

## National Developments

### 1. Teacher Supply and Bursary.

As a direct consequence of the removal of the bursary for teacher training places in RE, and the reduction in the number of places available on PGCE university based courses and Graduate Teacher Programmes, RE is now officially a shortage subject once again. My own school faced a late resignation, and despite the mammoth efforts and contacts of the Head, candidates are very few and far between. The Head reported that on the official site, RE and English are now 'RED' indicating a shortage - more so even than Physics etc.

However, in September 2014, the Government announced they were rectifying this by reinstating a bursary of up to £9000 for RE trainee teachers for 2015/16. This was welcomed by NATRE, teacher groups and faith bodies, but may not be of a sufficiently high amount to attract top candidates and if the shortage continues, they may have to raise this amount.

Please see <https://getintoteaching.education.gov.uk/bursaries-and-funding> for up to date information.

In response to the shortage in RE trainees and teachers the REC and NATRE have launched ***Beyond the Ordinary*** - a new campaign to find extraordinary individuals who have what it takes to train to become RE teachers.

You can read more about the campaign (including videos) here: <http://www.natre.org.uk/news/latest-news/re-teaching-beyond-the-ordinary/>

### 2. GCSE and A Level reform

The consultation on GCSE Religious Studies reform closed in January and following this, draft content was published by the DoFE. The main headlines are:

Students must study TWO faiths in equal proportion, covering beliefs and teachings AND practices: this will make up 50% of the course. Humanism is explicitly excluded from this; Catholicism can be studied distinctly from Christianity. The remaining 50% can be made up from a choice of textual studies and/or philosophy and ethical studies.

Assessment will continue to be an even split between AO1 (knowledge and understanding) and AO2 (analysis and evaluation).

All assessment will be through linear exams, no coursework, and will be assessed on a scale of 1-9 rather than the current G-A\*. There will be an increase in exam time and the number of papers sat. Only OCR and WJEC

have announced their draft specifications, Edexcel and AQA are to do this in the summer.

The A Levels are also only at draft stage. The biggest changes are that the AS and A levels have been unlinked, so each is a stand-alone qualification. All assessment will be linear with papers sat at the end of each year.

### 3. Social Media/Twitter

The online community of RE teachers, providers and interested parties continues to grow and provides great networking, publicity and CPD opportunities.

NATRE continues to host via Twitter a monthly #rechatuk, with pre-notified topics being discussed, and all invited to comment and share. This is usually the first Monday of every month, between 8-9pm.

The next one is on Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> July, 8-9pm, questions include 'How do we teach pupils to be religiously literate about Judaism? What do they need to know? To join in or view, just use the hashtag #rechatuk.

### 4. NATRE Secondary Survey

NATRE has launched its annual survey on RE in secondary schools in England and urges all those who teach RE to complete it. The responses will provide NATRE with invaluable details to inform its on-going campaign to secure the place of RE in the curriculum in all types of schools in the face of significant challenges from changes in the curriculum.

As a thank-you for completing the survey, NATRE is offering a £5 voucher to use on any RE Today publications. Please encourage all secondary schools to complete this survey.

### 5. Impact of Government Policy on GCSE RS

This report conducted by NATRE, shows the impact that government policy has had on the GCSE entry patterns for short and full course Religious Studies.

Two elements of government policy have been described as having 'unintended negative consequences for Religious Education'. The first of these was the English Baccalaureate introduced in 2010 which was a school performance indicator measure for schools which were ranked according to the number of candidates who achieved a grade GCSE A\*- C in five so-called academic subjects; English, Maths, Science, a language and History or Geography. The second decision was to change the method by which a

school's average point score was calculated. The performance indicator was a calculation of the average number of points achieved per pupil across their best 8 qualifications and is often used in league tables to rank schools by performance. From 2014, only full GCSEs could count in the calculation.

The recent release by Ofqual of provisional entries for GCSE in 2015 provides further evidence to support our claim, initially refuted by the government, that its policies were damaging the level of provision for Religious Education in England and that its legal status was insufficient as a safeguard.

Read the full report [here](#):

<http://www.natre.org.uk/uploads/Free%20Resources/Impact%20of%20government%20policy%20on%20GCSE%20RS%20270515.pdf>

## 6. Thinking Days

In March and April 2015, 25 leading RE practitioners were brought together for 'RE Thinking Days', organised by [Culham St Gabriel's Trust](#) and facilitated by Peter Batty.

Each practitioner was invited in a personal capacity, not representing any RE organisations. The participants were asked to envision a future for RE based on the year 2020.

The visions included a fictional Ofsted report for 2020, a grid plan showing actions at classroom, CPD and policy levels, and a timeline showing how we might get there. Vision A, which was worked on by a majority of participants, imagined significant legal and pedagogical changes. Vision B imagined continuity underpinned by widespread improvements.

All the participants in the Thinking Days agreed a convention that we would share the thinking as widely as possible with the RE community.

You can find links to the reports here: <http://www.natre.org.uk/news/latest-news/re-thinking-days-2015/>

## 7. *A New Settlement: Religion and Belief in Schools*

June saw the launch of the report *A New Settlement: Religion and Belief in Schools* written by Professor Linda Woodhead and The Right Honourable Charles Clarke. It contains wide-ranging proposals regarding the future of RE that will be of great interest to SACRE. You can find the full report at:

<http://faithdebates.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/A-New-Settlement-for-Religion-and-Belief-in-schools.pdf>