



Title of meeting: Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

Date of meeting: 1 November 2023

Subject: SACRE National and Local RE Matters Report

Report by: Chris May, Secondary RE Teaching and Learning Advisor

- 1 Purpose of report:** The purpose of this report is to enable SACRE to consider key national and local RE developments.

Recommendations:

That SACRE notes the report.

- 2 Executive Summary:**

This report seeks to update and inform SACRE of key national developments, for example the work of the Religious Education Council (REC), NASACRE, the RE Hubs project as well as the Association of University Lecturers in Religious Education (AULRE) and initiatives being led by the Culham St Gabriel's Trust.

- 3 Culham St Gabriel's Trust initiatives:**
Culham St Gabriel's Trust continues to be involved in a number of initiatives and is the largest grant giving body supporting religious education [Homepage - Culham St Gabriel's \(cstg.org.uk\)](http://www.cstg.org.uk) .

These include:

Active engagement in the national teacher recruitment campaign for RE. Further information on the campaign can be found below:

[New RE teacher recruitment campaign kicks off as popular GCSE subject faces staff shortage - Culham St Gabriel's \(cstg.org.uk\)](#)

Providing a range of virtual RE courses that are free to all on different aspects of RE. These are especially useful to new teachers, those teaching with no background in RE and those simply wishing to know more about the current world of RE. They include new 'Primary Beginning Teacher' courses. These can be found here:

[E Learning - Culham St Gabriel's \(cstg.org.uk\)](#)

- 4 RE Hubs –** This project was introduced to the SACRE last year. The South East section includes the Portsmouth Directory of Places of Worship. The range of resources on the website continues to expand which will be of real interest and use to the SACRE and to Portsmouth teachers, including information on further places of



worship, speakers and training and CPD that are available for all. As noted in the previous National and Local Matters report, there is a need for more RE Hub accredited speakers in our area and speakers are accredited after completing the initial training. They can then advertise on the website. Further information can be found here:

[Explore RE in your Region \(re-hubs.uk\)](https://re-hubs.uk)

5 Sacred Texts British Library

Resources created by the British Library were reported at the previous meeting and are a useful resource available online free of charge for all KS2 teachers on a range of different religions. They can be accessed here:

[Discovering Sacred Texts: Key Stage 2 teaching resources | The British Library \(bl.uk\)](https://www.bl.uk/learning/religious-studies)

- 6 National Association of SACREs (NASACRE).** NASACRE is the national body representing and leading on SACREs interests. A regular newsletter is circulated to SACRE members through their SACRE. In addition, a series of training sessions are offered for SACRE members to attend. The training program for 2023-4 is available on the NASACRE website here: [Virtual-training-programme-23-24.pdf \(nasacre.org.uk\)](https://www.nasacre.org.uk/virtual-training-programme-23-24.pdf)

- 7 NATRE (National Association of Teachers of Religious Education)** is the professional body for RE teachers and has produced reports on the initial GCSE and A-Level data. As part of this, numbers for both grades and uptake of RE are broken down by county (not by Local Authority). Unfortunately, this means there is not currently Portsmouth specific data available, but it does give an important picture of the results and uptake in the region as a whole, including Portsmouth schools. For GCSE Hampshire ranks 37th out of 47 counties for percentage uptake with just 15.9% of students opting for GCSE RS. The percentage of students gaining a grade 4-9 is at 72.9% ranking 22nd and slightly above the national average of 72.2%. For A-Level, the picture for uptake is worse and perhaps reflects the low GCSE uptake. Hampshire ranks 44th out of the 47 counties for uptake. Hampshire ranks 23rd for achieving grades A*-C at 77.7%, which is slightly below the national average of 79%. The reports suggest a continuing trend of lower uptake noted in GCSE data analysis last year and is of concern. The reports can be found here: [Report-on-GCSE-Religious-Studies-2023.pdf \(natre.org.uk\)](https://www.natre.org.uk/report-on-gcse-religious-studies-2023.pdf)
[Report-on-A-level-Religious-Studies-2023.pdf \(natre.org.uk\)](https://www.natre.org.uk/report-on-a-level-religious-studies-2023.pdf)

- 8** An open letter was sent to the Education Secretary Gillian Keegan in September and published in the Telegraph. This was signed by a group of cross-party peers and MP's. Of particular note is the claim that RE provision is "a postcode lottery", in which some children are receiving a comprehensive and well-taught education, while others receive "either tokenist RE or none at all" with 51% of children being taught by teachers without a specialism in RE. It also highlights that only 44% of the recruitment target for RE teachers will be met. The letter calls for teacher training bursaries for RE and a request for the government to set out what it is doing



to improve RE teacher recruitment. [Pupils receive a tokenistic religious education, cross-party MPs and peers tell Gillian Keegan \(telegraph.co.uk\)](#).

- 9** NATRE, represented by Deborah Weston, also represented RE at an Education Select Committee hearing on recruitment and retention on 12th September where RE was formally described as a shortage subject by the committee. The transcript can be found here: [12 September 2023 - Teacher recruitment, training and retention - Oral evidence - Committees - UK Parliament](#)
- 10** The Jewish Museum has produced a range of clips and resources for teaching inclusive Judaism. It aims to promote an authentic representation of Judaism in the classroom and make sure that the Jewish community is presented as a diverse living tradition. [Inclusive Judaism - The Jewish Museum London](#)
- 11** On 10 October, it was announced that for the year 2024-2025, a £10,000 bursary for trainee teachers of RE will be introduced. This is very welcome news but concerns still remain about the recruitment crisis in the profession.