

National RE Updates for SACRE Autumn 2024 For Southend SACRE

Calls for a National Plan for Religious Education

The Religious Education Council of England and Wales (REC) and the National Association for Teachers of RE (NATRE) have now called on the new Education Secretary, Bridget Phillipson MP, to introduce a National Plan for RE that provides a fair allocation of resources and prioritises the subject as part of Labour's plans to recruit more specialist teachers.

RE has recently seen a restoration of the teacher training bursary, but a shortage of specialism in schools remains a challenge given the long-term growth of the subject. The number of those recorded as teaching RE has remained roughly the same since 2011 at 16,200, while those delivering Geography and History lessons has risen by 1,700.

NASACRE News

Webinar Programme

The next in the series of NASACRE's training has been announced. Please consider which you can attend.

21 January 2025, 7-8pm: Calling all members of SACRE Group D – How to be an effective member of your SACRE?

25 February 2025, 7-8pm: Being an effective SACRE Clerk

11 March 2025, 7-8pm: Working on an Agreed Syllabus Conference – supports and processes

Various dates in March 2025, 6:30-8pm: NASACRE in Conversation
Free session for any SACREs to attend

24 June 2025, 6:30-8pm: So, you've joined your local SACRE...

Open University Religion, Belief and Worldviews Hub

The Open University Religion, Belief and Worldviews Hub can be accessed by all interested parties [Religion, belief and worldviews hub | OpenLearn - Open University](#). The Hub provides resources for schools and educational settings to support the delivery of RE in classrooms from Early Years through to post 16 education. The focus of the Hub is 'Religion and Belief' as a protected characteristic in UK legislation. Materials on the Hub have been provided by colleagues from The Open University, with classroom resources and online CPD opportunities for leaders and teachers of RE.

Strictly RE 2025

The annual NATRE conference for all RE professionals returns on 25th January 2025 and will be face to face following recent online conferences. This has become the annual date in the diaries of those

within RE and will be held at Leonardo Hotel in Birmingham. Click on the link to register interest in attending Strictly RE 2025. [NATRE Strictly RE 2025: National Religious Education Conference](https://www.natre.org.uk/courses-events/upcoming-courses-events/?page=1)

Upcoming RE Today Courses for the Spring Term

For more details on any of these courses, click here: <https://www.natre.org.uk/courses-events/upcoming-courses-events/?page=1>

PRIMARY PHASE

Help! I'm the RE Subject Leader

28/1/2025

cREative Primary RE

19/3/2025

SECONDARY PHASE RE

GCSE RS – Better Thinking, Better Writing, Better Results

10/02/2025

Peaceful and Purposeful Discussion in RE

03/03/2025

The RE Update: A day course for every secondary RE teacher

20/03/2025

CROSS PHASE (BOTH PRIMARY AND SECONDARY)

Introducing a Religion and Worldviews Approach

12/02/2025

The Ethics Cup

Saint Andrew's University are offering secondary schools the opportunity to participate in The Ethics Cup. Unlike traditional debating tournaments, pupils are asked to prepare to simply discuss a particular case with the other competing teams on the day of competition. The cases are not presented in a resolution format, there is no requirement for the teams to disagree with each other, and the competition is not won by proving the other team wrong. Each team is instead asked to craft its own position with as much nuance as judged appropriate. It is a collaborative discussion with a panel of three judges awarding points for insight, thoughtfulness, and civility.

This allows the pupils to put forward their own genuine beliefs, formed through prolonged thought and investigation, rather than a constructed polemic prescribed by the competition.

Schools can access information about The Ethics Cup here [The Ethics Cup – University of St Andrews Centre for Ethics, Philosophy and Public Affairs \(st-andrews.ac.uk\)](https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/ethicscup/)

RE Teaching in English Secondary Schools

The school workforce data is sourced from the annual school census which is submitted by schools in England to the DfE in November. Not every school completes the census each year however the data demonstrates who teaches RE in schools.

44% of teachers of RE have a post A Level qualification in the subject, compared to 80.3% for English, 76.6% for mathematics and 78.5% for History.

There has been an increase in the number of teachers of the other humanities subjects, history and geography between 2011 and 2023, however, the number of teachers of RE has remained static in the same period.

In response to a parliamentary question about how many RE lessons were taught by a teacher with another specialism, 51% of RE lessons were taught by teachers with another specialism, compared to 27% for history and 28% for geography.

A Level Religious Studies steady in England but a decrease in Wales

The overall trend in A level entries for Religious Studies over the last 5 years has been steeply downward in Wales but fairly stable in England.

Since 2020 entries in Wales have fallen by 37% from 1126 to 702. During the same period, entries in England, remained fairly stable with a fall of just under 0.5% from 14,564 to 14,499.

Even though the trend for entries in England is downwards, this is within a context where most Humanities subjects have experienced a fall in entries and most science, technology, engineering and maths subjects have seen an increase. It is worth noting that financial incentives for schools will have boosted these entries including the advanced maths premium scheme and a number of schemes established to boost science learning in schools.

Of the Humanities, Religious Studies in England was one of the smallest decreases between 2023 and 2024 at 1.3%.

Religious Studies remains a popular GCSE despite specialist teacher recruitment challenge

The number of students taking full course Religious Studies in England and Wales at GCSE has remained stable at 233,288 following a 0.5% rise in entries from 2023 making it one of the most widely studied humanities at GCSE.

223,034 students took RS GCSE (full course) in England, an increase of 0.3%. In Wales 10,254 students took the subject, an increase of 6.4%. For the third year running, the number of students taking a GCSE short course rose in England, this year by 9.5% to 20,627. In Wales however, entries fell by 27.1% to 2,201.

This is despite an ongoing challenge in recruiting specialist teachers amidst a gulf in government funding.

OCR Review – Striking the Balance: A Review of 11 – 16 curriculum and assessment in England

Oxford, Cambridge and RSA have published a report into the content of the curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 and the role and form of assessment including SATs and GCSE qualifications. The review was chaired by Charles Clarke and draws focus to four key areas

- Reducing the assessment burden
- Digital assessment and learning
- English and maths at 11–16
- Curriculum evolution at 11–16

The research was undertaken with over 2000 teachers and students at a variety of events as well as working with education specialists to draw the conclusions for each of the four areas.

Commentary in the section of the report on curriculum evolution points to an over-crowded curriculum in which some subjects have been overlooked due to a focus on EBacc subjects, there is reference not only to the creative subjects but also physical education and the following comment is made in relation to religious education

‘Another important aspect of the evolution of the curriculum is the teaching of religion and belief in schools. This remains a statutory requirement often honoured, outside faith schools, in the breach rather than the observance.’ – page 74

It is made clear in the report that although it is not necessary for all pupils in a school to follow the subjects contained within the EBacc there is a strong move within schools for pupils to study these as EBacc uptake is an accountability measure of school performance. The review calls for an independent curriculum authority to oversee the changes to the sector and to ease the examination burdens placed on students in Year 11 through a wholesale review of the processes and purposes of assessment in the education sector.

A copy of the review can be found here: [717919-striking-the-balance.pdf \(ocr.org.uk\)](https://ocr.org.uk/717919-striking-the-balance.pdf)

New Director for the National Association of Teachers of RE

After over a decade of dedicated service to NATRE as CEO, Fiona Moss has taken a new position at Culham St Gabriel’s Trust (CSTG) as Education and Programmes Manager. Fiona has made significant contributions to NATRE and the world of RE during her time as CEO, whether it be

lobbying political parties and government through to enabling the high-quality resources delivered by the NATRE Executive for its members.

Katie Freeman, the Chair of NATRE expressed these sentiments

All of us at NATRE would like to congratulate our wonderful Fiona Moss on her new role at CSTG. Fiona is a Powerhouse of RE and so many of us have stories about how she has inspired and supported us in our journeys within the RE community. Quite honestly NATRE won't be the same without her but we know that she will continue her important work in her new role and will be a vital part of the new CSTG team. She will be hugely missed but we look forward to continuing to work with her in new ways. Congratulations Fiona on your new role and thank you for all that you have done for NATRE members past and present!

Angela Hill, National RE Adviser and Editor of RE Today magazine has now taken over the role as Director of NATRE following Fiona's departure. Angela commented stated

I am honoured to take on the role at such a pivotal time for the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education. I look forward to working with the newly formed NATRE executive team to continue advancing the vital work of supporting and empowering all teachers, teaching the subject. Together, we will build on the strong foundation laid by Fiona and strive to create even greater opportunities for all teachers of religious education.

In welcoming Angela to her new role, Katie Freeman stated

NATRE are excited to welcome Angela Hill to her role working with and supporting the executive. Angela knows NATRE well as she has been working with us in her role as RE today's editor and we are looking forward to working with her more closely. She is a talented and knowledgeable adviser who will be able to support us with our existing projects as well as planning new ones. Congratulations Angela on your new role, we are so excited to see you develop your new role and we can't wait to work with you.