

National RE Updates for SACRE from RE Today Spring 2025 for Stockton-On-Tees SACRE

NATRE Primary Provision Survey

In 2024 NATRE conducted their biannual survey into religious education in primary schools. The findings are used by NATRE to provide guidance to its work with RE teachers.

Most Agreed Syllabuses recommend that the equivalent of approximately 60 minutes per week be spent on RE at Key Stage 1 and about 75 minutes at Key Stage 2. The survey data suggests that in just under a third of schools without a religious character (30.7%) insufficient time is being spent on the teaching of RE to ensure that pupils make good progress. On the other hand, in around 94% of schools timetable time has either increased or remained the same.

A third of subject leaders have no set or no budget for RE. Funding is an issue for all schools in the current climate. If resources are up to date and appropriate to modern teaching methods, it is vital that subject leaders have appropriate funds at their disposal. School funding is expected to rise this year and RE subject leaders will need to make the case for appropriate resourcing for RE. The most common budget is less than 50p per pupil per year and 35% of primary schools in the survey have no budget or no set budget at all.

Adults other than teachers are less likely to teach RE than was the case from the 2024 survey. In 54% of schools (63% in 2022) some RE is being delivered by this group of adults other than teachers. This was raised as a matter of concern by Ofsted in 2013 when in 24% of schools RE was delivered by teaching assistants. In just over one in five schools, (one in four in 2022) more than 25% of RE teaching is delivered in this way

A large proportion of primary teachers have no training in RE. More than 56% of the teachers in primary schools report that they received between 0 and 3 hours of training to teach RE in their initial teacher training (ITE). This represents an increase from 40% in 2022. 18% of these received no hours at all. This serious issue was the focus of Recommendation 6 of the Commission on RE (2018) Report. It links with the question about teachers' confidence. 60.5% of our respondents' colleagues feel reasonably or very confident in how to teach RE and 63.2% about what to teach in RE.

Wide variations in teachers' confidence to teach about different traditions. Teachers' confidence in teaching specific religions and beliefs varies significantly. Christianity, Islam and Judaism were ranked most highly in terms of teachers' confidence about their subject knowledge. Conversely, they were much less confident about teaching religions such as Zoroastrianism, the Bahá'í faith, Jainism and Paganism and also about non-religious worldviews such as Humanism.

RE is now commonly led by more experienced teachers. Far fewer subject leaders are recently qualified teachers than when we first began conducting this survey. Not only are the overwhelming majority of subject leaders, those with more than 10 years teaching experience but also they tend to hold the position for a number of years, 67% for more than 3 years and 42% for over 5 years.

The number of parents exercising the right to withdraw their child from RE is small but remains at around one in five schools but generally affecting fewer than 10 children per school, most frequently

one or two. 82% of schools reported that there had been no withdrawal from RE in the last academic year. The fact that parents can withdraw their child from RE without giving any reason or justification means that the ability of schools to educate pupils for life in a diverse modern world is compromised. The most common use of the right of withdrawal is from teaching about anything other than the home religion or belief. This is cited in 54% of cases.

Spirited Arts 2025

NATRE has announced the subject areas for its annual Spirited Arts competition for 2025. This annual competition asks pupils to use their creative talents to explore questions of religious and non-religious worldviews.

This is the 21st year for Spirited Arts and there are six themes for pupils to choose from

- Living in a Diverse World
- Stories that Change Lives
- Thinking about God
- Sacred Places
- All God's Creatures? (Sponsored by [AIA](#) & [VinE](#))
- Making Sense of Life

Schools can submit up to entries which should be received by the closing date of 31st July 2025. Full details are available at [Spirited Arts 2025 - Inspiring students to explore big questions through art](#)

Explaining Atheism

RE Today is delighted to be working with the Explaining Atheism research project as part of its outreach programme.

Leading on behalf of RE Today is National RE Adviser, Stephen Pett, who has been working with a number of researchers from Explaining Atheism to bring findings from their core research and affiliated research projects into classrooms across the UK.

Stephen is working in collaboration with filmmaker Briony Campbell and photographer Aubrey Wade to create learning resources from their projects. In October 2024 this work was trialled with groups of RE pupils at a pop-up exhibition and workshop series at Conway Hall in London, led by Lat Blaylock.

RE Today will be publishing teacher resources to link to the Explaining Atheism research. Earlier research from the project has been featured in *Challenging Knowledge in RE: Studying Worldviews* (2021) and *Investigating Non-Religious Worldviews* (2023).

Speaking about this opportunity, RE Adviser Stephen Pett said:

"It is a privilege to work with the researchers on this extensive and illuminating project. Findings help to show something of the complexity of what it means to have non-religious worldviews in the UK and in five other countries around the world. The multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches

are helpful for the RE community as we embrace the use of diverse ways of knowing in the classroom. I look forward to presenting our teaching and learning materials when they are ready to go!"

The video will serve as a helpful resource for RE teachers across the UK. It highlights the importance of including non-religious perspectives in the conversation, ensuring that all pupils can engage meaningfully with the diversity of worldviews that shape our world.

Jerusalem Trust Applications – RE Grants for Schools

Applications are now open for RE Grants for Schools from the Jerusalem Trust. The Jerusalem Trust’s Small Grants to Schools Scheme supports the teaching of Christianity within Religious Education. The scheme operates by providing schools with grants of up to £600 to purchase Christianity resources for use in RE lessons. The grants are available for all state funded schools in England and Wales.

Any school wishing to apply for the grant should visit [Grant Criteria – The Jerusalem Trust](#) which outlines what the grant will and will not cover and there is also a Frequently Asked Questions section available for schools to support them in making an application [FAQs – The Jerusalem Trust](#) .

At the time of the writing of the XXXXXX SACRE update there is availability for both primary and secondary schools to apply for the grant. The application will take between 15 and 20 minutes to complete.

Support for GCSE and A Level

Meeting for teachers of A-Level Religious Studies

Tuesday 28 January 2025 6-7pm

This is a FREE CPD opportunity – everyone welcome!

Agenda

Agnes Slusarska is a teacher and researcher. She has been working on an inquiry based approach to teaching Ethics + DCT for the OCR A level. She will be sharing resources for guided and open style inquiry which use technology to promote good researching practices at A level.

Joe Kinnaird is Head of RE at the Coopers Company and Coborn School in East London. He’s going to share some strategies to support evaluation and essay writing.

Meeting to be held online– link sent in advance

Email if you are not already signed up to the A-level NATRE Group and would like to.

k.steele@worc.ac.uk



RS GCSE

Virtual network meeting

Wednesday 5th February 2025 from 4 - 5pm

This NATRE associated GCSE group is hosted by Matt Pitcher for teachers of RS GCSE.

This meeting will focus on sharing tips and revision resources

[@re-runner.bsky.social](#)

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NASACRE and Westhill Awards

Westhill Endowment supported by NASACRE is once again offering the chance for SACRES to bid for funds to run a 2-year project involving schools, teachers and the local community to promote diversity in RE and Collective Worship. Projects should inspire young people to connect with diversity in their local area and should produce compelling learning experiences in RE or collective worship.

The idea is that the projects will foster collaboration between SACRES and local schools, strengthening the provision and impact of RE and Collective Worship. There may be connections created between schools and local communities as part of the project. The theme in recent years has been Education into Diversity and this will continue, though renamed Developing Diversity, encouraging SACRES to think about how RE and Collective Worship are preparing pupils and students for life and work in multi-religious and multi-secular Britain.

Applications should be completed using the application form on the NASACRE web site and be submitted by 28th February 2025 and sent to westhill@nasacre.org.uk and diane@westhillendowment.org. The successful SACRES being notified at the annual NASACRE conference in May.

RE Hubs

The RE hubs are offering training for speakers who would like to support schools bring to life their curriculum through first hand experience of meeting and talking with people from different religions and non-religious worldviews, as well as experts in social sciences, philosophy and theology.

Once the training has been completed then speakers are kite marked and then included on the RE hubs web site for the local region. Schools can then access a full list of speakers in their area to help bring RE to life in the classroom. There are a range of training dates available through the RE hubs website from 29th January 2025 through to 7th July 2025. Potential speakers, which may include members of SACRES can register at [Register as a school speaker](#)

NATRE responds to the DfE Call for Evidence for the Curriculum Review

NATRE has submitted a response from the National Executive to the Curriculum and Assessment Review. What follows is an executive summary of that response.

The NATRE response to the Curriculum and Assessment Review highlights the challenges and opportunities in Religious Education (RE) across England. It emphasises the subject's critical role as an academic subject, in fostering respect, understanding, and critical thinking in a multi-religious and multi-secular society while addressing the negative impact of recent government policies.

One major concern highlighted in our response is the exclusion of RE from the EBacc, which has devalued its status. Additionally, the decline in local authority capacity has limited the ability of Standing Advisory Councils on RE (SACRES) to support schools effectively. The absence of

accountability measures for academies, coupled with outdated GCSE and A-level content, has further contributed to inconsistencies in the delivery and quality of RE.

Despite these setbacks, NATRE acknowledges positive developments. GCSE and A-level entries have remained relatively stable in England, showing the enduring interest in RE. Innovative projects, such as the Religious Education Council's Religion and Worldviews Project, have developed resources like the Handbook for Syllabus Writers, which guides curriculum development. Other initiatives, like NATRE's Spirited Arts Competition, encourage creative engagement with RE and provide examples of good practice.

NATRE identifies the misuse of the parental right of withdrawal as another key issue. Sometimes this right is misused to prevent their children from learning about diverse worldviews, or to make time available for other activities, e.g. literacy/numeracy interventions, undermining the subject's inclusivity and compromising the principles of the Equality Act. NATRE supports reviewing this right, citing the Welsh model as one for consideration, where the right to withdrawal has been removed. The response advocates for several key recommendations. These include updating GCSE and A-level content to reflect modern religious and non-religious perspectives, implementing national standards for RE to ensure consistency, and enhancing accountability measures for academies. NATRE also emphasises the importance of teacher professional development, calling for increased access to Subject Knowledge Enhancement (SKE) courses and bursaries to address teacher shortages and ensure high-quality delivery.

Insights from pupil feedback reinforce the importance of improving RE. Primary pupils expressed a strong interest in learning about different religions, visiting places of worship, and engaging with people from various beliefs.

One pupil noted, "It's exciting to learn about things I've never heard of before," while another highlighted the importance of visiting places of worship to "see what others do."

Secondary students valued discussions on philosophical and moral questions, with one stating, "Debates in RE make us think about what's right and wrong." whilst commented, "My RE lessons make me think hard about life. It is challenging in a good way because we have to think hard about the subject and look deeply into it."

These responses align with NATRE's vision of an engaging and inclusive RE curriculum. By addressing current challenges and implementing these recommendations, NATRE envisions a National Plan for RE that would help secure a future where RE is consistently high-quality, relevant, and integral to preparing young people for life in a diverse and interconnected world.

NATRE's response articulates the complexities of RE in its place in the curriculum and highlights the need for further, meaningful engagement with teachers of RE in the next steps in the Curriculum and Assessment Review.

Upcoming RE Today Courses for the Spring Term and beyond!

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

Primary Phase CPD

Help! I'm the RE Subject Leader

28th January 2025 (Full Day 9.30am – 3.30pm)

Boost your knowledge and confidence with this one-day course, it will equip you to be an effective and inspirational RE subject leader in the primary school. Explore the role of the subject leader, using practical activities to develop your understanding of RE and your leadership and management skills. Focus on creative task setting, planning a scheme of work using your locally agreed syllabus or faith community guidelines, and effective and manageable monitoring and self evaluation. Leave feeling motivated, inspired and equipped with ready-to-use ideas to engage staff and pupils.

cREative primary RE

19th March 2025 (Morning 9.30am – 12.30pm)

How can I ensure children are engaged in RE lessons? What strategies can I use to make sure pupils are inspired during RE? This session is packed full of ready-to-use ideas for anyone who wants to engage pupils more fully in RE sessions. There will be a focus on the Spirited Arts competition 2025. Perfect for all primary practitioners who teach RE including Early Career Teachers, Subject Leaders and Teaching Assistants; with a wide range of practical classroom ideas for primary RE, there is sure to be something for everyone.

Primary - Understanding Christianity

19th May 2025 (Afternoon 1.00 pm – 4.00 pm – with two additional dates in Autumn 2025 and Spring 2026)

Get the confidence and subject knowledge to teach about Christianity: Text Impact Connections through this tried and tested course which is supported by a substantial whole school teachers handbook. Many locally agreed syllabuses include requirements for teaching Christianity that are directly supported by this resource. This resource supports good quality teaching about Christianity and can be used within the requirements of your syllabus guidelines.

Secondary Phase CPD

GCSE RS – Better thinking, better writing, better results (Feb 2025)

10th February 2025 (Afternoon 1.30 pm – 4.30pm)

This session offers practical strategies to help your pupils to avoid some of the common pitfalls of the GCSE RS examinations. We consider ways to approach teaching the GCSE that will encourage deeper, more critical

and analytic thinking, along with ideas to keep everyone engaged. This session will offer tips for refining pupils' exam technique, too.

Peaceful and Purposeful Discussion in RE

3rd March 2025 (Twilight 3.30 pm – 5.30 pm)

The best RE is not afraid of controversy! This session will explore practical strategies for helping pupils engage in peaceful and productive discussion of contested issues in RE.

The RE Update: a day course for every secondary RE teacher (March 2025)

19th March 2025 (Full Day 9.30 am – 3.30 pm)

Refresh your repertoires of teaching and learning strategies with this wide-ranging course, which will equip you with fresh classroom ideas and materials around some key current issues in the subject. Hear about the latest developments in the delivery of RE across the Key Stages. This wide-ranging course from Ian Nicholson will present fresh classroom ideas and materials to meet the needs of teachers of RE around some key current issues in the subject.

[Cross Phase CPD](#)

Introducing a Religion and Worldviews approach

12th February 2025 (Afternoon 1.30 pm – 4.30 pm) OR

7th May 2025 (Afternoon 1.30 pm – 4.30pm)

What is a religion and worldviews (RW) approach? How is it different from current RE practice? What are the benefits to teachers and pupils? This session offers a practical introduction to worldviews and explores what an RW approach means for subject content and how we teach it, as well as reflecting how it develops pupils' personal worldviews. Drawing on the 2024 RE Council Handbook and Frameworks, including resources and strategies, this session will show how to enrich and deepen pupils' understanding of religious and non-religious worldviews.