

# North Yorkshire Council

## North Yorkshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) –

**April 2024**

### Update from Professional RE Adviser

#### 1.0 Purpose of the Report

To inform Members on work undertaken by the Professional RE Adviser since the last SACRE meeting.

To provide members with local and national updates on RE

#### 2.0 Teacher Training Spring 2024

2.1 2 Primary RE Networks in the spring term were attended by 16 RE subject leaders and Headteachers. The network focussed on Engaging in Sacred Text and Story in Religious Education

Feedback from teachers in the networks:

- This is excellent. I would like advice on age-appropriate versions of sacred texts.
- This is also applicable to other areas of the curriculum.
- This is a really useful slide for staff and me who often need a bank of ideas to use.
- This is really helpful - and no doubt took much work!
- This will provide such an interesting challenge for the older children and really supports the 'reading to learn' aspect of the reading curriculum. We certainly don't do enough of this.
- This has been excellent - it is all useful and I will definitely be using this in UKS2.
- Lots of useful resources to help with supporting reading in RE.
- Thank you very much. Very much appreciated and useful.
- I think the ways in which you can explore a religious text in the classroom and the resources you can use has been useful.
- I feel really empowered today, thank you!
- I found the slides about behind/within/in front of the text interesting and definitely something I will take back to the classroom.

2.2 The new to RE Subject Leadership course ran over 2 half day sessions in February 2024 attended by 5 delegates. The training focussed on curriculum, subject knowledge, assessment and monitoring and evaluation.

Feedback from teachers:

- I am getting more confident with the progression throughout school.
- Thanks, really very useful to help me start the leadership role.
- Thank you, very helping in thinking about how I am planning the LTP and ensuring both substantive and disciplinary knowledge.
- Priority to look at the LTP and create a progressive plan throughout the school. We are going to wait until the launch in June to fully address this, but I am keen to look at the units and ensure coverage.
- thanks for today I have written loads of notes that will help us.
- Thanks very much, both sessions have been most useful. Being new to RE leadership I now feel ready to tackle it! LTP will be re-jigged by the end of this school year, and I am going to audit our resources in the next few weeks.

### 3.0 NYC Literacy Networks

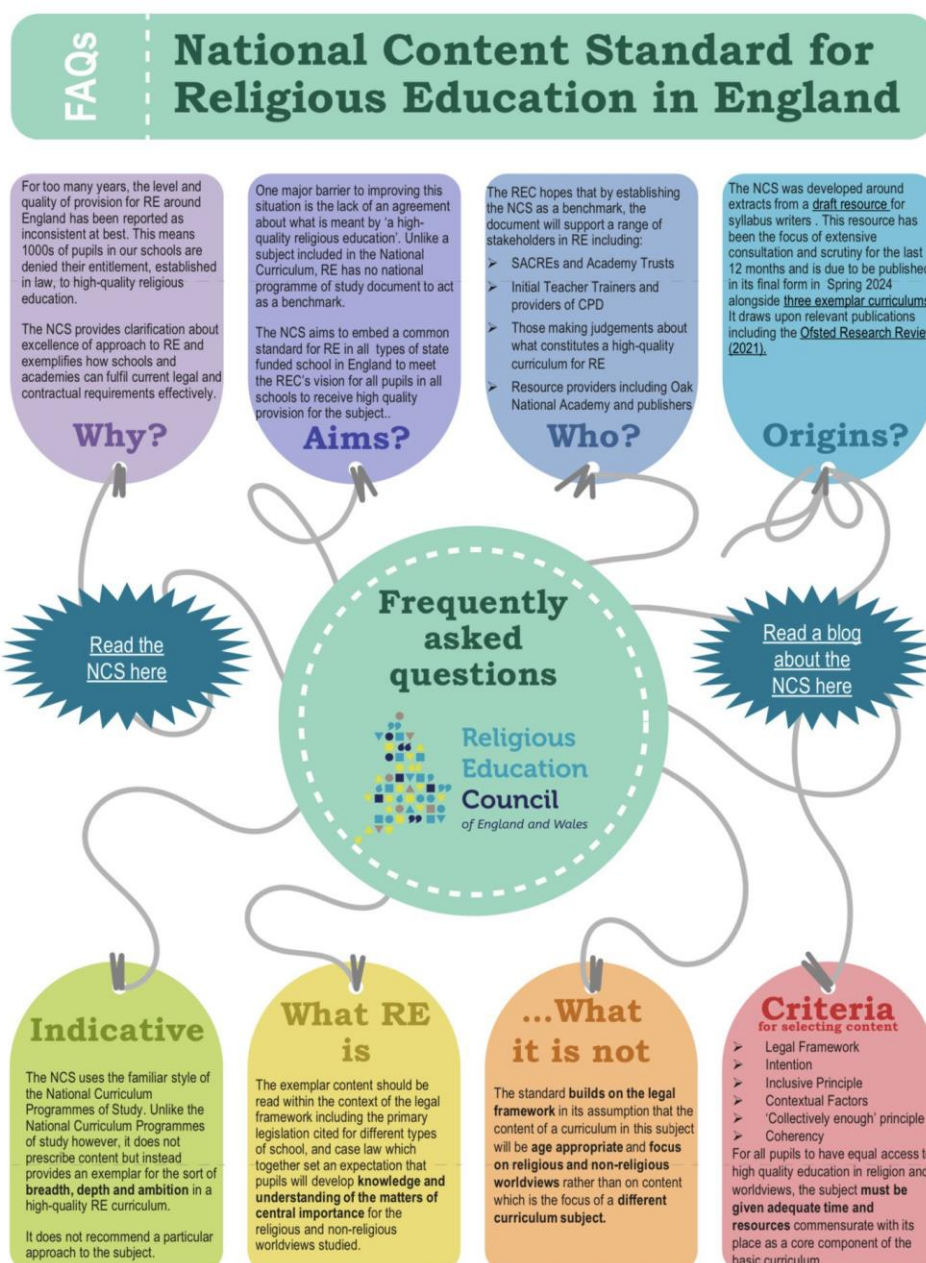
A second short input was delivered to Literacy leads at 2 NYC networks this term. The focus was talk in the RE classroom. This again provided an opportunity to highlight the work of SACRE and the Primary RE Networks.

### 4.0 SACRE Newsletter

The spring term newsletter went out to schools in January and a copy is attached. The summer term newsletter will go out in April and any contributions from members would be gratefully received.

### 5.0 National Content Standard

Following on from the information shared in my last report, members might find the following FAQs on the National Standard helpful.



A copy of the document can be downloaded here: [National Content Standard – 1st Edition – 2023 – REC \(religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk\)](https://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/national-content-standard-1st-edition-2023-REC)

## 6.0 House of Lords Debate Quality of Religious Education

"It is the right of every child to receive a well-rounded, comprehensive and high-quality religious education." "It is mandatory now, and there are no plans to change this."

It is not often that we can so whole-heartedly support the words of a government minister, but this is directly quoting Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Education, Baroness Barran, in the House of Lords yesterday.

If you missed it, Religious Education was in the spotlight yesterday as the Lords debated standards in RE in the Grand Committee. NATRE worked with the RE Policy Unit to help brief several peers who offered to speak in this debate proposed by Lord Harries of Pentregarth.

In his contribution, Lord Harries of Pentregarth raised concerns about schools' poor quality of religious education (RE) and quoted data collected by NATRE. He also referenced the damning 2023 HMCI Annual Ofsted report from Amanda Spielman, where RE was described as "poor quality" and "not fit for purpose". Ofsted suggested, he said, that RE was "undervalued" and often considered as an "afterthought" by schools and the "lack of clarity and support" from the Government made schools' job "harder".

The peer criticized the lack of government support, citing the survey conducted by NASACRE in August 2023, which found that five authorities declared no spending on RE at all, and a further 34—39 in all, or 31%—stated they did not spend any money supporting RE in schools.

Lord Harries closed his remarks by calling for a National Plan for RE, including a benchmark for the curriculum. He made a list of matters for inclusion in this National Plan.

1. it should include a budgetary provision at least comparable to that received for other subjects such as music;

- the plan should include a benchmark for what is expected from the syllabus,
- that what happens locally should be judged by this benchmark;
- that RE should be taught by people who have qualifications in the subject and who are given regular opportunities to enhance their professional skills,
- that more bursaries and more money for enhanced professional training should be made available to this end.

Responding to the Government, Baroness Barran – parliamentary under-secretary of state for Education, commended Lord Harries for initiating the debate on religious education (RE) and said she appreciated the insightful contributions from other speakers. She highlighted the importance of high-quality RE in a society with a changing religious demographic, emphasising its role in developing children's knowledge, understanding, and tolerance of religious and non-religious beliefs.

Baroness Barran addressed the unique nature of RE, which contributed, she said, to personal, social and academic benefits, fostering respect and providing opportunities for exploring questions of belief, values, and morality. She acknowledged the significant shift in the religious demographic, as Lord Warner and Lady Meacher highlighted, and stressed the importance of adapting to this diversity.

Regarding teacher recruitment and retention, Baroness Barran outlined the Government's efforts to transform teacher training and recruit specialists in RE. Introducing a £10,000

bursary for RE trainee teachers in the 2024-25 academic year aims to incentivise more applicants. She also mentioned subject knowledge enhancement courses and the need for teachers to feel supported in handling sensitive content. She explained the poor recruitment for this year's RE initial teacher education (44%) by saying that the Government had increased the target by around the same amount. This failed to acknowledge that her Government had inexplicably cut the target a few years ago, and the target had been restored to previous levels due to the apparent undersupply of secondary RE teachers.

Responding to concerns raised by various speakers, Baroness Barran affirmed that non-religious worldviews are already 'an integral' part of the religious studies GCSE and A-level subject content. This statement could easily have been misunderstood because that content does not include a non-religious worldview, such as Humanism, at the same level as the content specified for religions. **This BBC Article** from 2015 records the level of support for a Humanism Annex and that it was refused. We did, however, spot a helpful shift in the right direction about non-religious worldviews. In a debate last year, the Baroness rejected calls to change the law to ensure non-religious worldviews were taught in schools. The response was that schools already **may** include them in the RE curriculum. In this speech, however, she acknowledged the recent court rulings that have made it clear that religious education should include teaching non-religious worldviews. NATRE's oft-repeated view is that they **MUST** be included, and most Agreed Syllabus Conference appear to agree.

The Baroness emphasised the Government's commitment to local determination of Religious Education. Still, she failed to mention that over half of pupils in England are now educated in Academies where the locally determined Agreed Syllabus does not apply. However, she did welcome the work that the Religious Education Council has done to assist curriculum developers by publishing its National Content Standard for Religious Education in England. She explained it is not a curriculum in itself. Still, because it did not specify the content that schools should teach, it provided a non-statutory benchmark against which syllabus providers and others can choose to inform or evaluate their work.

Regarding schools' compliance with their duty to teach RE, Baroness Barran noted that schools not teaching RE are acting unlawfully, and concerns can be raised through the complaints procedure and escalated to the department if necessary. NATRE has tested this process with both Community schools and an Academy, and it took almost two years. Given the number of secondary schools that our data analysis suggests are non-compliant is around 500, this advice is not something we can recommend. However, the campaign will continue.

Read the hour-long detail in full here: **[Religious Education in Schools - Hansard - UK Parliament](#)**

Listen via Parliament TV **[Parliamentlive.tv - Lords Grand Committee](#)**

## **7.0 Institute for Jewish Policy Research - National Jewish Identity Survey**

This landmark study provides a detailed and updated profile of how British Jews understand and live their Jewish lives. It is based on JPR's National Jewish Identity Survey, conducted in November-December 2022 among nearly 5,000 members of the **[JPR research panel](#)**. It is the largest survey of its kind and the most comprehensive study of Jewish identity to date.

The report, written by Dr David Graham and Dr Jonathan Boyd, covers a variety of key themes in contemporary Jewish life, including religious belief and affiliation, Jewish education and cultural consumption, Jewish ethnicity, Zionism and attachment to Israel, antisemitism, charitable giving and volunteering, and the relationship between community engagement and happiness.

The full report can be downloaded here [Jews in the UK today: Key findings from the JPR National Jewish Identity Survey | JPR](#) A video summary can be found here: [Who are Jews in the UK today? \(youtube.com\)](#)

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Background documents: SACRE Newsletter