

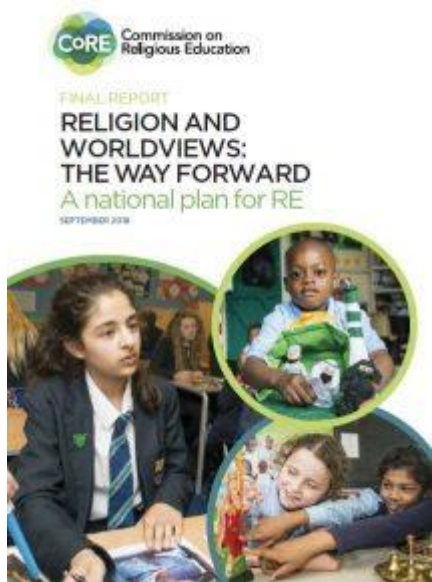
# National News for SACRE, Autumn 2018

**The New RE Syllabus for Central Bedfordshire, Bedford Borough and Luton has been successfully launched.**

We ran two very popular launch events for the new syllabus in September (attendance 127) and October (attendance 105) at Putteridgebury Conference Centre. These events were rated good or very good by 98% of attendees. They enabled us to explain in depth and detail the requirements, resources and opportunities of the new syllabus and to provide inspiration and enthuse teachers, mostly subject leaders but many senior school leaders too, to pursue the task of implementing the syllabus.

We announced a further training programme for schools including the training for 'Understanding Christianity' and a day of training on 'Three Religions' enabling us to support the need for subject knowledge in relation to Jewish, Hindu and Islamic life.

**The Commission on RE: final report, launched September 18.**



This independent report, funded and supported by the RE Council, has spent over a year developing its perspective and recommendations, and has been observed (keenly?) by DfE and government. SACREs are very interested in its conclusions, not least because it has considered questions about local determination of RE and Agreed Syllabuses, recommending a new national entitlement for RE, and the removal of the responsibility on SACREs to make Agreed Syllabuses, the renaming of SACREs and the reduction of their responsibilities. There are 11 recommendations to consider and the thrust of the report is to move control of the RE curriculum from SACREs to a new national body, appointed and paid for by the DfE, supported by the RE Council. Reception of the report has varied from enthusiasm to more cautious voices, e.g. from NASACRE, the BDBJ and the CES.

## Funding from Government for SACRE

SACREs will be funded through the central school services block (CSSB) from 2018-19, which is one of the blocks of funding in the national funding formula. For further information, see the [NFF Policy Document](#) and the [2018-19 Operational Guidance](#) (specifically paragraph 133).

## 'A new settlement revised: Religion and Belief in schools'

A recent report by Professor Linda Woodhead and former Education Secretary Charles Clarke suggests that our more diverse society makes reform to current legislation even more overdue. At the launch Stephen Timms MP welcomed everyone and reflected that we are all shaped by our experience of religion at school, legislation that was set in this place, Parliament, in 1944. Professor Woodhead introduced the report she noted that when the 1944 act was first read in 1943 the country was at war but education was still considered to be important. She explained the morphing of the subject from RI to the official renaming in 1988 of Religious Education. She characterised RE as learning about others and suggested in 2018 it is time to learn about us in the diverse context we live in. She said, '...change is overdue RE like any other academic subject needs no longer to be exceptionalised and parents should no longer be allowed to withdraw pupils from RE. Other recommendations in the report are around collective worship and 'faith schools'.

## RE Teacher recruitment

This has been a particularly challenging year for teacher recruitment and especially so for RE. After missing the target for recruitment for training of teachers of RE to begin in 2017, the DfE failed to take an action to incentivise recruitment for 2018. In contrast, bursaries were increased or maintained at a higher level for those choosing to train in other subjects. These higher level bursaries are offered for many subjects including subjects who had been more successful in recruiting 2017. We should not be surprised therefore, that at the time of writing, of all secondary subjects, RE the fourth worst level of recruitment at just over 50% of the target. This picture will – we hope – change after the recent announcement from DfE that new entrants will, this year, attract a £9 000 bursary as they become RE Teachers. A little, and rather late, but something to be pleased about.

## Youth Debate: England's young people challenge MPs at Westminster

On Monday 9th July 2018, 80 Year 10-12 students from schools across England came to Parliament to debate some of the key issues around the teaching of Religious Education (RE). The students discussed some of the fundamental issues facing the subject, such as whether, in an increasingly secular society, RE is still a vital component of balanced, modern curriculum, and whether pupils learn more by studying other people's belief than your one.

Numerous MPs, Parliamentary researchers, policy advisers and other interested parties witnessed the debate, which showcased the students' engagement with the subject through their range and depth of thinking around these complex questions.

Students were welcomed to Westminster by William Wragg MP, Liz Twist MP, and historian of religion and broadcaster, Professor Francesca Stavrakopoulou.

In a wide-ranging discussion – covering topics as diverse as the role of religious literacy in combatting extremism, the need for RE in an increasingly secular society, and whether or not students learn more by studying their own religion and belief than they do by studying their own – United Nations debating rules were firmly applied in the chamber by the co-chairs, students from Mulberry School for Girls in Hackney, London. Both young women were clearly and expertly trained in handling opinionated peers...and politicians!

Professor Francesca said, "The level of debate was extremely impressive - the pupils were bright, passionate and rigorous in their arguments'.

## NATRE's Strictly RE: bigger and even better for 2019: should SACRE sponsor some local delegates?

Bookings are open now for the national annual NATRE conference in London on January 26<sup>th</sup>. Subscribers to RE Today may be eligible for discounts on their fees to Strictly –check the website for details. The conference brings together about 250 people in the largest gathering of RE professionals in the year. If you have never been, or if you've come each year, then plan to join us for an inspirational and exciting day of lectures, seminars, exhibits, connections and opportunities: all the exam awarding bodies and major publishers will be there too.

## **New teachers of RE getting together: NATRE's regional 'Welcome to RE' conferences. Can SACRE support new RE teachers this year?**

NATRE's Inter-University conferences for new teachers ran last year in Belfast, Exeter, Swansea, York, Ormskirk and London. We love to bring together the new entrants to secondary RE teaching from different universities, Teach First, SCITT and other routes: we have over twenty ITE partners who send their graduates along to these events. Over 200 new teachers of RE attended one of the events, which are generously sponsored by the Jerusalem Trust, and their continuing support means that a similar set of conferences can be run next year. Already, these are planned for Leeds (7<sup>th</sup> December), Edge Hill (14<sup>th</sup> December) and London (8<sup>th</sup> February 2019). The program will enable new RE teachers to learn about the national politics of RE but also to engage with some of NATRE's lesson and learning ideas in highly practical ways. For more details email the conference organiser Lat Blaylock: [lat@retoday.org.uk](mailto:lat@retoday.org.uk).

## **Free copies of Christian scripture for your pupils?**

The Gideons, the Christian charity famous for giving Bibles away to hotels – and pretty much anyone who wants one – are happy to come to any secondary school in the UK, and volunteers, who are professional and business people, can take an assembly or an RE lesson to make the offer of a free copy of the New Testament and Psalms. They have 7 new assemblies and seven new lessons to share, and about 1000 volunteers have taken part in a day's training recently to enable them to deliver the assemblies and lessons. For further information, contact Tony Lovering on [HQ@gideons.org.uk](mailto:HQ@gideons.org.uk)

## **NATRE's New2RE project: mentoring, support and conferences for those starting teaching secondary RE**

NATRE runs a funded programme called 'new2RE' for those who are secondary NQTs, over the first three years of their careers. A small number of places may still be available: does SACRE know any new teachers in secondary RE who it could refer to this programme, rated excellent by a big majority of its participants every year.

## **BBC's recent and new RE programming: can SACRE draw attention to these programmes for schools?**

The well-loved BBC Bitesize site has a major review and renewal underway, with 10 new KS4 programmes nearly ready to use, and major innovations around the new GCSE for 14-16s. These 'A day in the faith of...' clips will present the lives of young members of the 6 principal religions, as they talk about some of the key ideas and concepts of GCSE and Scottish RE

Now broadcast and available free via BBC Teach (all these have notes written by RE Today to accompany them):

- For 5-7s, 10 animated short films of key stories of faith from 6 different religions, series title: 'Religions of the World'.
- My Life, My Religion 5 x 30 minute programmes. Featuring lots of original filming from across Britain using child presenters with diariycams, one each on being Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Sikh in today's Britain. Online as clips in segments of 2-4 minutes.
- For 11-14s, 'An A-Z of Religion' with notes for students to use the 26 programmes from RE Today (written as supported self study materials for homework).

- For 14-16s, A Question of Faith 5 x 12 minute programmes for GCSE and Standard Grade in 2014 on sexuality, marriage, death, revelation and suffering, with notes on RE Today and clips on BBC Bitesize.

A new series of ten further GCSE / 14-16 programmes and a complete revision of the Bitesize offer to schools is in process, using the idea of ‘a day in the life’ of people from different religions as a hook. I’m enjoying working as series consultant for this.

Lat Blaylock, National RE Adviser, Autumn 2018

## **Additional material from NATRE:**

### **Relevant documents on our NATRE website relating to SACREs**

1. 30+ things a SACRE can do
2. Exemplar SACRE letter RE provision in LA maintained schools
3. Exemplar SACRE letter RE provision in academies
4. Funding for SACREs 2017-18
5. Exemplar SACRE follow up letter about RE provision
6. How to make a complaint about the RE curriculum in a local authority maintained school