schools are an important place for educating and socialising young people in multicultural settings, the fact that there are more incidents in educational institutions than took place against Muslim institutions is troubling. (page 39).

SACREs may wish to look at this **report in full** and ask the local authority what it is doing in light of the report. It may also want to ask how the local authority is working with transport providers to ensure that pupils who are identified as Muslims are being kept safe from bullying, intimidation and hate crime. What is clear is that girls and young women are much more vulnerable than their male counterparts so the question arises: what is the local authority and schools within the authority's area doing to ensure that these pupils are kept safe.

Of course there is a further question worth asking: if so much time is being given in many schools to the teaching of Islam in RE, why isn't this having a more positive impact on the lives of Muslims in Britain? If RE teachers are proud of their contribution to promoting shared values and community cohesion why is the percentage of hate crime against Muslims so high in schools?

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THE PROVISION AND TRAINING OF TEACHERS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: GUIDANCE FOR GOVERNING BODIES OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS

The purpose of this paper is to make school governors aware of the findings and recommendations of *Religious Education the Truth Unmasked*, which reports the outcomes of the recent inquiry held by the All Party Parliamentary Group for RE (APPG). The full text of the report can be found on the RE Council website: <http://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/appg/news/2013-03-18/appg-re-final-report-the-truth-unmasked>

Governors' legal responsibility for religious education (RE)

Governing bodies and headteachers in all state schools must ensure that provision is made for RE for all pupils, unless they are withdrawn by their parents. Further details, in particular guidance on the RE curriculum to be taught in different types of school, may be found in two documents on the Department for Education (DfE) website:

- 1 *Religious education in English schools: Non-statutory guidance 2010.*
<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum/a0064886/religious-education-in-english-schools-non-statutory-guidance-2010>
- 2 *Religious Education (RE) in academies and free schools.*
http://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/media/file/re_and_collective_worship_in_acads_a.pdf

The importance of RE

The APPG concluded that:

Religious Education has a vital and powerful contribution to make in equipping young people, whatever their backgrounds and personal beliefs with the skills to understand and thrive in a diverse and shifting world. The ... subject is now under threat as never before, just at the moment when it is needed most.

The staffing of primary RE

Ofsted has found that pupils' achievement in RE is very inconsistent. At the time of Ofsted's most recent report on RE (Ofsted 2010)¹ primary school pupils' achievement in RE was good or outstanding in only 4 out of 10 schools. The APPG inquiry identified four key concerns related to the deployment of teachers that contributed to these disappointing standards in RE.

- a) ***The excessive use of teaching assistants to teach RE.*** Ofsted has found that class teachers use their RE lesson time for planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) more than they use other subject time. In over half of the 300 primary schools participating in the APPG inquiry, some or all pupils were taught RE by someone other than the class teacher. In 24% of schools in the inquiry RE was taught to some children by higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs), a practice almost unknown in foundation subjects such as history, geography and design and technology. The outcome is not always negative and Ofsted has reported that in the few occasions 'where the teaching assistants were very carefully supported, managed and monitored, their enthusiasm and interest in the subject could have a very positive impact on pupils' learning' (Ofsted 2010:36). BUT generally the practice is not good and reflects the low status of RE in many schools (2.2-2.5).

¹ Ofsted (2010) Transforming Religious Education

- b) **Teachers' lack of confidence.** About a half of primary teachers and trainee teachers lack confidence in teaching RE (2.6-2.10). Evidence presented to the APPG shows that the following reasons account for trainees' caution/lack of confidence with RE:
- Fear of bias (especially in those of faith)
 - Feeling of unpreparedness/ lack of experience
 - Fear about pronunciations
 - Fear of offending
 - Unsure about the RE curriculum
 - Fear of teaching controversial topics
 - Uncertainty about the place of RE in the curriculum
- c) **RE subject leaders' lack of expertise.** About a half of subject leaders who replied to the inquiry said that they lacked the expertise or experience to undertake their role effectively (2.11-2.13) Over a third of primary RE subject leaders in responding schools had no qualifications in RE above GCSE/O Level.
- d) **Insufficient teacher training in RE.** There is a wide variation in the extent of initial teacher training in RE and too many trainee teachers had little or no effective preparation for teaching the subject.(2.14-2.16)

Support for primary teachers of RE

The APPG inquiry found that in spite of many teachers' weak subject knowledge and confidence, too little in service training in RE is available (6.1-6.3). In particular:

- a) RE subject leaders responding to the APPG identified three particular CPD needs above all others:
- improving their knowledge of world religions
 - help with implementing a new agreed syllabus
 - how to assess pupils' learning
- b) The ability of SACREs to provide support for teachers of RE at a local level has been dramatically reduced by local authority funding decisions. (6.31-6.36)
- c) Primary teachers and subject leaders in schools without a religious character have particularly limited access to RE CPD (6.13-6.21)
- d) Teachers' access to RE CPD is a postcode lottery; it depends on the resources of their local SACRE or diocese, proximity to training and the priority given to RE in schools.
- e) CPD is sometimes provided by other organisations, if teachers know where to look. In particular the National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE) provides after-school RE support groups in some areas. In addition several websites (e.g. NATRE) and journals (e.g. RE Today) offer subject knowledge and ideas for teaching. Charitable trusts such as Culham St Gabriel's and the Farmington Institute also offer CPD opportunities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In response to the APPG recommendations governors should:

- require a review of RE in the school to find out
 - the extent of teachers' confidence in teaching RE, and the reasons for any lack of confidence
 - how many teachers, if any, are not teaching RE to their class and the reasons why
 - the training, expertise and enthusiasm of staff covering other teachers' RE classes
- require the school leadership to:
 - make proper provision for continuing professional development for RE subject leaders and others with responsibility for teaching RE in order to improve its quality
 - ensure that the RE subject leader knows where to find training and support locally and from national organisations
 - provide regular opportunities for RE subject leaders to train their colleagues in subject knowledge and planning and assessing RE.

THE PROVISION AND TRAINING OF TEACHERS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: GUIDANCE FOR GOVERNING BODIES OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The purpose of this paper is to make school governors aware of the findings and recommendations of *Religious Education the Truth Unmasked*, which reports the outcomes of the recent inquiry held by the All Party Parliamentary Group for RE (APPG). The full text of the report can be found on the RE Council website: <http://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/appg/news/2013-03-18/appg-re-final-report-the-truth-unmasked>

Governors' legal responsibility for religious education (RE)

Governing bodies and headteachers in all state schools must ensure that provision is made for RE for all pupils, unless they are withdrawn by their parents. Further details, in particular guidance on the RE curriculum to be taught in different types of school, may be found in two documents on the Department for Education (DfE) website:

- 1 *Religious education in English schools: Non-statutory guidance 2010.*
<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum/a0064886/religious-education-in-english-schools-non-statutory-guidance-2010>
- 2 *Religious Education (RE) in academies and free schools.*
http://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/media/file/re_and_collective_worship_in_acads_a.pdf

Why does RE matter?

The APPG concluded that:

Religious Education has a vital and powerful contribution to make in equipping young people, whatever their backgrounds and personal beliefs with the skills to understand and thrive in a diverse and shifting world. The ... subject is now under threat as never before, just at the moment when it is needed most.

To what extent are standards and the teaching of secondary RE a problem?

The most recent Ofsted report on RE found that pupils' achievement in RE in secondary schools shows a very mixed picture. It was good or outstanding in 40 of the 89 schools visited, requiring improvement in 45 schools and inadequate in 14 schools. The APPG inquiry identified five key concerns related to the management of teachers that contributed to these disappointing standards in over half of all secondary schools.

- a) **The excessive use of non-specialists.** The DfE has argued that pupils' attainments are affected "above all other factors" by the quality of their teachers. Ofsted has found that the lack of teachers' subject qualifications is a key factor affecting pupils' examination success. Nevertheless, nearly half of those teaching RE in secondary schools have no qualification or appropriate expertise in the subject are unlikely to have the subject knowledge to meet the DfE's national teaching standards.
- b) **The inappropriate use of non specialists.** Non specialists can be effective when they receive training and are well supported by subject specialists. The APPG identified particular weaknesses in teaching where:
 - non specialists are deployed to teach RE because they have gaps in their timetables, rather than from any interest in the subject
 - several non specialists are used to teach a few RE lessons each week, rather than one non specialist who can develop subject expertise and experience
 - different non specialists are used every year, inhibiting continuity and the development of subject expertise.

The APPG found that in such cases non specialists often lacked the confidence to move beyond the predictability of a text book or work sheet and found that other commitments made attendance at departmental meetings difficult.

- c) ***Schools misunderstanding the legal position of RE.*** Some secondary school leadership teams understood the omission of RE from the EBacc as a statement that it no longer has to be taught at Key Stage 4. This is not the case and Michael Gove, the Secretary of State for Education has said, 'The Government is committed to maintaining the status of RE as a compulsory subject that all pupils must study throughout their schooling'.
- d) ***Insufficient continuing professional development (CPD) in RE.*** In nearly 40% of schools RE teachers have inadequate access to continuing professional development. RE teachers in schools without a religious character have particularly limited access to CPD. RE Teachers' access to CPD is a postcode lottery; it depends on the resources of their local SACRE or diocese, proximity to training and the priority given to RE in schools

What are the most urgent needs of RE heads of department and teachers of RE?

The APPG identified the following needs as priorities for heads of RE:

- a) Training in the accurate evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of all aspects of RE in the school; in particular answering the questions 'Are standards in RE high enough?' and 'Is RE teaching good enough?'
- b) Training in planning for the development of RE in the school with a focus on raising standards and improving teaching.
- c) A balance of internal and external training. External training gives RE specialists access to information about such priorities as curriculum change, new resources and local faith community contacts. Courses also provide invaluable opportunities to meet and exchange experiences with subject specialists from other schools.
- d) Subject training for ***all*** non specialist teachers of RE, focusing on the development of subject knowledge.

In response to the APPG recommendations governors should:

- a) initiate a review of RE in the school to find out
 - to what extent the school is meeting legal requirements to teach RE to all pupils, except those withdrawn by their parents
 - the subject qualifications and training of all teachers of RE (including non specialists)
 - the number of non-specialists teaching RE, the number of weekly lessons taught by each and the number of years each has been teaching RE
 - where teachers of RE find support for their teaching
 - how much subject-specific CPD RE teachers have had in the last three years
 - the proportion of Key Stage 4 and post-16 pupils entered for public examinations in RE
- b) work with the school leadership to:
 - use non-specialists to teach RE only when all other possibilities have been explored
 - identify only one or two non specialist teachers who are willing to teach RE, where the use of non-specialists is necessary
 - provide training for all non-specialists teaching RE. High quality, inexpensive subject knowledge booster courses are available on line, for example see Culham St Gabriel's (www.cstg.org.uk)
 - provide high quality RE throughout the school, assessed where possible through public examinations
 - make proper provision for continuing professional development for the RE head of department and others who teach RE in order to improve its quality
 - ensure that the RE subject leader knows where to find training and support locally and from national organisations. In addition to the local SACRE, the National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE) provides after-school RE support groups in some areas. Several websites (e.g. the RE Council, NATRE and REOnline) and journals (e.g. RE Today, REsource) offer subject knowledge and ideas for teaching. Charitable trusts such as Culham St Gabriel's and the Farmington Institute also offer CPD opportunities and bursaries for higher degrees.

Inclusivity Award 2017

August 30, 2016

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The scope of the awards

The Accord Coalition's Inclusivity Award is doing something different over the coming year. So far the Award has been open to schools in England and Wales, but for the 2017 Award judges are only inviting nominations from Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education – the local authority committees that monitor the Religious Education and assemblies that most schools provide. Award judges have previously always paid very close attention to the RE that schools provide, so reviewing the often overlooked work of SACREs is an extension of these concerns.

How the Awards will be judged

Ofsted's 2013 triennial **report** into the provision of RE described the subject as making '... a significant contribution to pupils' academic and personal development. It also plays a key role in promoting social cohesion and the virtues of respect and empathy, which are important in our diverse society. However, the potential of RE was not being realised fully in the majority of the schools surveyed for this report.'

RE has many expectations placed upon it in terms of what people want it to achieve, while the standing of the subject has been challenged in recent years. In England RE GCSE been left out of the high profile English Baccalaureate school performance indicator, while SACREs have – as local authority committees – suffered as local Councils have been required to make significant savings. The 2017 Award seeks to reward those SACREs in England and Wales that, despite current demands and pressures, have worked hardest and gone that extra step to help boost the growth of inclusion, cohesion and mutual understanding between those of different religions and beliefs.

SACREs will not be disadvantaged for being located in a diverse or relatively mono-cultural area, though judges will be interested in how a SACRE's approach may have been tailored to meet local issues. SACREs will also not be disadvantaged because of the number of schools that must follow its syllabus, though judges are interested in any leadership a SACRE may provide to local schools that aren't required to follow the local syllabus. Other features of the SACRE's approach that would be of interest include how it may:

- recognise the diversity which exists within and between communities and amongst individuals
- enquire into what enables different individuals and communities to live together respectfully for the well-being of all
- assist pupils in agreeing or disagreeing respectfully
- develop pupil's analytical tools and human sympathies needed to appreciate and understand different beliefs and values while developing and adhering to their own life-stance and identity
- complement school's general duty under the 2010 Equality Act to advance equality of opportunity, foster good relations and tackle discrimination
- support school's governing body in upholding their requirement under the 2006 Education and Inspections Act to promote community cohesion

Each SACRE will be evaluated through the [nomination form](#) received on its behalf. Given the nature of the information requested, forms should be completed by someone involved in a SACREs work. If you know of an inclusive SACRE that you think should be considered then please suggest that they apply – and tell us about their strongest attributes, and we will ask them to consider submitting a nomination as well.

Applicants that go over the word limit will be penalised. Judges also cannot accept hard copies of extra information, so if you wish them to see extra information in support of the SACREs work please consider including web links. If you only have supporting information in hard copy then please consider scanning and hosting a copy of it somewhere and then linking to it. Download a [nomination form here](#). Topics that the judges are interested may have already been seriously considered in the SACRE's annual report.

Judging panel

Now in its eighth year, the Award will be judged by another respected and experienced panel of experts from a range of backgrounds. Please check this page for an announcement on the final lineup.

APPG Report on Religious Literacy – NASACRE Reflection

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Religious Education (APPG/RE), under its new Chair Fiona Bruce, MP, took many people by surprise when it branched out into an enquiry on Religious Literacy, having already dispensed with its previous partners from the Religious Education Council (REC) as facilitators for the APPG, in favour of House of Commons support.

The APPG/RE set up a consultation process, with evidence being heard from a number of invited individuals and organisations, and with a general invitation to all interested people and groups to submit material.

Given the complexity of the field of enquiry, it is remarkable that the APPG/RE has now produced a **report** of its findings “Improving Religious Literacy” in such a relatively short space of time. It is even more remarkable that, in spite of signs of hasty production (two clashing numbering systems, some typos), the report stands up well, with a wide range of pertinent recommendations. It contains an impressive list of references (enough for several PhD theses!), and it is a compelling and substantial contribution to public debate, not just about RE, but about the healthy development of society as a whole.

The report is eminently quotable at many points. It is a vigorous and stimulating document. However, its working definition of “Religious Literacy”, comprising four elements, is less quotable and will call for the reader’s powers of concentration and acuity. The cumbersome and laboured formula may point to a sense that the concept of Religious Literacy is not entirely self-explanatory, and perhaps also to an awareness that discussion of Religious Literacy has not been without controversy.

Much more positively, many of us will heartily echo the report’s summary of the predicament facing RE today: (Para 6.6)

Many of the difficulties identified in the teaching of RE were long-term and structural. The situation is now urgent. Respondents argued that RE in many schools has been marginalisedSome schools are not fulfilling their statutory requirementtoo often RE lessons are being taught by teachers who are not specialists in the subject and who do not have access to (adequate) continuing professional development. ...other factors have also had an adverse effect on the quality of the subject, including the exclusion of RE from the English Baccalaureate and a decline in resources for SACREs. This report is not the first to note such findings.

Equally trenchant, and strongly affirming, are the words of the APPG/RE Chair in her foreword:

“We are....entering a defining period for our country, our national life and our national identity. The shape of *our religious landscape is changing, as is the place of religion in the public sphere, our private lives and our local communities..... It is more important*

than ever that....we all have the knowledge and skills required to engage effectively with religion."

"...the provision of high quality school-based RE, and good teaching and learning about religion beyond the school years in the whole of life context, cannot be allowed to fall off the agenda of the government or Parliament. I will continue....to highlight to government the importance of providing excellent RE for every child...."

Of the report's twenty four recommendations, the first ten relate to RE. Many of these ten are concerned with ensuring that RE is taught to a consistent standard of excellence by a plentiful army of specialist or properly prepared teachers who have good access to continuing professional development (CPD), to which we all loudly say "Amen". In addition, the report calls for training in Religious Literacy to be incorporated into all Secondary Initial Teacher Training and to be available more widely in CPD programmes for all teachers. It also encourages the Minister to re-examine the exclusion of RE from the EBacc, and "for all relevant parties to participate in the ongoing discussions about the legal framework for RE in schools and other major issues."

The remaining recommendations underline the argument that while RE is an essential resource for promoting Religious Literacy, the responsibility for improving Religious Literacy within society as a whole cannot be left entirely at the RE door, or even in schools themselves. Rather, this responsibility rests on all of us, with the Government needing to take the lead. So within the report there are recommendations for various government departments and civil servants, for the media (e.g. that the new BBC Charter should include a commitment to promote Religious Literacy), for expert editorial scrutiny of policy documents, for encouraging public engagement in inter-communal dialogue, projects and outreach, for channeling funding into community initiatives delivering Religious Literacy, and so on.

The title page of the report makes it clear that the report has no official status; it is simply "A Contribution to the Debate". Nevertheless, it has been produced and issued by a group of people who do have influence, and who have access to key government ministers and departments. We must hope that the report will add significantly to the case being constantly put to the government that good quality RE in schools, while crucially important for our personal and societal wellbeing, is unsustainable in the present circumstances: something must be done, soon.

**Citizenship, RE and PSHE need to be promoted to build respectful schools and societies
in post-Brexit Britain**

An open letter to the Secretary of State for Education

[anyone unable to edit to add own signature, please email lundied@hope.ac.uk]

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Dear Ms Greening,

Following an urgent discussion of the implications that the referendum and subsequent xenophobic attacks have for moral and values education[1], we the undersigned call on the government to renew its commitment to community cohesion as an essential part of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all young people. Firstly, we note that schools have not contributed to the rise in racism, xenophobia and division in the UK, and we would point the Secretary of State to the many examples of good practice such as the ‘*REsilience*’ programme[2], which supported teachers in dealing with contentious issues in the classroom. We are aware that the ever-changing world throws up challenges and opportunities for young people, for which they need to learn how to manage risk, make informed choices, and know how to access help and participate in democracy at all levels.

Nonetheless, we acknowledge that the referendum has raised deep questions about identity and belonging for many young people, for which an increasingly narrow academic curriculum has left them ill-equipped. In addition to acquiring knowledge, young people need to successfully develop conflict resolution, decision making skills, self-regulation, self-respect, negotiation and respect for those with different beliefs and values. We join with the many voices from faith and political leaders in condemning the rise of xenophobic and racist attacks. Schools provide an important space for dialogue, where opinions can be expressed, respected and evaluated. While we are aware of the many pressing matters for your attention, we ask you to make time to listen to existing good practice in spiritual, moral, social and cultural education from the Religious Education, Citizenship and Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education professional communities. We call on government to enable teachers to continue the good work of asking challenging questions, acknowledging the discomforting nature of some of the answers, and promoting a vision of our young people as global and European citizens.

Now is the time to commit to a renewed conversation about our shared national values, ensuring that young people’s voices are heard. In particular, we are aware of the dangers of some schools misinterpreting the need to promote fundamental British values in ways which close down, rather than open up, meaningful discussions. Religious Education and Assemblies are often the areas of school life where local and community concerns can most effectively be addressed, but we also recognise the fragility of these areas of the curriculum, which are increasingly being squeezed out by time pressures for ‘core’ academic subjects. This space for learning and for dialogue needs to permeate the whole curriculum and culture of schools, and not be seen as the preserve of any one curriculum subject. We also stress the need for democratic, moral and citizenship education to be experiential, something in which

students participate, and not something which is done ‘to’ them. We encourage school leaders to include both local and global perspectives across the curriculum and to draw hope from the continuing good practice of teachers in this area.

The area of values education has been the beneficiary of a number of positive European collaborations, shaped by consensus among teachers, academics and communities. These initiatives have helped practitioners in the UK evolve a sense of shared European identity, and go beyond access to funding sources. For example, the Council of Europe has developed policies and strategies for teaching about religious diversity, intercultural, citizenship and human rights education[3]. Only this month the Foundation for Peace launched a European Commission supported education tool ‘*Extreme Dialogue*’ to help schools to challenge extremism[4]. The OECD PISA assessment emphasises attitudes and values in addressing how we live together in its framework for Global Competence. We will always continue to seek out and develop these collaborations, and ask the government to seek assurances to enable continuing movement of young people and ideas.

We encourage the Department for Education to seek an inclusive conversation with young people, experts, practitioners and communities about the nature of British values and identity in the 21st century, seeking to include the devolved governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. We note that reports from Westminster Faith Debates, the Commission on Religion and Belief in British Public Life and the Faiths and Civil Society Unit have called for review, including a wider study of values, recommending that the boundaries between RE, Citizenship and SMSC should be explored, and ask you to support the work of the RE Council Commission[5] as they explore these timely questions. We also note the All Party Parliamentary Group on RE’s recommendation that the impact of the EBacc on GCSE RS be reconsidered. We also note that four Parliamentary select committees, the Children’s Commissioner, the Chief Medical Officer, the Association for Directors of Public Health, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, the Association of Independent Local Safeguarding Children’s Boards Chairs as well as the vast majority of children, teachers and parents support compulsory PSHE education and urge you to act on this advice as a means of ensuring that this is an entitlement for all children and young people.

We congratulate you on your appointment, and hope that this time of opportunity will provide much needed reflection on our shared human, global, British and local identities for your department, for schools and for all young people in the United Kingdom.

With our very best wishes,

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Canterbury Christ Church University, Chair, Religious Education Council of England and Wales

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[1] A colloquium on Citizenship, Religion, Philosophy and Values in Education in Post-Brexit Britain was held at Liverpool Hope University on Monday 11th July. The event brought together teachers, NGOs, local authority representatives and academics from the fields of RE, Citizenship, PSHE and philosophy for schools.

[2] <http://www.re-silience.org.uk/>

[3]

<http://www.theewc.org/Content/Library/COE-Steering-documents/Recommendations/Signposts-Policy-and-practice-for-teaching-about-religions-and-non-religious-world-views-in-intercultural-education>

[4] <http://www.extremedialogue.org/>

[5] <http://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/commission-on-re>

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