



# RE: THE TRUTH UNMASKED

The supply of and support  
for Religious Education teachers

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An Inquiry by  
The All Party  
Parliamentary  
Group on Religious  
Education



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# FOREWORD

Stephen Lloyd MP

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Very few issues matter more than education. Our hardworking teachers not only impart information, they also help shape the views of the next generation. The importance of mutual respect and understanding, for faiths and belief, is crucial in a society where there are now many different religions and cultures. This is why I believe religious education is so important. It should never be about telling young people what to believe, it should be about informing them what others believe.

Despite religious education being more important than ever before, our group were informed that the subject was often marginalised in schools, and teachers undermined by the dismantling of the RE frameworks and support structures. There appeared to be fewer subject specialists now than in previous years. This is why the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Religious Education has conducted this inquiry into the 'Supply of and Support for Religious Education Teachers'.

We have consulted with a range of individuals and organisations, with direct experience of teaching religious education, and accredited experts. We reached out to over 430 schools and have heard from

statisticians from the Department for Education and academia. I would like to thank all of those who have contributed through submitting written evidence, or who came along to listen or give evidence at our two parliamentary meetings. In particular I would like to thank Dr Barbara Wintersgill for all her hard work in helping us conduct this inquiry. I have personally learned a great deal from reading through the evidence and listening to contributors at the meetings. I am now even more determined to do everything I can so that every pupil is taught religious education to a high standard.

We hope that the Department for Education find this report useful, and incorporate our recommendations into Government policy on RE.

Yours sincerely



**Stephen Lloyd MP**  
Chair of the APPG on Religious  
Education  
March 2013





# MAIN FINDINGS

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## 1 Supply of primary RE teachers

- a) In over half of the 300 primary schools participating in this inquiry, some or all pupils were taught RE by someone other than their class teacher. In a quarter of these schools RE was taught by teaching assistants. This is unacceptable and in many cases this has a detrimental impact on the quality of RE.(2.2-2.5)
- b) About a half of primary teachers and trainee teachers lack confidence in teaching RE (2.6-2.10)
- c) About a half of subject leaders in primary schools lack the expertise or experience to undertake their role effectively (2.11-2.13)
- d) There is a wide variation in the extent of initial teacher training in RE and too many trainee teachers have little effective preparation for teaching the subject.(2.14-2.16)

## 2 Supply of secondary teachers

- a) Over 50% of teachers of RE in secondary schools have no qualification or appropriate expertise in the subject. This is unacceptable (3.1-3.6)
- b) The inclusion of non specialists in the total number of RE teachers given by the DfE gives the false impression that we have enough RE teachers and skews the statistics regarding the need to train more RE specialists (4.1-4.4)
- c) Secondary RE trainees on school based routes are not guaranteed places in schools where the RE staff have sufficient expertise to provide training (5.3-5.4)
- d) Applications for secondary RE teacher training courses are currently 143 down on the same time last year. The loss of bursaries for RE is among the reasons for this reduction in applicant numbers for 2013/14 (5.4-5.5)

## 3 Support for teachers of RE

- a) In nearly 40% of schools RE teachers have inadequate access to continuing professional development.(6.1-6.3)
- b) RE teachers, particularly non specialists, in schools without a religious character have particularly limited access to CPD (6.13-6.21)
- c) The ability of SACREs to provide support for teachers of RE at a local level has been dramatically reduced by local authority funding decisions and the impact of the academisation programme. (6.31-6.36)
- d) Teachers' access to CPD is a postcode lottery; it depends on the resources of their local SACRE or diocese, proximity to training and the priority given to RE in schools.

## 4 Contributory factors

- a) A range of government policies, notably those relating to the EBacc and GCSE short courses, are contributing to the lowering of the status of RE in some schools leading to a reduction in the demand for specialist teachers (4.5-4.11)
- b) Recent reductions and changes in teacher training have resulted in the closure of some outstanding university providers with a loss of opportunities for RE CPD. (5.1-5.3)
- c) The combined effect of inadequate supply and inadequate access to support is that whatever their level of commitment, many teachers struggle to reach the levels of subject competence expected in the DfE's own teaching standards.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

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## **The DfE should:**

- revise the methods by which it gathers information about the number of RE teachers in secondary schools and present full time equivalent totals, and use these as the basis of the department's calculation of teacher training targets
- introduce a system which requires all secondary teachers to receive some training in any subject they teach
- restore bursaries for RE trainees
- restore the inclusion of results for the GCSE short course for RE to school league table points
- require academies to use the local agreed syllabus
- publish the outcomes of SACREs' monitoring of teacher supply and CPD
- ensure that SACREs have the resources to carry out their statutory responsibilities

## **All schools should:**

- ensure that all teachers of RE meet the Teaching Standards in respect of the subject and develop their confidence and expertise in teaching RE
- make proper provision for continuing professional development for subject leaders, specialist teachers and others with responsibility for teaching RE in order to improve its quality

## **Primary schools should:**

- review, where relevant, the widespread practice of using staff other than the classroom teacher to teach RE
- provide regular opportunities for RE subject leaders to train their colleagues in subject knowledge and planning and assessing RE

## **Secondary schools should:**

- review as a priority, where relevant, the practice of using non specialist teachers to teach RE
- where non specialists are teaching RE;
  - ensure that the same few teachers teach the subject every year rather than fill timetable gaps with any teacher who is free at the time
  - ensure that all non specialists receive high quality subject-specific training

## **ITE training providers should:**

- improve the quality of RE training for primary trainees to enable them to teach RE knowledgeably and confidently
- monitor carefully all secondary trainee RE placements to ensure that they provide high quality experiences

## **Local authorities should ensure sufficient resources are made available to enable SACREs to:**

- provide high quality RE support for their schools
- monitor the quality of the provision and staffing of RE in schools
- develop networks to share good practice in RE in all schools in their local area.

## **Those involved in providing CPD for RE teachers should:**

- consider providing an on-line subject knowledge booster course for primary RE subject leaders
- encourage teachers and school leaders to become better informed about the range of RE CPD opportunities available

## **Ofsted should:**

- require inspectors to report on non-compliance with statutory requirements regarding RE
- continue monitor the quality of RE provision, including teaching and professional development, through subject inspections

## **The Teaching Agency should:**

- review the capacity of training schools to provide subject specific training for RE in schools without the necessary subject expertise.



# 1. INTRODUCTION

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## RE in the curriculum

- 1.1 RE must be taught to all pupils, including those in the 6th form, with the exception of those withdrawn by their parents. It is up to schools to decide how to plan RE in the curriculum but the following are the most usual curriculum arrangements for RE.
- In most primary schools pupils have one lesson of RE a week. This is a departure from usual practice for similar subjects such as history and geography, which are generally taught in concentrated half-termly blocks rather than weekly lessons.
  - Secondary schools also generally teach RE on a weekly basis. In some secondary schools RE is taught at Key Stage 3 (11-14 year olds) as part of an integrated humanities course with other subjects.
  - There are varieties of practice in Key Stage 4 (15-16 year olds), most of which involve GCSE courses. The most common forms of provision are:
    - all pupils take the GCSE short course in religious studies OR
    - all pupils take the GCSE full course in religious studies OR
    - some pupils take the short course and others choose to take the full course OR
    - some pupils select the full course from a list of optional subjects and all pupils follow a non-examined course that combines RE with personal, social and health education (PSHE) and/or citizenship.
  - For 6th form students many schools offer AS and A Level courses in religious studies. In order to meet the statutory requirement schools include non-examination RE in a variety of ways, such as termly one day conferences or modules in general studies.

## Consolidation and improvement

- 1.2 The last two decades have seen an overall gradual improvement in the provision for and quality of religious education (RE). Ofsted<sup>1</sup> has identified the following strengths:
- Examination entries in religious studies at GCSE and GCE A level have continued to rise each year since 2006.
  - Pupils' attitudes to RE have improved (Ofsted 2010:4)
  - RE makes a positive contribution to key aspects of pupils' personal development, most notably in relation to the understanding and appreciation of the diverse nature of our society.(Ofsted 2010:6)
  - A greater consensus exists about the nature and purpose of the subject, reflected in and encouraged by the publication of the Non-Statutory National Framework (NSNF) in 2004.
  - The National College of School Leadership has recently included RE in the list of designated specialisms for the position of Specialist Leader in Education with the college, having excluded it in earlier drafts. This means that it is now possible to have Religious Education Specialist Leaders, a position offering excellent professional development for RE teachers who see their future career within the subject rather than in school leadership generally.
  - There has been an enthusiastic response from schools to the RE Quality Mark (REQM). During the short time that it has been running as a pilot project 22 schools have received gold, 12 silver and 9 bronze awards.

## Challenges in primary RE that need to be addressed

- 1.3 Despite the welcome improvements noted above, pupils' achievement in RE is very inconsistent. At the time of Ofsted's most recent report on RE (Ofsted 2010) primary school pupils' achievement in RE was good or outstanding in only 4 out of 10 schools. Ofsted identifies a number of contributory factors, which are

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<sup>1</sup>The sample of schools selected for Ofsted RE inspections represents a cross-section, including voluntary controlled schools, but does not include voluntary aided schools or academies with a religious designation.



pertinent to this inquiry:

- Primary teachers' lack of secure subject knowledge is 'a key factor limiting the amount of good and outstanding teaching in RE' (Ofsted 2007:7) . Three years later, in too many cases 'teachers lacked the knowledge and confidence to plan and teach high quality RE lessons' (Ofsted 2010:4).
- This lack of subject knowledge is blamed partly on primary initial teacher training (ITT) courses, which provide very little training about teaching RE (Ofsted 2007:7)
- A particular area of concern is the increasing use of teaching assistants to deliver RE instead of qualified teachers. Around a third of the primary schools visited deployed their teaching assistants in this way for at least part of the RE provision (Ofsted 2010:36).
- Later professional development does not compensate for the inadequacy of many teachers' initial training in RE (Ofsted 2007:7). Ofsted found 'very limited training for staff with little opportunity for the subject leader to support other teachers in planning RE'. In the primary schools visited, RE was rarely the focus of staff meetings or in-service training and teaching assistants who taught the subject were often not trained to do so (Ofsted 2010:36).

### Challenges in secondary RE that need to be addressed

1.4 Pupils' achievement in RE in secondary schools shows a very mixed picture (Ofsted 2010:13). It was good or outstanding in 40 of the 89 schools visited, requiring improvement in 45 schools and inadequate in 14 schools. This could be explained at least in part by the following considerations.

- Too many pupils are taught RE by non specialist teachers (ibid:39).
- In many cases, non specialists are not given subject-related training and they have a negative impact on students' progress in RE (Ofsted 2010:39).
- Teachers do not have enough opportunities for professional development. 'The effectiveness of specialist staff training in RE was inadequate in four out of 10 of the schools visited. They were not giving sufficient time and resources to support teachers' professional development in the subject' (Ofsted 2010:6).
- In-service training in RE is not always matched closely enough to teachers' needs (ibid:39). Schools rarely evaluate its impact.

### Recent challenges to RE

1.5 The improvements in RE provision and standards which, notwithstanding the challenges identified above, have been the overall trend in the last decade have been undermined by a series of severe blows since 2010. Many national sources of support have been abolished.

- Chief among these are the loss of a national adviser for RE at QCDA. In addition to analysing annual SACRE reports, this adviser had helped Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education (SACREs) perform their task knowledgeably and provided key information and curriculum materials on a level and with a consistency that could never be matched locally.
- For RE to keep abreast of other curriculum subjects its inclusion in the 2011-13 national curriculum review was essential. On 18 July 2010 the Secretary of State in reply to a question from Chris Bryant (Rhondda) gave his assurance that 'As part of our curriculum review later this year, we shall address...religious education'. However in the event RE was excluded from the review and no alternative measures were taken to ensure that, for the sake of schools, RE's place in the curriculum was considered alongside the other subjects to facilitate the school's overall planning.
- After 2014, short course GCSEs will not be recognised in the headline measures of a school's performance.
- In 2011 RE was excluded from the English Baccalaureate (EBacc).
- Government targets for recruiting RE trainee teachers have been significantly reduced. As a result several university departments, including some outstanding providers, have closed. They had not only trained new RE teachers but also contributed to local RE through SACRE membership and by providing continuing professional development.
- From 2013 bursaries for RE trainee teachers have been withdrawn.
- All but the strongest SACREs are now struggling to meet their responsibilities. The extension of the academies programme together with local authority cut backs have resulted in the loss of funding and of time for advisers and consultants who provided professional support to SACREs. SACREs' role has been undermined by the decision to allow academies not to teach the locally agreed syllabus, or indeed any agreed syllabus.

1.6 In many of these cases RE has been the unintended victim of a combination of major policy changes rather than the subject of a deliberate attack. Nevertheless the combined impact of so many severe setbacks in such a short time has been to convey the message that even though it is a statutory subject, RE is of less value than other subjects.



## Why is the focus of this inquiry on the supply of and support for teachers of RE?

Nothing makes more difference to the progress and attainment of any child or young person than good teachers and good teaching. (The government White Paper *The Importance of Teaching* 2010:43)

Nothing makes more difference to the progress and attainment of any child or young person than good teachers and good teaching. (The government White Paper *The Importance of Teaching* 2010:43)

1.7 The APPG inquiry has looked further into the issues raised by Ofsted and this report seeks to address these challenges and present solutions to halt the deterioration in the position of RE which has occurred over the last two years. The APPG's aims are:

- to promote the highest possible standards of RE in schools, colleges, universities and academies,
- to press for continuous improvement in RE,
- to promote a clear, positive image and public understanding of RE, and
- to advocate that every young person experiences a personally inspiring and academically rigorous education in religious and non religious worldviews.

The common factors influencing the achievement of these aims are teachers. The standards achieved by pupils in RE depend on their teachers' knowledge, teaching expertise and love of the subject; only teachers can bring about continuous improvement; the public image of RE is based on society's collective memory of the quality of RE lessons; only RE teachers can ensure that their pupils experience an inspiring and rigorous religious education.

This report will focus on an analysis of teacher supply, an examination of the support available to RE teachers from SACREs and other sources and will offer recommendations on ways of improving provision.

A well trained and confident workforce is crucial in ensuring good quality RE. (DfE2010:27)





# 2. THE SUPPLY OF TEACHERS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

2.1 One of the key questions for this inquiry was 'Do we have enough teachers of religious education?' There is no simple answer to this question, partly because the term 'teacher of religious education' is open to a range of interpretations. In particular the term has very different meanings in primary and secondary schools. This inquiry into the provision of teachers of RE is not just concerned with numbers. Our interest is in the provision of good teachers, which should be our young people's entitlement. The levels of subject expertise required by all teachers are set out in the new standards for teachers:

These are among the standards expected of all RE teachers.

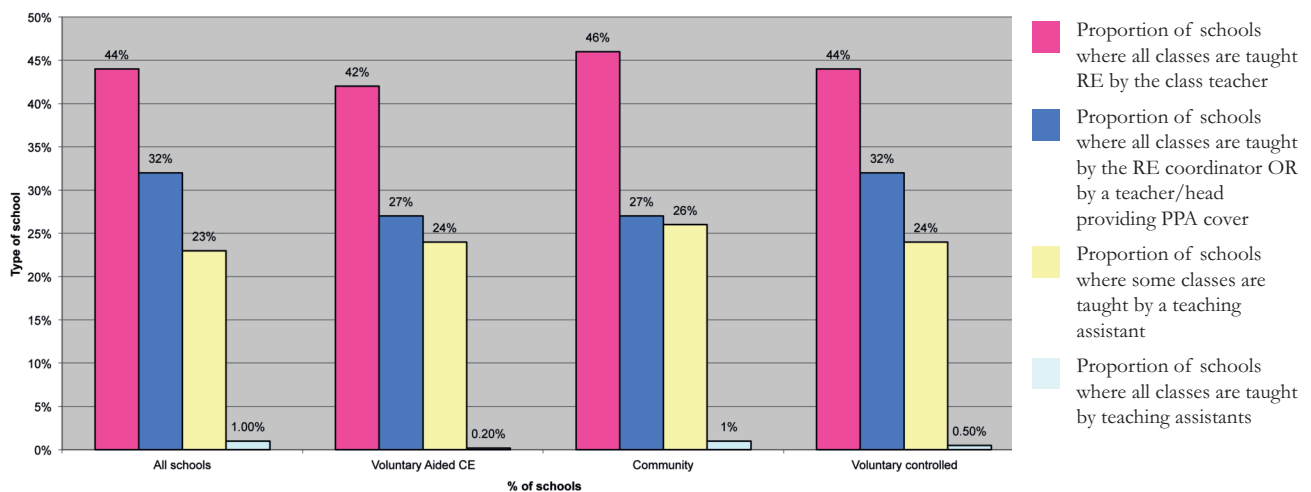
## Who teaches RE in primary schools?

2.2 It is general practice in primary schools for class teachers to teach all subjects to their classes. Occasionally pairs of teachers may agree to exchange subjects in order that more children have the opportunity to be taught by a teacher with specialist expertise in the case of, for example music, modern foreign languages (MFL) and PE. On this principle all primary school teachers are potential teachers of RE. In practice this is far from being the case.

### A teacher must:

- Set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge pupils
- Promote good progress and outcomes by pupils
- Demonstrate good subject and curriculum knowledge
  - have a secure knowledge of the relevant subject(s) and curriculum areas, foster and maintain pupils' interest in the subject, and address misunderstandings
  - demonstrate a critical understanding of developments in the subject and curriculum areas, and promote the value of scholarship
- Plan and teach well structured lessons
  - impart knowledge and develop understanding through effective use of lesson time
  - contribute to the design and provision of an engaging curriculum within the relevant subject area(s). (Teachers' Standards. DfE May 2012)

CHART 1: Who teaches RE in Primary Schools



- 2.3 Chart 1 relates to the 300 primary schools responding to the APPG inquiry 'call for evidence'. In only 44% of these schools were all pupils taught RE by their class teacher, a similar figure to that reported by Ofsted (HMI reporting to the APPG).
- 2.4 In the majority of cases where the class teacher did not teach RE, the subject was taught by someone else during the class teacher's planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time. Class teachers use their RE lesson time for PPA more than they use other subject time. Ofsted evidence indicates this trend is growing.

In 50% of schools that we visited some or all of the RE is taught in this preparation, planning and assessment time by someone other than the class teacher. Sometimes that is a cover teacher; sometimes it is an RE specialist in primary; often it is the HLTA or a TA. The problem with that is it isolates RE from the rest of the curriculum, which is being taught by a different teacher. We think that impacts on the quality of what is happening with the subject. (Alan Brine HMI: oral evidence to the APPG)

- 2.5 In 24% of schools in the APPG survey RE was taught to some children by higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs); indeed Ofsted estimates this figure as high as a third (Ofsted 2010:36). This practice almost unknown in foundation subjects such as history, geography and design and technology.

'Common practice is for the class teacher to teach history as the norm with TAs and HLTAs in support. It is extremely rare to come across a school where history is not taught by the class teacher' (Michael Maddison HMI. National Adviser for history)

The extensive use of teaching assistants to teach RE was generally consistent irrespective of school type. The outcome is not always negative and Ofsted has reported that in the few occasions 'where the teaching assistants were very carefully supported, managed and monitored, their enthusiasm and interest in the subject could have a very positive impact on pupils' learning' (Ofsted 2010:36). BUT generally the practice is not good and reflects the low status of RE in many schools. The effects of this policy go beyond the negative impact on pupils and class teachers. They also affect trainee teachers in Initial Teacher Education (ITE).

The use of teaching assistants to teach RE has a detrimental effect on pupils' perceptions of the subject. It implies that RE isn't as important as other subjects. It also impacts on my students' attitudes towards RE and reduces their opportunities for teaching and being observed by experienced teachers who can help them develop their teaching strategies. (Linda Whitworth. Middlesex University)

The use of people who are not qualified teachers to teach lessons, the majority being teaching assistants, is extensive in RE. This practice has a negative impact on pupils' attitudes and standards.

### Why are so many children taught RE by someone other than their class teacher?

- 2.6 Some teachers responding to the APPG explained why PPA time was so often taken during RE lessons. In some schools the reason was strategic: the practice of teaching RE once a week rather than in half termly blocks, as in the case of history and geography, provided a useful one hour slot for PPA. Ofsted has reported (Ofsted 2010) that the practice of teaching RE in weekly slots was often because teachers lacked confidence and this timetabling arrangement enabled them to pass the RE on to another person.
- 2.7 In a few cases the class teacher was replaced for a positive reason, by a colleague with a higher qualification in RE, for example a degree in theology or a BEd/BA with RE as a specialist subject.
- 2.8 A primary initial teacher educator carrying out research among her students was one of many who suggested that lack confidence in RE was the main reason why so many teachers avoided teaching it. This lack of confidence first took root during teacher training.

Approximately 50% of students have concerns about teaching RE, in particular fear of causing offence, not being accurate about religions and concerns about how to manage their own beliefs and attitudes in a multicultural classroom. (Linda Whitworth: Middlesex University).



2.9 Particularly detailed information has been presented by Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln, which carried out a survey of 824 primary trainees' attitudes to RE over 7 years. Trainees were asked 'How do you feel about teaching RE?' They responded as follows:

Reaction/comments	Total %
Positive about RE	26%
Negative about RE	4%
OK about teaching it	20%
Confident about teaching it	21%
Cautious/ lacking in confidence*	50%

The most encouraging discovery here is the tiny number of trainees who were negative about teaching RE. Trainees gave the following reasons for caution/lack of confidence:

- Lack of subject knowledge
- Fear of bias (especially those of faith)
- Feeling of unpreparedness/ lack of experience
- Fear about pronunciations
- Fear of offending
- Unsure of the RE curriculum
- Fear of teaching controversial topics
- Uncertainty about its place in the curriculum

2.10 Ofsted has found that much of this uncertainty relates specifically to teaching about Christianity: 'Primary schools in particular were often uncertain about whether Christian material should be investigated in its own right, as part of understanding the religion, or whether it should be used to consider moral or social themes out of the context of the religion'(Ofsted

2010:33). The cumulative effect of this uncertainty is that in primary schools standards in RE are not high enough. Since the quality of RE provision relies heavily on the quality of the leadership and management of the subject, this suggests that the wider question is, 'Are primary RE subject leaders adequately prepared for their role?'

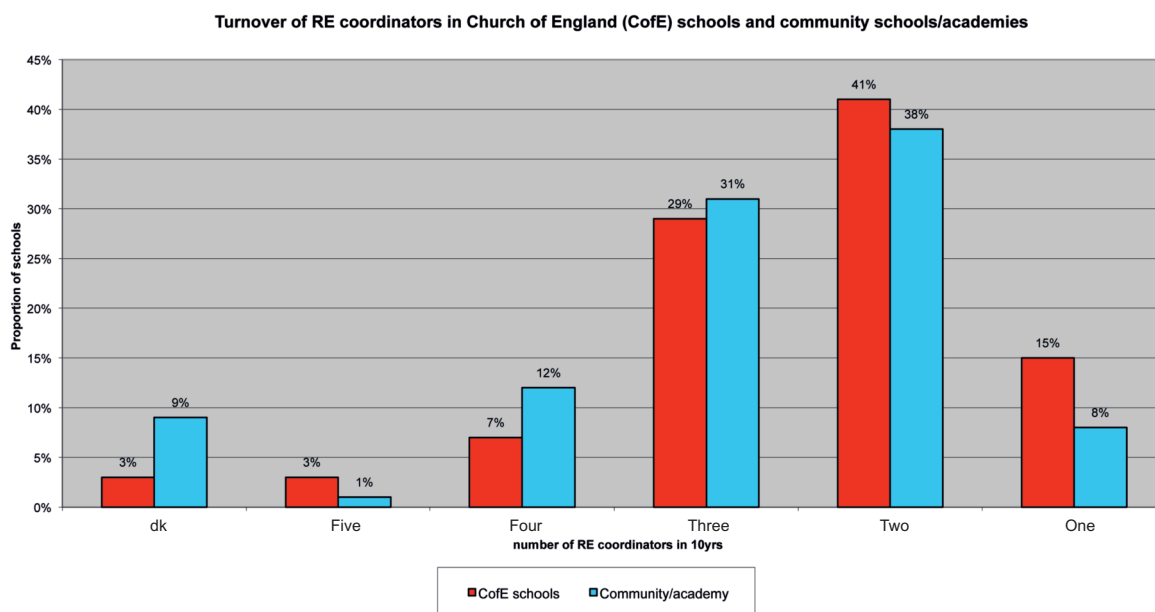
**Research at two universities indicates that the main reason why so many primary teachers avoid teaching RE is not dislike of the subject but lack of confidence, in particular fear of causing offence. This is particularly the case with trainees whose subject knowledge is poor.**

### Are primary subject leaders adequately prepared for leading and managing RE?

2.11 All but two schools responding to the APPG had a named RE leader whose role was to lead and manage RE in the school by, for example, ensuring that every teacher knew what their class had to learn each lesson. In over 80% of these schools there was a regular turnover of RE leaders, most holding the post for between one and three years.

2.12 In 2010 Ofsted found that 'the leadership and management of RE were good or outstanding in just over half the primary schools visited', the same proportion reported in 2007 (Ofsted 2010:35), compared to 74% in history over the same period. Ofsted reported that a number of features of the

CHART 2: number of RE leaders in primary schools over a ten year period



leadership and management of RE in primary schools were weak, undermining the effectiveness of the subject. These included weak monitoring and self-evaluation and narrowly focused development planning, which paid insufficient attention to improving the quality of provision and raising pupils' attainment.

2.13 Very few primary RE subject leaders in responding schools had qualifications in RE above GCSE/O Level.

An analysis of the qualifications of leaders indicates that RE appears to be taken more seriously in schools with a religious character than in community schools. In community schools a far higher proportion of leaders had no qualification at all in RE while in schools with a religious character more leaders had GCSE, A Level, a degree or even a higher degree in Theology or Religious Studies. However, the lack of formal qualification is not unique to RE and is also a feature of history subject leaders (Ofsted 2007a:20), although not to the same extent.

The subject is disadvantaged by the movement of experienced and successful primary RE co-ordinators to more 'prestigious' areas, such as numeracy or literacy. (Wendy Harrison. SACRE consultant)

CHART 3: The highest qualification of primary RE leaders - all schools

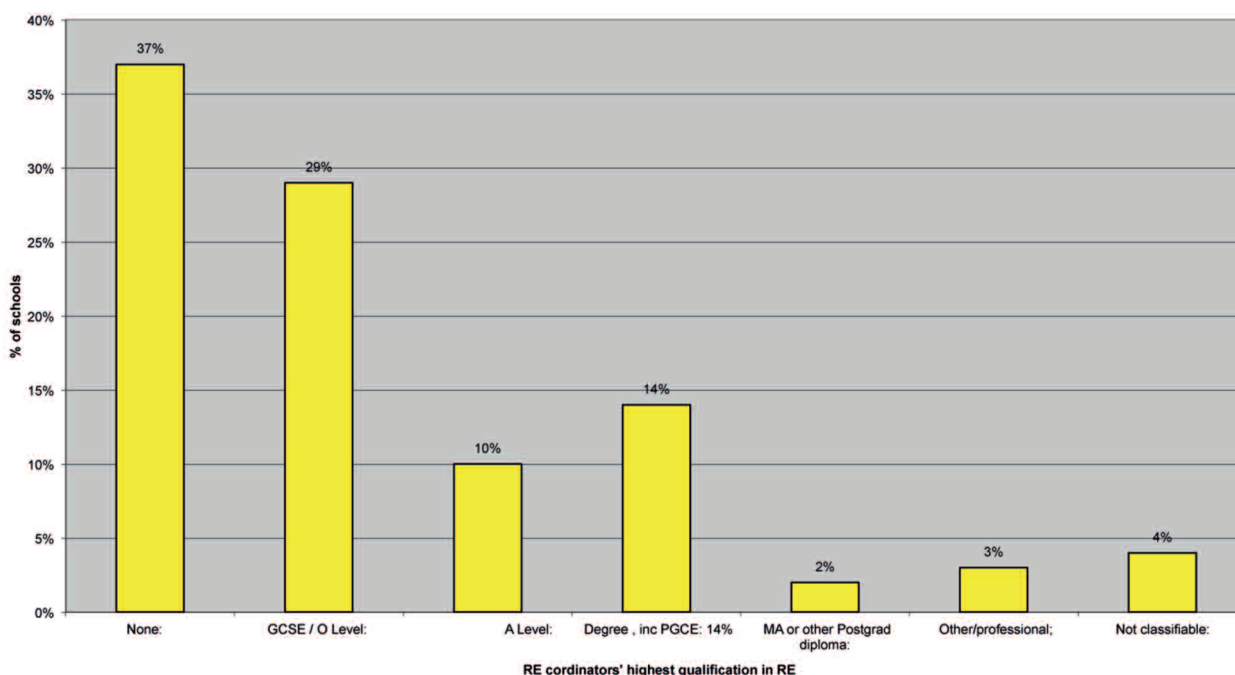
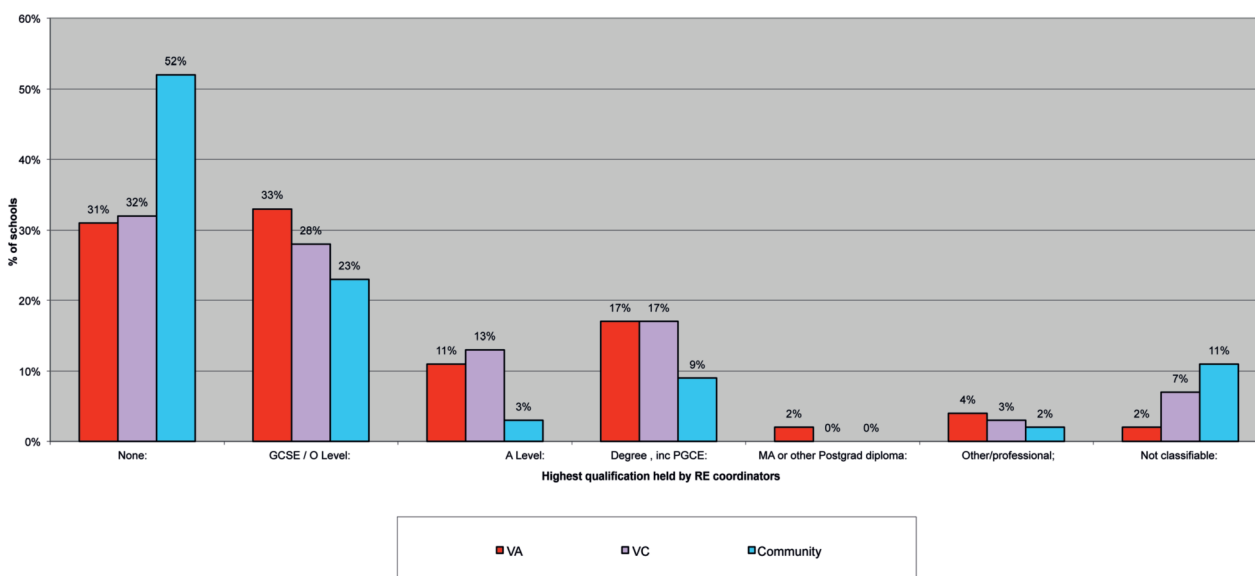


CHART 4: The highest RE qualification of primary RE leaders - Church of England and community schools





Very few RE leaders in primary schools had qualifications in RE. Nearly 40% did not even have GCSE/O Level.

## RE and Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

2.14 There are several ways in which a primary teacher might have been prepared to teach RE during their initial teacher training. A minority (see chart 4) study theology/religious studies as the whole or part of a BA or PGCE qualification. But the vast majority have some, usually minimal, encounter with RE during their general primary training, which includes school experience.

2.15 Chart 5 represents an approximation of the information given by respondents, showing that they had a wide variety of experiences of RE during their teacher training. Most of those teachers who had devoted over 20 hours to RE in their teacher training years described it as their main subject, or a special focus. About half of the teachers surveyed had no more than 15 hours of training in RE. 15% of subject leaders had no training in RE. This wide variation in training is confirmed by the Association of University Lecturers in RE (AULRE) whose 2013 data indicate that students on BA(QT) courses can spend as little as 4 and even at best 26 hours on RE; those on PGCE courses had between 2 and 18 hours. Ofsted found that 'Primary initial teacher training (ITT) courses provide very little training about teaching RE'(Ofsted 2007:7).

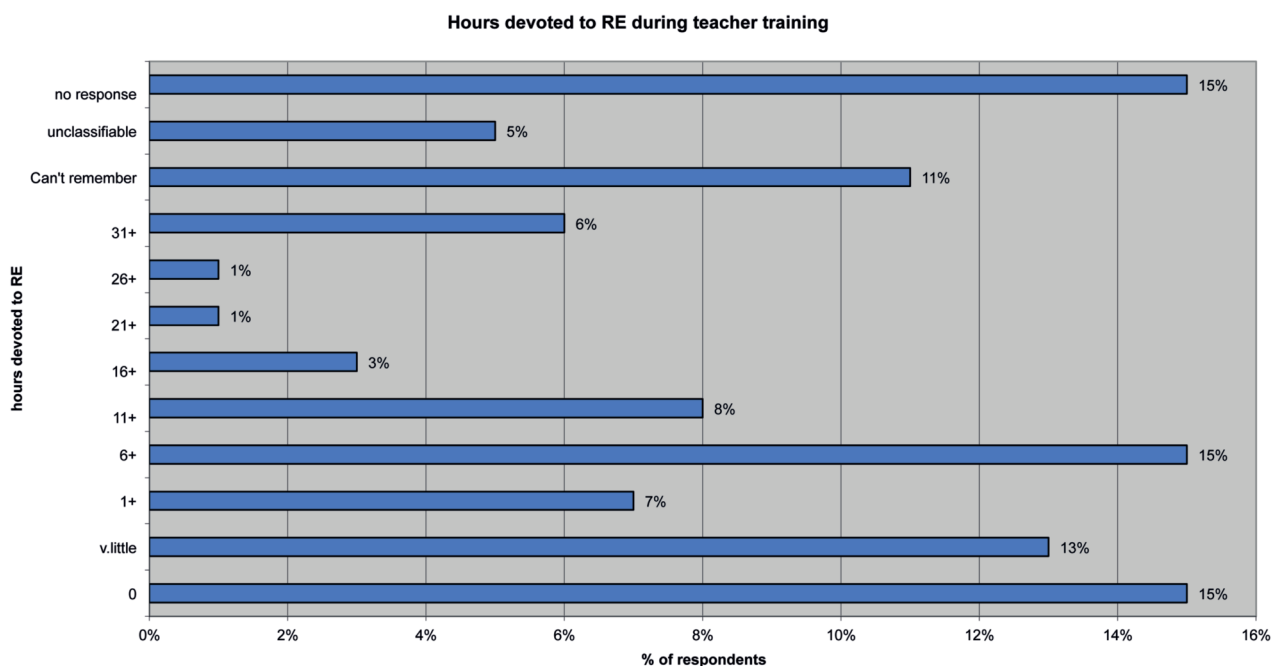
2.16 Given the small number of teachers with post GCSE qualifications in RE and the minimal time devoted to the subject in initial teacher training, is not surprising that Ofsted can conclude that even where schools take RE seriously 'in too many cases, teachers lacked the knowledge and confidence to plan and teach high quality RE lessons' (Ofsted 2010:4).

*I've learned more about RE today than in all my teacher training. (Evaluation from a teacher on a one day RE course)*

*The great majority of trainee primary teachers do not receive sufficient training in RE for them to be able to teach the subject effectively.*

2.17 This inquiry has established that in primary schools RE is taught by a variety of people: classroom teachers, teaching assistants and sometimes even clergy and other community representatives. This is a more diverse group of people than those teaching any other subject. The common denominator is that only a tiny proportion of them have had the training they need to teach RE effectively. Many of those responsible for RE are ill prepared for the task of teaching RE let alone leading it. We shall see in section 6 that this lack of initial training is in no way redressed by continuing professional development and many teachers and RE subject leaders are left to muddle through as best they

**CHART 5: RE in initial teacher training (primary)**



can with little more than the internet as a guide. **There is almost no chance that they can meet the DfE Teachers' Standards under such circumstances.** This is one of the key factors contributing to Ofsted's finding that standards in RE required improvement in more than half of primary schools. Given the data about the level of training provided it is perhaps surprising that only half are in this position.



# 3. THE PROVISION OF TEACHERS OF RE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

3.1 Parents might reasonably expect their children in secondary schools to be taught by specialists with the expertise to teach their subjects effectively. This principle is recognised by the current Secretary of State for Education, who has argued that the quality of teachers is central to the task of raising standards in schools (DfE 2010), pointing out that pupil attainment is affected “above all other factors” by the quality of their teachers (DfE 2011:4). Furthermore, financial incentives in the form of training bursaries are now offered to graduates with good degrees - varying from £0 to £20,000 according to subject - in order to attract them into teaching (DfE 2012). The message is clear: the knowledge and qualifications that teachers have is vitally important to the prospects of pupils and this is reflected in the DfE's Teaching Standards.

## What proportion of secondary teachers of RE are appropriately qualified?

- 3.2 Given the current government's emphasis on the subject knowledge and qualifications of teachers, what is the situation in RE?
- 3.3 There are two ways of asking this question:
- (i) How many secondary RE teachers have appropriate qualifications to teach RE?
  - (ii) What proportion of RE lessons are taught in a typical week by appropriately qualified teachers?
- 3.4 The answer to (i), provided by the DfE workforce survey, is that 55% of those teaching RE have no post-A Level subject qualification compared to only 28% of history and 33% of geography teachers. This figure includes many teachers who teach RE for only a few lessons a week.

CHART 6:

Hours taught in a typical week in 2011 to pupils in years 7 to 13 by post A-level qualifications of the teacher teaching the lesson.						
SUBJECT	Degree or higher %	Bachelor of Education %	Postgraduate Certificate of Education %	Other qualifications %	Any relevant post A-Level qualification %	No relevant post A-Level qualification %
Mathematics	52.6	7.4	21.7	2.3	84.0	16.0
English	71.8	4.5	9.7	1.6	87.5	12.5
Physics	65.1	3.2	6.9	0.8	75.9	24.1
Chemistry	73.0	2.6	5.8	0.6	82.1	17.9
Biology	79.2	3.9	5.1	0.8	89.0	11.0
History	75.6	3.2	7.7	0.9	87.4	12.6
Geography	71.6	3.6	7.5	1.0	83.7	16.3
French	55.2	4.6	18.6	1.3	79.8	20.2
German	59.8	2.3	11.7	1.4	75.2	24.8
Spanish	43.1	2.0	13.3	1.4	59.8	40.2
Religious Education	54.3	4.9	12.4	1.4	72.9	27.1
2010	52.9	4.7	13.6	1.5	72.8	27.2

Source: School Workforce Census Base: 150,852 secondary level teachers (unweighted head count)



**'The heavy reliance on non specialist teachers in RE has been raised frequently in previous reports and remains a matter of concern. (Ofsted 2010:39).**

3.5 The answer to (ii) again according to the DfE workforce survey, is that 27.1% of RE lessons in a typical week are taught by teachers with no post-A Level qualification in the subject. Chart 6 shows that this is a far higher proportion in comparison with history and geography and in comparison with most national curriculum subjects.

These findings (chart 6) were confirmed by the APPG survey which found that in nearly a quarter of schools over 25% of pupils were taught by non specialists.

3.6 The Department for Education argues that pupil attainment is affected “above all other factors” by the quality of their teachers. The crucial question then is why are teachers with no RE subject qualifications accepted to the point where they make up over half the RE workforce?

Too many teachers of RE in secondary schools lack the appropriate level of subject expertise to teach the subject effectively

### **What is the impact of non specialist teachers of RE on their pupils' standards of work?**

3.7 Non specialists can be effective when they receive training and are well supported by subject specialists. What follows applies particularly to the large number of non specialists who find themselves teaching RE purely because they have gaps in their timetables. These teachers have little opportunity to build up their level of subject expertise. This is a particular issue in schools which deploy different non specialists year after year to cover RE classes.

3.8 The greatest challenge to any non specialist teacher of RE is the extensive body of subject knowledge needed to teach the subject confidently and well.

The quality of teachers' qualifications and training will greatly affect the quality of RE delivered in the classroom. Teachers need confidence, skills, and knowledge in their subject area to ensure effective learning takes place. They require not just solid teaching techniques but subject specific knowledge. (British Humanist Association)

3.9 Teachers with weak subject knowledge will struggle with other aspects of teaching, such as identifying accurate resources or having the confidence to move beyond the predictability of a text book or work sheet. For example, a head of department arrived at a school to find the subject dominated by non specialists and textbooks. She remarked, 'The non specialists felt safer with text books, which the kids didn't like. They kept going from week to week by going from one page of the book to the next' (Warwick 2010:173) . The same research demonstrates the inadequacy of many of these text books and their capacity to mislead non specialists.

Following a subject inspection, Ofsted made the following judgement on teaching by non specialists in a secondary school.

**Non specialist teachers, while possessing good teaching skills, lacked the subject expertise to answer the pupils' questions correctly, intervene effectively to extend their learning, or re-direct the lesson when it was taking a wrong course. As a result pupils sometimes never recovered from mistakes made early in their lessons.**

This illustrates the contradiction between the Teachers' Standards on the one hand and the classroom reality on the other and flies in the face of the government's own declarations about the 'importance of teachers'.

3.10 Several respondents to the APPG's call for evidence drew attention to the impact of non specialists on examination results. Devon SACRE expressed concerns about performance in RE where departments were led and supported by non specialists. In one school surveyed 33% of pupils at Key Stage 4 were taught by several non specialists, resulting in 'massive variation in student enjoyment between groups'. Groups taught by non specialists have suffered from lower grades than those taught by specialists. This is confirmed by Ofsted:

**Achievement in the ... short GCSE course was extremely variable. Success was affected by a number of factors, including...whether the subject was taught by specialists or non specialists' (Ofsted 2010:14).**

Overall 15% of schools surveyed reported the negative impact of non specialists on standards and on pupils' attitudes to RE.





I am now the only specialist RE teacher in the school. We rely on one non specialist to teach with me, which is detrimental to the subject. Poor achievement in GCSE last year was given as the reason to remove Key Stage 4 RE as a compulsory subject. (Evidence from the 2012 NATRE survey) .

- 3.11 Concern about the confidence of some non specialists was raised by a number of schools in the survey. Respondents noted that non specialists often lacked confidence when it came to lesson planning and assessment and found that other commitments made attendance at departmental meetings difficult.

Over a half of teachers of RE in secondary schools lack the appropriate level of subject expertise to teach the subject effectively and this has a negative impact on standards and pupils' examination results.

Secondary schools continue to expect non specialists to teach a large proportion of RE lessons without the necessary preparation, even though for less than £200 a non specialist can take a subject knowledge booster course in RE that will help them provide a better quality religious education for their pupils.



# 4. PROVISION OF TEACHERS OF RE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: A QUESTION OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND

## Are there enough secondary teachers of RE?

4.1 The supply of teachers in schools is determined by the DfE, which sets annual teacher training targets in response to demand. If the demand for RE teachers remains stable, then the recruitment targets are also likely to remain stable. But if demand falls, then recruitment targets will fall. Demand is sometimes determined by forces beyond the school. For example, the Secretary of State introduced the EBacc in order to bring about an increase in the number of pupils taking history, geography and modern languages for GCSE. This stimulated the demand for teachers of these subjects and consequently training targets were adjusted to reflect this demand and bursaries given to encourage good graduate applicants.

4.2 The annual targets for the recruitment of RE trainee teachers have been dropping very rapidly over the last 2 years.

Chart 9: RE trainee recruitment targets

### DfE Targets and Total Recruited to become New RE teachers

Year	DfE Target	Total Recruited	% Recruited to Target
2008/09	740	935	126%
2009/10	695	850	122%
2010/11	655	841	128%
2011/12	460	469	102%
2012/13	450	470	104%

Source: Teaching Agency ITT Census. Figures presented correct at census date, and include forecast contribution from EBITT provision.

Audrey Brown (DfE) in her oral testimony to the APPG identified three possible reasons for this reduction:

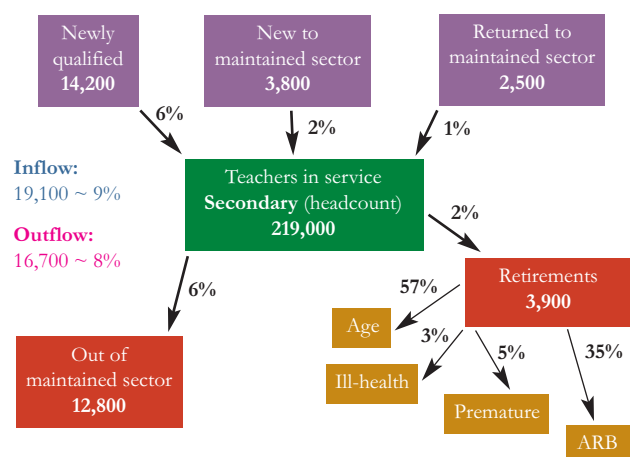
- falling rolls in secondary schools, which have led to a general reduction in secondary targets for teacher training
- recent decreased demand for RE staff at Key Stage 4 following the announcement regarding the EBacc
- over-recruitment from 2008/9 - 2010/11 which was believed to have resulted in 600 teachers over target.

4.3 The School Workforce Survey for 2011 (secondary), on which current Department for Education (DfE) targets are based, records that there are just over 16,000 secondary teachers of RE. 'Teacher of RE' here includes any teacher who teaches RE for one lesson per week in a secondary school. This includes all non-specialists, who as already noted above constitute over 50% of the RE workforce.

4.4 The DfE targets are based on numbers entering and leaving the profession each year. Chart 10 shows how the DfE calculates targets for all secondary teachers. If such a chart were available for RE, the figure in the green box would be about 16,000.

Chart 10: how the DfE calculates recruitment targets

### Secondary Teacher Flows in England



Source: Database of Teacher Records (2007-08)



DfE figures show that over 50% of this 16,000 are non specialists (3.4 above). This is the central problem. The number of teachers available appears to be sufficient because of the inappropriate definition of a 'teacher of RE' used by the workforce survey, which includes all non specialists. Because we do not know how much RE is taught by these non specialists it is not possible to calculate how many specialists would be needed to replace them. It would be more helpful if the DfE would re-phrase the relevant question in the workforce survey in terms of the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) RE teachers and their qualifications. This would make it easier to calculate precisely how many more specialists are needed.

4.5 The DfE has conducted precisely this analysis of the numbers of specialist teachers that would need to be recruited to teach the hours taught by non specialists in EBacc subjects. (DfE. 2013:C18). No such calculation has been made for RE, one of the subjects with the highest use of non specialists. The implication is that teaching 'in need of improvement' is only unacceptable in EBacc subjects.

The DfE mechanism for calculating the demand for RE teachers is flawed because it fails to take account the high percentage of lessons taught by non specialists. This masks the real 'demand' for qualified RE teachers.

### What has been the impact of recent government initiatives on the demand for RE teachers?

4.6 In 2012 the Secretary of State for education made two announcements that had the potential to reduce schools' demand for RE specialists. The announcement that the 'humanities' category of the new EBacc would exclude RS was met with widespread concern. Alongside the EBacc was the EBC, a new qualification to replace GCSEs in the core academic areas of English, mathematics, the sciences, languages and a humanities subject (history or geography). In February 2013 the Secretary of State announced that GCSEs would be reformed rather than abolished and that the plans for the EBC would not be pursued. From 2017 the key measure of school performance would not be the number of pupils achieving 5 A\*-C grades at GCSE (including English and maths) as at present. Instead school performance would be judged by a 'performance 8' valued added measure where the 'average point score' of students' best eight GCSEs

would become the headline school performance figure. The eight would include English and mathematics, three EBacc subjects (e.g. three sciences, or - say - geography, history and a foreign language), and three others, one of which could be RS.

4.7 The APPG welcomes the Department for Education's decision to listen to its members, amongst others, during the consultation period. It welcomes the replacement of the EBacc with the 'Best8' measure and only wonders why the EBacc has not been formally abolished, since it has no further use.

4.8 The EBacc history illustrates the damage that can be done to schools and to pupils' learning when headteachers are too quick to reorganise their staffing during a consultation period for significant policy change. There is mounting evidence that the 5 A\* - C EBacc measure has already had a detrimental effect on the provision of high quality teaching of Religious Studies across the country. The demand for RE teachers is in proportion to the number of RE classes taught. The APPG inquiry and the 2012 NATRE survey found that where schools have experienced a decline in the number of students taking GCSE RE courses or a change in the provision of RE at Key Stage 4, the EBacc was the main reason.

4.9 Some schools are adopting a range of strategies in order to create time for EBacc subjects by taking it from RE.

- The EBacc has extended the group of compulsory subjects, giving pupils fewer choices from among the other subjects. As a result, many RE departments that previously taught two or three RE exam groups three times a week each, now only teach one, or even none.

Since the introduction of the EBacc I have not had a full course group. (APPG school response)

- In order to create time for EBacc subjects some schools have cut all RE in years 10 and 11 except for full course examination groups. These schools are breaking the law. The statutory status of RE does not mean that it is in practice protected at Key Stage 4
- In other schools pupils taking the EBacc do not take RE: another illegal practice that reduces the demand for RE teachers.
- Other schools are teaching the GCSE short course to all pupils in Years 9 and 10 rather than years 10 and 11 as was intended. As a result there is no RE in Year 11. This practice was reported by Ofsted (Ofsted 2010:30) and may be growing.



My school begins short course in year 9 as with other GCSE courses; however the Head has removed year 11 from curriculum time to give the time to EBacc subjects - he is fully aware he is breaking the law. (APPG school response)

Plans for an EBacc, now revised, which excluded RE have already in many schools led to fewer pupils taking RS<sup>2</sup> GCSE, full course, even though (national entries remain buoyant), less time devoted to RE in years 10 and 11, a reduction in RE specialists and increasing use of non specialists.

4.10 It is too early to tell what will be the impact of the decision not to include short course results in the league table points for schools. The GCSE short course in RE was introduced in recognition of the distinctive statutory position of RE, as an incentive for head teachers to meet statutory requirements and to motivate pupils by providing accreditation for an interesting and high quality course. This was a successful strategy and Ofsted has found consistently that in most secondary schools pupils could see the value of RE. RE is statutory at Key Stage 4 and prior to the introduction of the short course there was widespread non-compliance since neither pupils nor schools were motivated to follow a course that was not certificated. The short course has been enormously successful and at its peak in 2008 around 275,000 pupils gained the award. So successful has it been that some schools have begun to extend GCSE entry for the full course to all pupils. In 2012 over 350,000 pupils were awarded a GCSE full or short course in RE. Ofsted has reported that standards are highest at Key Stage 4 where pupils are preparing for a GCSE examination. The introduction of the EBacc must be one of the only occasions when the Department for Education has brought in a policy knowing that the result would be to depress standards.

More schools have introduced the GCSE short course as a means of meeting statutory requirements and to motivate pupils. Non-compliance in Key Stage 4 is much reduced, compared with five years ago. (Ofsted Subject Reports 1999-2000)

<sup>2</sup> See Glossary

<sup>3</sup> With the sole exception of Spanish, which is nonetheless taught by modern languages teachers'

4.11 The lesson learnt is that the status of a subject can be enhanced when promoted by the government and its agencies. Unfortunately the reverse is also true. With the removal of the 'carrot' of league table points coupled with greater calls on curriculum time than ever before, schools are likely to respond in one of two ways. Those wishing to maintain RE for the added value it gives to young people's education will teach the RE full course to all pupils but in one hour a week rather than three, possibly beginning in Year 9. Those who do not value the subject will teach RE only to the few who select it, abolish it altogether or offer a reduced time strategy such as teaching a whole day of RE periodically. These alternatives are not speculative; they are already happening.

The head of RE – who has since left with no replacement – was informed that RE will no longer be offered as a subject by September. Instead, there will be a one day conference a term organised by the geography department. (University of Cumbria research)<sup>3</sup>

The government's decision not to include short course results in the league table points for schools is already leading to a reduction in the number of schools entering all pupils for a GCSE exam and to increased non-compliance at Key Stage 4.

### Does the status of religious education in schools have an impact on the provision of teachers of RE?

4.12 The high proportion of non specialists, together with the culture that permits their use beyond what is acceptable in any other subject, masks the crucial question, 'How many RE teachers need to be trained to secure high quality RE?' The extent of the EBacc's

Since the introduction of the EBacc there has been a notable trend to appoint other humanities teachers as Heads of RE. In 2010 – 2011, after the publication of the White Paper all Head of RE positions were filled by historians even where there were qualified RE teachers applying for those posts. There is no evidence to show that this trend has changed at the moment. (Cornwall SACRE evidence to the APPG)





negative impact on RE depends on the value placed on RE by head teachers and governing bodies. Many schools will have to appoint new history and geography teachers to teach the EBacc. This is often at the expense of the RE department, whose staff are not replaced when they move on or retire.

- 4.13 School managers have to make the choice as to whether to deploy non specialists to teach RE or to teach another subject; and in what situations to decide not to appoint a specialist on the grounds that the school can 'fill up' a timetable with non specialists. In 43 of the 130 responding secondary schools over 40% of RE lessons were being taught by non specialists. This level of cover, or even a considerably lower one, warrants the appointment of a part-time member of staff. Contrasting responses to the APPG illustrate how the variation in the priority given to RE between schools determines the extent to which non specialists are sometimes deployed without any concern for compliance with legal requirements, standards or the quality of teaching.

The Senior Leadership Team feels that RS GCSE is as valuable as any other and have no plans to change its status. (APPG school response)

A historian was appointed to teach RE. Senior management argued that he had plenty of experience teaching history and would be able to pick up RE easily as long as there were books, Power Points and schemes of work to use. (APPG school response)

- 4.14 The status and success of RE in individual schools reflects the attitude of the head teacher and the governing body. Many schools provide high quality RE and comply with legal requirements. However, it has always been the case that in schools where RE is not valued, little provision has been made beyond Year 9, even to the point of non-compliance. The EBacc has provided an excuse for schools that want to minimise

The 1988 Act does not specify proportions of time but there is a very strong recommendation that it should be given equal status with other subjects in the curriculum... The attitude taken by heads of schools is absolutely critical in such affairs. If the head of a school gives priority to the subject, there is a will to make it happen. Where there is a will to make it happen, it happens. Baroness Blatch

RE provision to do so in the knowledge that Ofsted is unlikely to notice or comment on the fact, even where schools admit that legal requirements are infringed. The role of head teachers in ensuring the provision of high quality RE for their pupils, or their failure to do so, was recognised nearly 20 years ago; in a debate in the House of Lords about specialist teachers of RE.

The extent of the damage done by initiatives such as the EBacc is determined partly by the status given to RE in individual schools.

- 4.15 Consequently RE is caught in a pincer movement between schools and the DfE. Too many schools are allowing their pupils to be taught RE by teachers with no qualifications or expertise in the subject, even where evidence shows that this practice has a detrimental affect on pupils' attitudes and standards. The DfE meanwhile is undermining RE by giving tacit approval to the extensive use of non specialists by including them in its workforce data about RE teachers. Although DfE evidence clearly shows that more non specialists are used in RE than in any similar subject, no pressure is put on schools to reform. Repeated calls for change by Ofsted have been consistently ignored.



# 5. CHANGES IN INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION (ITE) AND THE SUPPLY OF SECONDARY RE SPECIALISTS

## Why are changes in ITE adding to concerns about the supply of RE specialists in the future?

5.1 The future supply of specialist RE teachers depends on the quantity and quality of trainees. Compared to history and geography, a relatively high percentage of RE trainees are still located in higher education. Consequently any changes to HE training routes are particularly relevant to RE.

**Chart 11: Allocations of trainees 2013/14 by Teacher Preparation Route (Howson 2012)**

SUBJECT	Salaried School Direct	Non-salaried School Direct	University based
History	15%	26%	59%
Geography	10%	24%	66%
RE	5%	22%	73%

Respondents raised five particular concerns regarding the future supply of RE teachers.

- i. RE recruitment has been hit particularly hard by the recent reduction in HE places that has affected most subjects.
- ii. The closure of outstanding providers has deprived the profession of teachers trained to the highest standards.
- iii. The Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church are particularly apprehensive about the loss of ITE places in the church foundation universities, which place a special emphasis on teaching about Christianity
- iv. The high number of non specialists teaching RE has a detrimental impact on initial teacher training because it leads to a dearth of training expertise within schools.
- v. From September 2013, those training to teach RE will no longer be entitled to bursaries that offset their tuition fees and this is already adversely affecting

recruitment numbers.

5.2 RE recruitment has been hit particularly hard by the recent reduction in HE places that has affected most subjects. Chart 12 overleaf shows that recruitment is currently 145 below the figure for the same time last year, yet the DfE target is only 10 below (see Chart 9).

The reduction in numbers nationally has been applied to individual HE providers of RE training with the result that the number of providers was cut from 40 in 2011-2012 to 33 in 2012-2013. The cuts have also adversely affected the overall quality of training as at least two of the providers, Hull and Warwick, both judged by Ofsted to be outstanding, were unable to sustain their courses on the basis of their low allocations and have closed their PGCE provision.

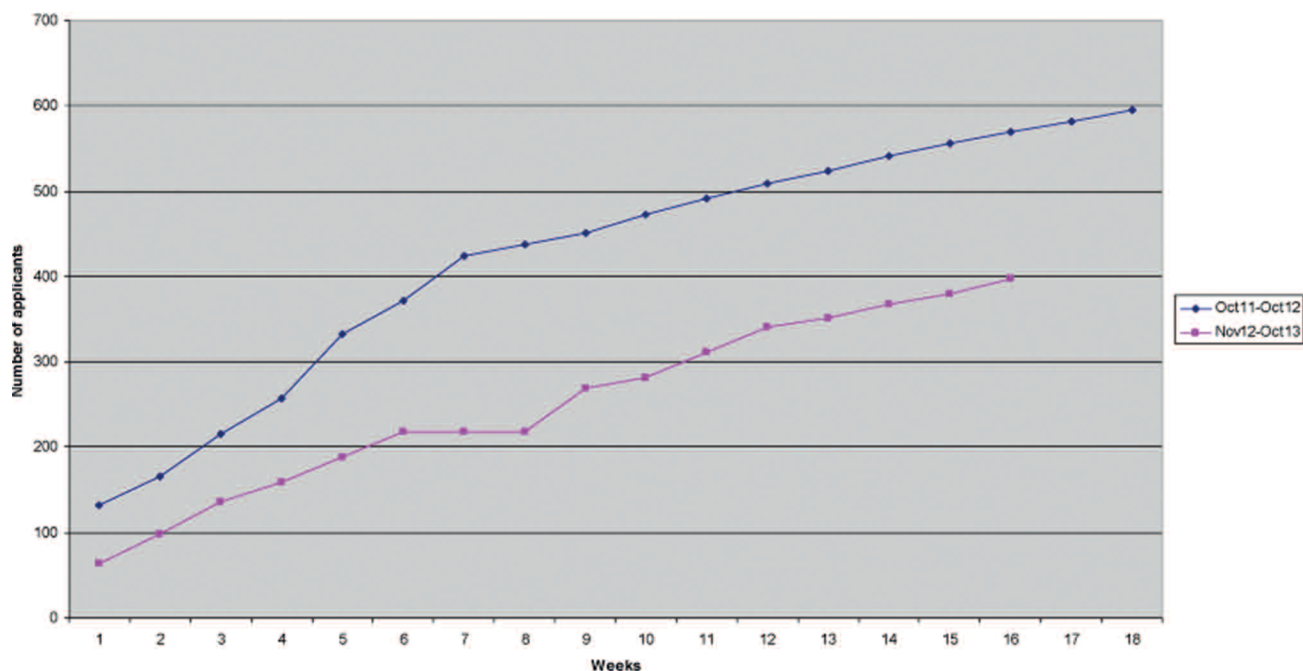
In 2011 12 the University of Warwick, an outstanding provider, was allocated seven PGCE places, so the fact the Ofsted report on this institution shows it to be outstanding seems to have no bearing on the way the Teaching Agency allocates the places. (Mike Castelli: oral evidence to the APPG)

Further closures are expected in 2013-14 when 17 more providers have been allocated fewer than 10 places, the number generally regarded as the threshold for sustainability. In particular danger are the 10 of these 17 providers allocated under 6 places.

The loss of outstanding providers has deprived the profession of teachers trained to the highest standard. It also undermines the capacity of such providers to support wider professional development for teachers and to give important support for SACREs.



Chart 12: applications for PGCE courses 07/11 - 02/13



5.3 The Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church are apprehensive about the loss of ITE places, particularly in the church foundation universities (Cathedrals Group). Church of England schools draw from the same general pool of teachers as community schools. As already seen (Chart 7 above) church schools tend to employ more specialists than do community schools and 'may well have an overt stress on RE as an important and core subject' (Rev'd Janina Ainsworth). The Cathedrals Group places a very strong focus on understanding Christianity and the loss of places and of some courses is a matter of deep concern for appropriate teacher recruitment in both the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church.

The spokesman for the Roman Catholic Church also voiced his concern over the reduction in the allocation of teacher training places, for example on PGCE RE courses at the former Catholic teacher training colleges and also the disappearance of bursaries for training RE teachers (Fr Tim Gardner, Catholic Education Service).

5.4 The high number of non specialists teaching RE has a detrimental impact on initial teacher training. There are now several routes to becoming a teacher, which all depend on finding schools with high quality RE departments, where trainees can learn from the best practitioners. Even university-based trainees rarely benefit from school placements in RE departments with several specialists who between them provide a range of wisdom and experience from which trainees can learn. Several respondents voiced concerns about the suitability of school based training programmes, such as Teach First, for RE trainees. This was not an attack on the principle of school based training as much as concern over the likelihood of trainees finding themselves in a training school where there is little or no expertise. There is a significant difference in opportunity between a science trainee working in a department of six specialists, each with different strengths, and an RE trainee in a department of one specialist already managing several non specialists.

An analysis of a sample of Teach First schools found some with good RE provision. However, mediocre GCSE results and/or low numbers of GCSE entrants in 40% of these schools raised questions as to whether they had the capacity to train an RE teacher effectively. (Deborah Weston: oral evidence to the APPG).

There is potentially a vicious circle developing here. Poor quality RE in schools, particularly at GCSE, reduces your pool going through to A-level. The A-level is not supported and you are reducing your recruitment to Theology and Religious Studies in the higher education institutions and potentially continuing to reduce the pool of high quality RE teachers...RE is critical and essential for students and is part of their general education. We share the anxiety about shifting ITE into schools: if there is poor quality RE in the schools how are we to develop good quality RE teachers? The effect of shutting RE out of the Baccalaureate and the pressure on what we have been able to offer so far means that we share with everybody else a deep anxiety about what is happening to RE. (Rev'd Janina Ainsworth: oral evidence to the APPG)



One of my Teach First participants is the only RE specialist in the school and is responsible for teaching and providing lesson plans and resources for all the RE teaching in the school - it is a large London school and he teaches over 500 pupils per week. RE is taught at GCSE but the Senior Leadership Team are not overly supportive. (Teach First RE tutor, evidence to the APPG)

The increasing use of non specialists to teach RE is limiting the number of RE departments that can be used as placements where trainees can learn from well qualified and experienced specialists.

This is in sharp contrast to the selection of schools by universities, many of which have a close relationship with the provider forged over many years. University tutors select for their RE trainees only schools with strong RE departments. Under school-based routes training schools are identified irrespective of the quality of their RE department.

All our schools have excellent RE departments and our students are blessed to be able to observe really strong practice and to be informed by this and supported by this. Also we don't re-use any schools which don't provide best practice. We visit new schools before placing students and so we can be fairly sure of the quality of the RE experience we are providing. (Kings College London: evidence to the APPG inquiry).

5.5 From 2013, those training to teach RE will no longer be entitled to bursaries that offset their tuition fees. Bursaries are available for trainee teachers of physics, chemistry, maths, English, geography, history, computer science, MFL (including Latin and Greek!) music, biology, physical education and computer science. For example, a trainee with a 1st class honours degree in physics, chemistry, maths and modern languages will receive a bursary of £20K while an RE trainee with a 1st will receive nothing. All the ITE providers responding to the APPG inquiry reported a steep decline in applications for RE in 2013. This is not surprising considering the cost of becoming an RE teacher. It is difficult to see the logic behind this decision and its strangest repercussion, that a trainee can get a bursary for training to teach Ancient Greek, very much a minority subject, but not for teaching RE,

which is a statutory requirement for all pupils.

Cost of training to be an RE teacher	
£27,000 borrowed for degree	£27,000 borrowed for degree £9,000 PGCE fees
With bursary	£9,000 PGCE fees
£27,000 = total borrowed	£36,000 = total borrowed
£50,000+ to be repaid	£90,000+ to be repaid

Repayment rate RPI+3% variable

Source for repayments - Directgov calculator

Data provided for the APPG by Prof John Howson

Without a bursary, RE teachers will have to repay £90,000 on the loans for their degree and professional training. This is a clear disincentive to anyone considering RE teaching as a career, apart from the very wealthy.

Any one of the above developments would be enough to raise questions about the future supply of RE teachers. But taken together

- the reduction in training places,
- the loss of several training providers, including some outstanding ones
- the uncertain quality of RE departments in school based training placements and
- the loss of the bursary

create uncertainties about the supply of well qualified and expertly trained RE teachers of the future.

## A paradox

5.6 The Secretary of State for education has called for a raising of the bar on entry to the teaching profession and given a reaffirmation of the fact that teachers are 'responsible for the most important thing in our country, which is safeguarding its intellectual life'. He encourages teachers to spend time deepening their subject knowledge and, if they want to, acquiring masters level qualifications .

5.7 Teacher training providers are required to accept trainees with the best subject qualifications. However, there is no



such requirement on schools in England and Wales, which can employ or deploy teachers to teach any subject, regardless of qualifications, in contravention of the Teaching Standards. In other European countries it is taken for granted that teachers must have qualifications in the subjects they teach and is indeed a formal requirement of their employment (Dr Peter Schreiner, President of the Intereuropean Commission on Church and School). This is the least that parents and children should expect.

We will never have a world class education system until the mismatch between training and teaching requirements is addressed. It is a nonsense that trainee teachers need a minimum level of knowledge to train in a subject, but then anyone, even those with no knowledge or training, can teach the subject, even up to 'A;' level. There may be some 'natural' teachers, but even they should possess a required minimum of subject knowledge.  
Professor John Howson





# 6. SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

As well as fulfilling their legal obligations, the governing body and headteacher should also make sure that those teaching RE are suitably qualified and trained in the subject and have regular and effective opportunities for CPD (DfE 2010:27)

One of the weakest aspects of RE was the provision of continuing professional development, which was inadequate in nearly four in 10 schools visited. It was good or better in only three in 10 schools. (Ofsted 2010:25)

- 6.1 'Support' for teachers has two broad meanings:
- continuing professional development (CPD) that builds on and extends initial teacher training and
  - general everyday support, such as help and advice for a newly appointed subject leader who is not familiar with the local agreed syllabus.

## Why is CPD essential to maintaining standards in education?

- 6.2 The House of Commons Education Committee report *Great teachers: attracting, training and retaining the best* (2012), received unanimous calls for improvements to teachers' professional development opportunities.

Successive education ministers have neglected continuing professional development (CPD) and focused overly much on initial teacher training—at most, four years of a teacher's career, compared with a potential 40 or more thereafter— (DfE 2012:94)

The committee found that although professional development was rated highly by teachers, the 'proportion of teacher time devoted to CPD in England is lower than in the best-performing school systems' and called on the government to 'consult on the quality, range, scope and content of a high-level strategy for teachers' CPD, and with an aim of introducing an entitlement for all teaching staff as soon as feasible' (DfE 2012:99).

- 6.3 Within this national context of under provision for CPD generally, RE teachers fare particularly badly.

Ofsted reported that in schools where training was inadequate there was:

- no systematic analysis of the specific training needs of RE teachers
- a lack of access to local training or advice that would support the implementation of the locally agreed syllabus
- insufficient training in RE for all primary teachers and teaching assistants who taught the subject
- little consideration in secondary schools to providing training for non specialist teachers.

Evidence from SACREs responding to the APPG indicates that provision of CPD has deteriorated still further since 2010 due to the steep decline in local authorities' ability to provide it. Although this deterioration is widespread, a few local authorities continue to resource CPD for RE. A teacher's chance of finding CPD locally is a postcode lottery.

In 60% of schools (excluding VA) pupils' achievement and teaching are not good enough. Teaching is not good enough because of weaknesses in teachers' understanding of the subject, poor and fragmented curriculum planning, very weak assessment, ineffective patterns of monitoring, and limited access to effective training. (HMI: oral evidence to the APPG)

Teachers of RE do not have sufficient access to CPD. This means that they cannot keep up to date with the tools they need to teach the subject in an engaging way that will help their pupils achieve high standards.



## What are the training needs of RE subject leaders?

- 6.4 The continuing training of subject leaders is central to improving RE provision. Subject leaders are responsible for leadership and management: they set the standard for RE throughout the school.
- 6.5 Ofsted has identified specific weaknesses in both primary and secondary subject leadership and management. A summary of the key weaknesses shows that there is a need in all key stages for training that will enable RE subject leaders to:
- evaluate accurately the strengths and weaknesses of all aspects of RE in the school; in particular answering the questions 'Are standards in RE high enough?' and 'Is RE teaching good enough?'
  - plan for the development of RE in the school with a focus on raising standards and improving teaching.
- 6.6 In addition to training in monitoring, most primary RE leaders have more basic needs. Many come to the role with the very limited background in the subject that typifies so many primary teachers of RE. In recognition of this situation, when asked to identify the foci of training that would best equip them for the role of subject leader they named:
- how to assess pupils' learning
  - help with implementing a new agreed syllabus
  - improving their knowledge of world religions.
- 6.7 Secondary respondents expressed a need for two types of support that could be provided within the school:
- i. Subject-specific support from the diocesan or LA RE adviser or SLE. The adviser's visits might include a demonstration lesson, support for a new RE co-ordinator or tutoring on a specific topic, such as assessment or planning an RE curriculum. The involvement of all teachers of RE in the training would provide a foundation for further development.
  - ii. Generic middle-management training for all heads of department in, for example, strategies for monitoring pupils' progress and techniques for evaluating the quality of provision.
- 6.8 Most secondary subject leaders responding to the APPG identified external courses rather than in-house training as their key need. The explanation for this lies partly in the isolation of the sole secondary RE specialist who has no RE colleagues with whom to follow up in house-training. External courses give RE specialists access to information about such priorities as curriculum change, new resources and local faith community contacts. Courses also provide invaluable opportunities to meet and exchange experiences with

subject specialists from other schools.

**RE subject leaders in primary and secondary schools need both in-school CPD to develop their generic teaching, leadership and management skills and also RE-specific CPD to develop their subject expertise. For subject leaders without specialist colleagues external courses are a particularly important form of CPD.**

## What do we know about the range of CPD available for RE leaders?

- 6.9 Most of the support identified by respondents took the form of out-of-school RE specific courses. They identified three main types of event:
- Local support groups
  - Day/half day courses
  - Working groups

The main providers they identified were as follows:

- Diocesan Boards of Education (DBEs) offer a wide range of courses. In 2012/13 DBE training on RE and collective worship was accessed by 2937 Church of England schools and 3116 non faith schools, which equates to 66% of CofE schools and 27% of other schools. However, in percentage terms this is a relatively small proportion of community schools and diocesan support for non CofE schools is not evenly distributed across the country.

Some dioceses operate across into community schools on an extensive scale. When we asked London Diocese to quantify what they were offering for us they said 'It is too many to count'. They operate among many of the London boroughs being 'the deliverer' of RE support to all schools. But other dioceses are also finding that there is great enthusiasm and interest from community schools; in some cases that is formalised in, for example, diocesan staff being also on the LEA payroll, so there are a number of dioceses where the Diocesan Advisor is both the Local Authority Advisor and the Diocesan Advisor. (Rev'd Janina Ainsworth: oral evidence to the APPG).

- Local authority (LA) training was also attended by subject leaders from community, voluntary aided (VA) and voluntary controlled (VC) schools. The training foci were far narrower than those offered by the dioceses, by far the most common being the



launch of a new agreed syllabus or scheme of work. However, a few local authorities provided a wide range of exciting courses, designed to challenge subject leaders. In recent years the volume of provision offered by local authorities has shrunk in line with reduced budgets available to support this kind of work.<sup>4</sup>

- Secondary teachers most frequently accessed training provided by the examination boards, which provided courses attended by 35% of responding schools. In these courses the focus was very specifically on meeting examination requirements rather than the broader development of subject expertise. From September 2013 many of these courses will cease.
- Independent training companies provided courses on a commercial basis on popular themes such as assessment.
- Charitable trusts provide a range of opportunities. For example, Culham St Gabriel's provides an on-line subject knowledge booster course for primary and secondary non specialists that can be completed in a few months. The St Luke's Foundation provides funding for RE teachers studying for higher degrees. RE Today Services provides CPD (e.g. one-day courses; local and national conferences; sustained

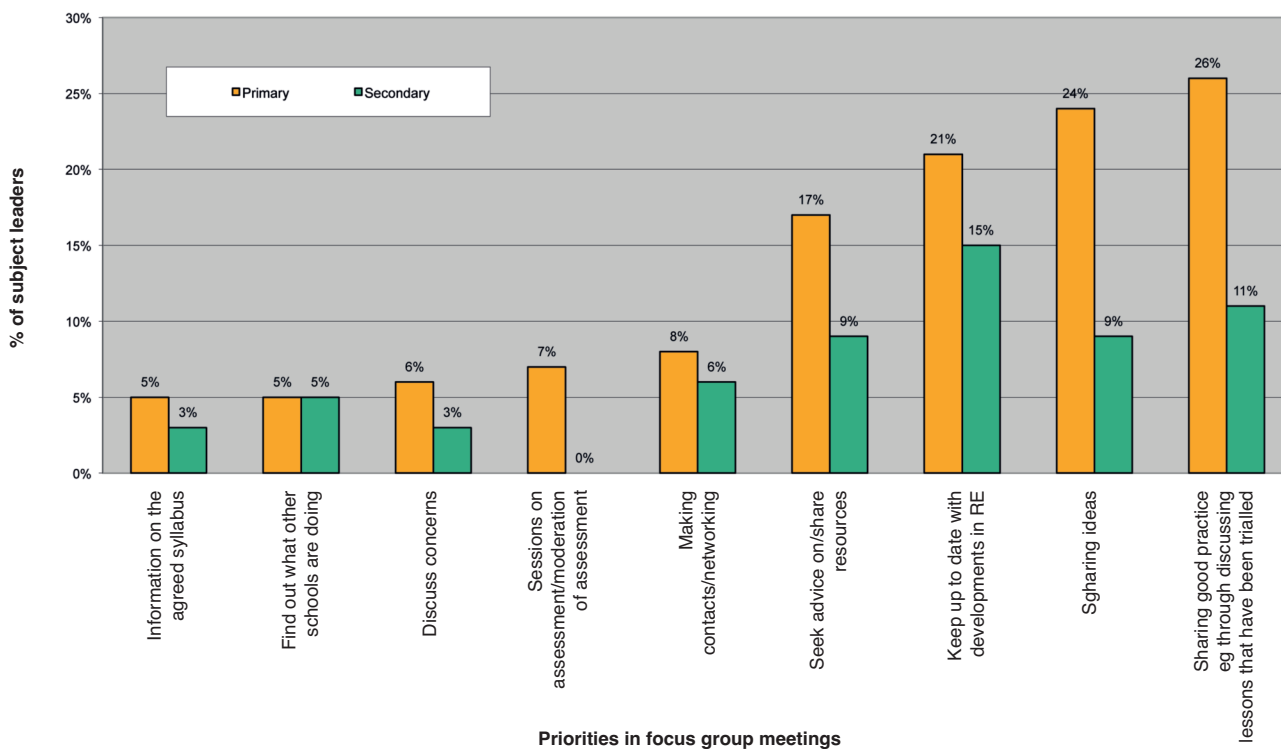
CPD projects, often delivered through Dioceses, LAs and school groups) for up to 6,000 teachers a year. It also publishes termly teaching resources.

- National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE) is the professional association for teachers of RE. NATRE provides a range of CPD, often working in collaboration with RE Today. It publishes *REsource*, its professional journal, maintains a website with up to date news and downloadable resources, and promotes the cause of RE.
- New forms of CPD in RE are emerging as schools and their partners in HE and local authorities address teachers' current identified training needs. For example, in the south-west peninsula, 12 teachers are being trained as project lead teachers of RE who will run local learning hubs, sharing this training with teachers and HLTAs.

### Local support networks

6.10 Many dioceses and local authorities, sometimes working together, provide local support groups for RE subject leaders. 160 of these local groups are affiliated to NATRE. Typically these meetings are held once or

**CHART 13: Features of support groups perceived to improve the effectiveness of the RE subject leader, according to responding schools**



<sup>4</sup> See 6.35



twice a term after school and for many subject leaders in LA schools and academies they constitute the only available training. Sometimes these meetings are organised and managed by an adviser/consultant and at other times by one of the subject leaders. As a result the quality of support is variable, depending on the level of expertise available.

6.11 Chart 13 identifies the key foci at local RE support groups which, according to responding subject leaders, improved their confidence and effectiveness.

Practical ideas for teaching and for finding new resources are priorities. Particular importance is ascribed to 'sharing good practice' and 'sharing ideas' and this illustrates the value of these meetings as opportunities for subject leaders and teachers to learn from each other's experience rather than as formal CPD opportunities.

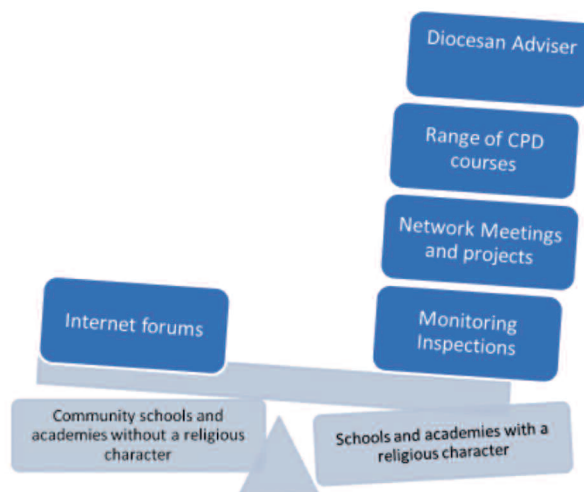
6.12 Particularly valued by primary subject leaders is the 'sharing of lesson plans' that have 'worked well'. These are also priorities for all teachers of RE and these rather basic requirements should be priorities for any teacher of RE and are evidence of many subject leaders' lack of prior training and limited vision of their role. Most of the priorities identified by subject leaders do not refer specifically to learning or raising standards or methods for monitoring the subject across the school or developing leadership and management skills.

### Training for RE subject leaders in schools with and without a religious character - an unequal playing field

6.13 In gaining access to CPD, teachers of RE in community schools are generally the poor relations compared to their counterparts in schools with a religious character (based on the data collected for the APPG inquiry). Joy Schmack from Liverpool Hope University summarised for the second APPG meeting the disparity of CPD opportunities in the North West for RE teachers between schools and academies with a religious character compared to those in community schools.

6.14 Responses from subject leaders to this inquiry confirm the limited range of training opportunities. Chart 14 below shows the number of CPD opportunities taken by primary RE subject leaders in different types of school over a three year period. The large majority (in the central column) only attended between one and three CPD events over a three year period. Given that most primary RE subject leaders are only in post for about three years, many of them will only experience one CPD session at most. For a teaching population

### Development opportunities



Diocesan schools had a range of CPD courses ...For those within local authority schools and community Schools, there were no such references any more. The vast majority referred to what I would say are unmonitored internet forums as their methods of support now. (Joy Schmack: Oral evidence to the APPG)

with minimal initial training in RE, poor subject knowledge and little subject confidence, this level of support will not give them the tools they need to provide sufficient subject leadership to support their colleagues.

Chart 14 (overleaf) confirms the disparity in provision of CPD opportunities in community schools compared with VA schools, where more than half of the subject leaders had a higher level of CPD.

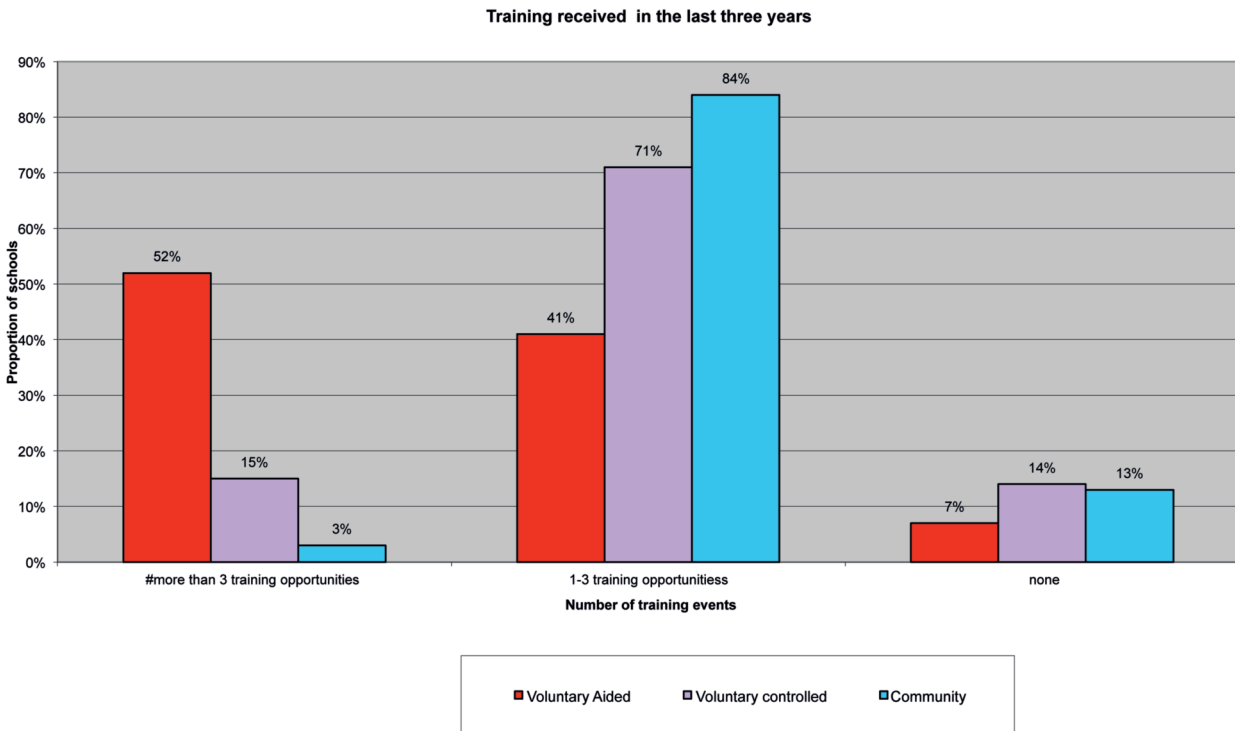
6.15 Chart 15 overleaf shows the number of CPD events attended by RE teachers in secondary departments, although in reality the subject leaders were the main beneficiaries. The stark reality again is that schools with a religious character had far more access to training.

It is apparent that:

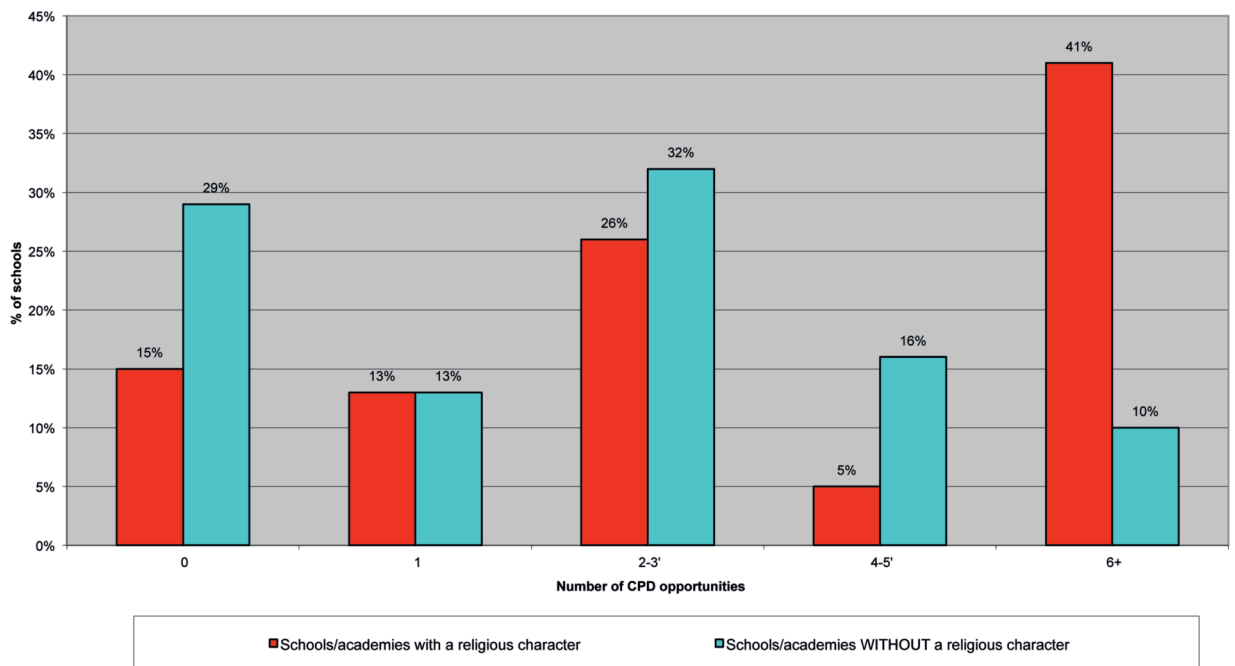
- Diocesan education boards generally provide more training opportunities for RE subject leaders than do most local authorities, although over a quarter of subject leaders even in C of E schools responding to the inquiry had little or no CPD.
- Local authority provision, which used to be extensive, is now minimal in most parts of the country as many local authority RE adviser posts have been cut and the pool of subject specialists is



**CHART 14: The number of CPD opportunities attended by the RE subject leader (primary) between 2009-2012**



**CHART 15: number of CPD opportunities for the secondary RE department between 2009-2012**



diminishing as older members retire and are not replaced. There is some provision by external consultants who are employed on a contractual basis to provide support for RE.

- RE leaders in schools with a religious character generally benefitted from more regular subject based professional development than those in other schools
- RE subject leaders in community schools generally had the fewest opportunities for professional development and had a narrower range of options to choose from.
- 27 out of 300 primary RE leaders responding to the APPG and 33 out of 130 secondary ones had received no RE-specific CPD in the last three years.





This is a cause for deep concern when combined with the fact that so many primary teachers had insufficient initial training in the subject

The responses from schools highlight the inconsistency and inequality that results nationally when subject leaders have no entitlement to subject-specific training.

RE subject leaders in primary and secondary schools may benefit from a range of patterns of support to address their various training needs but access to this support is patchy and inconsistent, depending on the type of school they teach in, the status of RE in the school, the presence of a local adviser and the availability of local training. In short RE teachers' access to CPD is a postcode lottery.

### What do we know about the training provided for all RE teachers?

A non specialist teacher, or a primary teacher who has had perhaps only a couple of hours on RE during their PGCE year, has a very limited take on the purpose of religious education. What Ofsted is now finding is that, if you do not have clarity about the purpose of what you are doing, it makes you much less secure and confident as a teacher in the classroom. (Dr Mark Chater: oral evidence to the APPG).

6.16 It has been established that that many primary school teachers are lacking both subject knowledge and confidence in RE and that minimal time is spent on RE in initial teacher training. Also in secondary schools over 50% of those who teach RE have no qualifications or training in the subject. If pupils are to receive the high quality RE that they are entitled to, then the in-service training of these teachers should be a priority. But unfortunately this is not always the case.

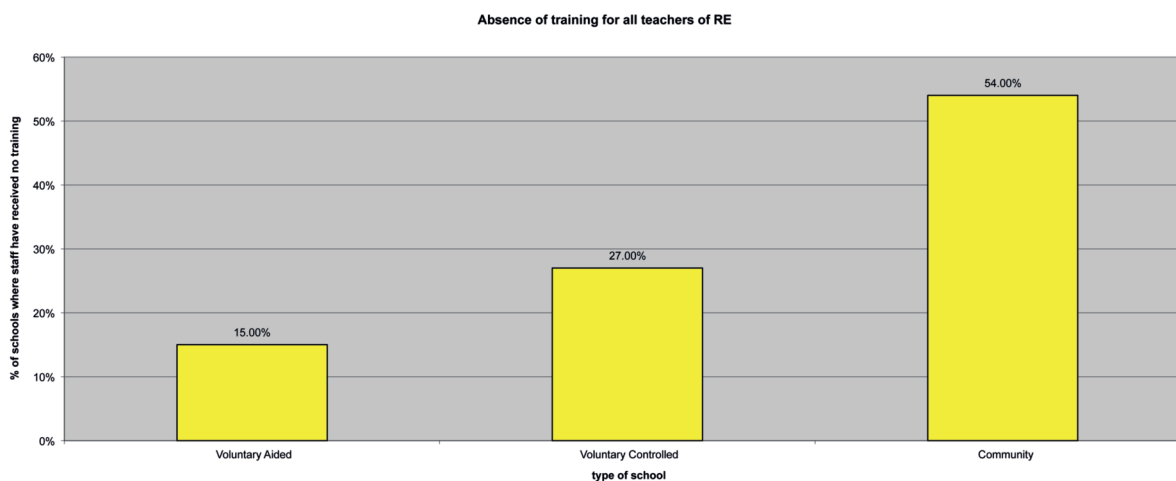
6.17 Where training is provided for all primary teachers of RE the most common provision is through sessions after school where the subject leader 'cascades' a course that they attended. The frequency of such sessions is decided by the school leadership. The most common topics covered in these sessions are assessment, the curriculum and in particular changes to the agreed or diocesan syllabus/scheme of work. This system is entirely dependent on the subject leader having opportunities for CPD and the school leadership team allocating staff meeting time for RE training. It would be rare for this to happen as often as once a year in community schools.

6.18 The differences identified between the professional development of RE subject **leaders** in different types of school becomes more pronounced when applied to all **teachers** of RE, as chart 16 demonstrates.

Half of those teaching RE in community primary schools receive no professional development in the subject at all. This has been confirmed by Ofsted.

In the primary schools visited, RE was rarely the focus of staff meetings or in-service training and teaching assistants who taught the subject were often not trained to do so. (Ofsted 2010:39)

CHART 16: Primary teachers of RE receiving no CPD



6.19 The situation in schools with a religious character is very different from that in community schools. In VA schools it is not uncommon to find other staff in addition to the subject leader attending diocesan training days and the diocesan adviser frequently leading whole staff training in school. For example, one VA school reported a one day RE school conference every two years, with workshops led by national leaders in the subject, as well as three staff meetings dedicated to RE over every 18 month period led by the diocesan adviser.

6.20 There is evidence that in community schools 'there is a clear correlation between the access to training in RE and the overall effectiveness of the subject, particularly in primary schools. In the majority of cases this was directly linked to the ability of the local authority to provide such training and support. Where such support was not available, in nearly every case, this had a direct negative effect on the effectiveness of the teaching and subject leadership'. (HMI evidence to the APPG)

6.21 Ofsted found that 'where good provision had been made for training, the use of non specialists had enriched rather than weakened the quality of provision for RE' (Ofsted 2010:39). However, for the majority of non specialists no training is provided and their negative impact on students' progress is allowed to continue.

**Provision of CPD in RE for both subject leaders and teachers is very patchy and frequently absent.**

### **Why do many RE teachers not take up existing CPD opportunities?**

6.22 In spite of teachers' apparent enthusiasm for all forms of CPD, many of them do not take the opportunities that are available.

Respondents identified four main restrictions on RE teachers' access to CPD:

- Educational priorities: schools focus their funding where it is most likely to make a positive difference to the outcome of inspection or to the school points scores and place in the league tables. RE is rarely a priority and as one secondary subject leader put it, 'RE does not feature on the school development plan'.
- Logistical issues: In several responding schools the rule of 'no more than two teachers out on any given day' led to RE staff being told to cancel courses to

make way for other subjects.

- Work pressures: specialist RE teachers in secondary schools can in the worst cases teach up to 800 pupils a week, creating a huge work load in terms of lesson preparation and marking. In addition many specialists have non specialists to manage and support. Some have given this as a reason for the lack of take-up of opportunities. The St Luke's Foundation is one of a number of Church College Trusts offering bursaries for higher degrees. Trustees responding to the APPG expressed concern at the absence of applications for awards from RE teachers.
- Geographical: it is difficult for some schools to find RE-specific training locally and hence travel imposes constraints of time and money.

**RE teachers find it difficult to access training unless it is related to examination changes (Cornwall SACRE)**

6.23 The lack of training for secondary non specialists remains one of the greatest concerns in RE. Some respondents have suggested that non specialists receive no subject specific CPD because the school does not know whether it will continue to expect them to teach RE in the future and therefore training is not thought of as cost-effective. The same argument applies to non specialists themselves. They are more likely to take their CPD in a subject or management area in which they see their career developing than in a subject which they might teach twice a week.

6.24 Training for non specialists is easier to manage where schools do not to deploy staff randomly to 'fill the gaps' in the RE timetable but use a smaller number of teachers with an interest in the subject over a sustained period to make subject training worthwhile for them and the school.

### **Where do RE subject leaders go for informal subject-related help and advice?**

6.25 Subject leaders were asked where they went for help with problems relating to RE. Several secondary respondents commented that they rarely needed help with RE outside the department. Charts 17 and 18 below show that primary RE leaders were far more likely to seek help than their secondary counterparts. This reflects the widespread lack of confidence and expertise among primary RE leaders. For both primary and secondary subject leaders, diocesan and local authority advisers were recognised as the most



important authorities on RE to whom most appeals for support were addressed. Many respondents noted with regret and concern the recent and rapid disappearance of local authority advisers (see below 6.35ff).

pronounced among primary subject leaders than secondary. Again this reflects the lack of confidence among primary subject leaders.

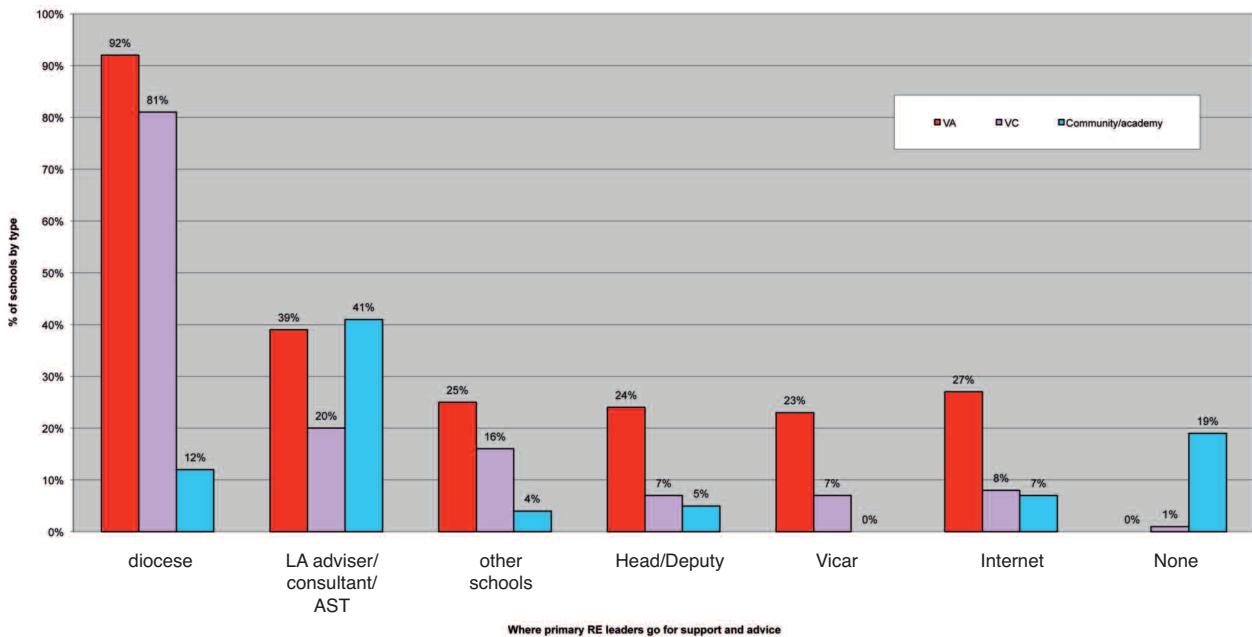
Community schools and academies had least access to help and advice, by a considerable margin, with nearly one fifth of community schools having no access to support at all.

### Summary

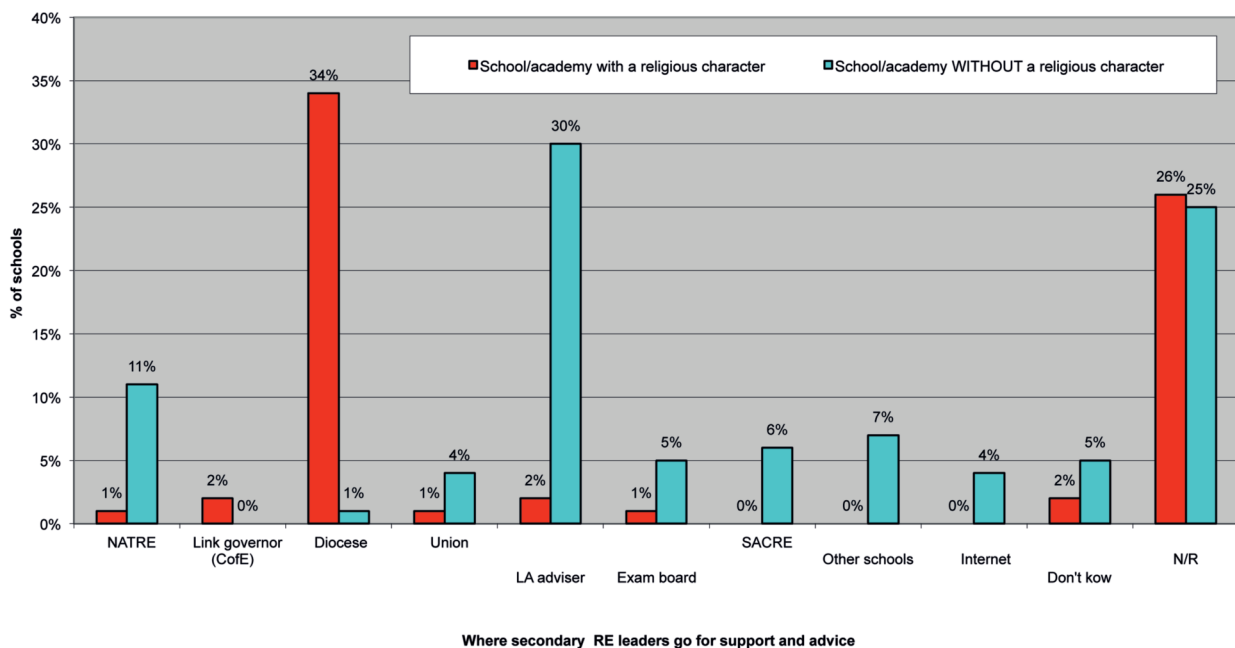
6.26 The need for help with subject matters was more

6.27 Many young people in this country are for some of the time taught by teachers with no relevant qualifications or training, and there is more non specialist teaching in RE than in any other subject. This makes teachers'

**CHART 17: Main sources of support for RE accessed by primary RE subject leaders**



**CHART 18: Main sources of support for RE accessed by secondary RE subject leaders**



access to CPD even more important in RE, yet opportunities for this are fewer and are diminishing. This reflects the absence of any obligation on schools to match staff deployment to new subject areas with appropriate training.

6.28 This state of affairs that appears to permit, even encourage an element of mediocrity in teaching mystifies educationalists abroad. Peter Schreiner from the Council of Europe wrote to the APPG:

While many European states are now giving close attention to qualified teacher training in RE, the UK government seems to be neglecting it through eroding support for teacher training and in service training of teachers. At this time it seems particularly ironic that European educators are heavily inspired by research in RE carried out in recent years in the UK, while the subject itself in England is in decline through lack of specialist staff, teacher training resources, specialist advice and declining status.

## Do SACREs and RE advisers still have the resources to provide support for teachers of RE?

### The function of Standing Advisory Councils on RE (SACREs)

6.29 Every Local Authority (LA) is required by law to have a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education. A SACRE's main function is 'to advise the authority upon such matters connected with religious worship in county schools and the religious education to be given in accordance with an agreed syllabus'. (See section 391 of the Education Act 1996, as amended by the paragraph 94 of Schedule 30 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998).

By law, every local authority is required to have a SACRE. We have members in four different groups...members of the Church of England; members of other faiths and Christian denominations; teachers from schools; and also local councillors. In that way SACREs have a real sense of ownership when they are working well on RE in their local area. (Lesley Prior: oral evidence to the APPG)

6.30 The responsibilities of a SACRE relevant to this inquiry

are that it must:

- provide advice to the LA on all aspects of its provision for RE in its schools (this does not include voluntary aided roof schools or academies)
- decide whether the LA's Agreed Syllabus for RE needs to be reviewed
- advise on matters relating to training for teachers in RE

SACREs also respond to matters referred to it by the LA, which include:

- methods of teaching
- the choice of teaching material
- the provision of teacher training

### The capacity of SACREs to carry out their statutory responsibilities.

6.31 In 2004 Ofsted published an evaluation of the work of SACREs, which cast doubt on the capacity of SACREs to carry out these functions without professional assistance from a subject specialist.

Six years later Ofsted could not report any improvement, finding that 'many local authorities did not ensure that their Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education had sufficient capacity to fulfil their responsibilities effectively' (Ofsted 2010:51).

Legislation describes the responsibilities of SACREs as though SACREs can discharge those obligations independently of professional advice. This is not the case. With the exception of the teachers and representatives of diocesan education boards, few members of SACREs have the professional expertise to advise either the LEA or schools on RE in relation to curriculum, pedagogy, assessment or training. (Ofsted 2004. Para 25)

6.32 Each local authority (working through the SACRE and Agreed Syllabus Conference) produces a locally agreed syllabus and often also accompanying guidance and teaching materials. These are tasks requiring professional expertise in RE and therefore pivotal to their success is the LA adviser or consultant employed to support the SACRE. The effectiveness of advisers and consultants lies in their dual role of advising the SACRE and schools. This enables them to provide SACRE with first hand information about what support schools need in relation to RE.

6.33 According to a survey carried out by NASACRE in 2012, there were wide variations in the resources available to SACREs. The amount of consultant time varied widely between SACREs from fewer than five



SACREs are unlikely to be able to fulfil their statutory functions without access to a specialist consultant/adviser to co-ordinate the development of the agreed syllabus and to provide accompanying guidance and teaching materials.

to 30 or more days a year. SACREs' funding varied from £90K to nil. For RE teachers relying on SACRE and the LA for support and training, this is the 'postcode lottery' referred to earlier. The system can work in a large authority with a big budget and high level of staffing, but not in a small authority without such resources. For example, RE teachers in Birmingham, where SACRE has an annual budget of £90K, have access to a 0.75fte RE/SACRE adviser and to the city's RE website, which provides lesson plans, filmed material for use in the classrooms and interactive games. This SACRE also has close contacts with academics from local universities who can be called on for advice. SACREs that have only modest resources can do little for teachers. Many LAs are just too small to carry out their SACRE functions effectively.

Northamptonshire reports a two thirds cut in staffing to a level which 'does not allow for sufficient LA Officer time to do anything but the bare minimum of preparation for meetings, analysis of exam results and preparation of the Annual Report. The projects that SACRE had planned, including monitoring standards and supporting schools to improve RE, have had either be put on hold or now rely on SACRE members to drive them forwards'.

The government continues to insist that RE is a local matter and that all forms of support for RE are local responsibilities. This system is not working because:

- some LAs are too small to do this effectively and that has been the case since local government reorganization in 1997
- the recent programme of reductions to local authority funding has meant that such frontline support has been cut drastically and the great majority of SACREs no longer have the capacity to provide more than minimal support for schools and teachers.

## Ofsted's inspections of RE

- 6.34 The DfE frequently reiterates the argument that RE teaching in schools is safeguarded because it remains statutory for all pupils. Ministers and officials state that inspection will check that RE is being taught and report non-compliance when it occurs.

Because Ofsted rarely reports on non-compliance SACREs have no means of finding out which schools teach RE to all pupils, including those in the 6th form. Since SACREs do not have this information they are not in a position to help schools find ways to meet requirements.

## The academy factor

- 6.35 Academies have to teach RE to their pupils but they are not required to teach in accordance with their local agreed syllabus, or indeed any agreed syllabus. This effectively removes academies from the responsibility of the local SACRE and weakens the capacity of LAs to support teachers of RE. For example.

For the last 3 years the university put on highly successful sixth form conferences as part of statutory provision for RE for all year 12 students in the LA. Now all but one of the secondary schools have become academies, the LA can no longer fund this provision.(University of Bath Spa)

Some SACREs are producing agreed syllabuses, as required by law<sup>6</sup>, in local authorities that no longer have any secondary schools. This means they have to spend their very limited resources on carrying out a statutory function, yet there is no requirement that any school will use such a syllabus once it is produced.

The negative impact of the Academies Act is twofold: it leads to the isolation of teachers in academies and it reduces the capacity of local authorities to provide support for RE.

<sup>6</sup> Technically an agreed syllabus is produced or 'adopted' by an Agreed Syllabus Conference(ASC). In most cases there is no difference in membership between the ASC and the SACRE.





## Summary

6.36 For the SACRE system to work, professional support is needed and this has been cut drastically in recent years so that most LAs can provide little more than the barest minimum in terms of funding the development of an agreed syllabus. There is no equality or fairness in access to CPD for RE teachers in community schools, as this depends on the LA's capacity to provide support for RE and the inclination of school managements to release and finance RE staff for training. The academisation programme further undermines the notion of local accountability. Consequently it is time that the government recognised that the system can no longer work as is set out in legislation because the infrastructure that the system requires is well along the path of disintegration and is set to disappear altogether unless action is taken to reverse this.



# 7. EPILOGUE

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- 7.1 Too many people are teaching RE without any qualifications or expertise in the subject; some of them are not even qualified teachers; there are insufficient opportunities for CPD to put this right; teaching is not as good as it should be; as a result standards in RE are not as high as they should be; RE teacher training numbers are being reduced; SACREs being underfunded. Why does it matter?
- 7.2 It matters because our young people are entitled to good teaching, whatever the subject. Every lesson counts.
- 7.3 There appears to be a contradiction in the DfE's position on RE. In spite of the department's claim that 'A well-trained and confident workforce is crucial in ensuring good-quality RE'<sup>7</sup> non specialists are counted as 'teachers of RE' along with specialists, even though they are unlikely to meet the teaching standards for the subject. Bursaries have been withdrawn from RE specialists applying to be RE teachers, with the result that the number of applicants is now considerably below that for previous years. The short course GCSE, which for so many years has provided motivation and accreditation, has been undermined. Academisation has pulled the rug - certainly the agreed syllabus - from under SACREs' feet.
- 7.4 The Department for Education often looks to international comparisons - Finland, Singapore, Hong Kong - and finds the schools system in this country wanting. Yet the structure of RE in England and Wales wins international acclaim because it provides a broad and inclusive education for young people in any and every type of school.

**It deserves to be acknowledged just how highly the English and Welsh model for RE is regarded internationally. (Professor Brian Gates MBE)**

The international perspective highlights a tragic element to the fortunes of RE: it is being undermined by current policies just at the time when the subject as it exists in England is gaining international recognition.

**I am personally involved in a European RE network. What we do in SACREs, where we have all these people from very different backgrounds working together, is looked at with wonder and fascination and is seen as an excellent model of good practice in community cohesion, bringing people together and sharing what is on offer. (Lesley Prior: oral evidence to the APPG).**

- 7.5 The world is changing: new technologies are transforming the global labour markets, and the diversity of national populations is intensifying through patterns of migration and cultural change. The results of the 2011 Census give a picture of increasing differences in the beliefs and values that we hold as a society. There are more people of minority faiths, and more people who profess no affiliation. For educators there is a clear imperative: understanding others. Yousif al-Khoei speaking to the APPG emphasised the importance of RE in helping young people to develop mutual understanding.
- 7.6 Religious literacy matters for everyone. Religious Education has a vital and powerful contribution to make in equipping young people, whatever their backgrounds and personal beliefs with the skills to understand and thrive in a diverse and shifting world. The value of this contribution has not been widely recognised by policy makers. A raft of recent policies have had the effect of downgrading RE in status on the school curriculum, and the subject is now under threat as never before, just at the moment when it is needed most. This report sets out those threats, along with urgent proposals for meeting them head on.

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<sup>7</sup> (DfE2010:27)



# APPENDIX 1: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Academy	A school which operates independently of its local authority and is funded directly by the Department for Education. Academies may or may not be partly sponsored or governed by another organisation, whose character, whether religious or otherwise, may be part of the school ethos.	HLTA	Higher Level Teaching Assistant. A role with some additional responsibilities to being a TA such as some whole class teaching and covering staff absences or PPA time.
Adviser	Local authorities employed subject advisers in the past, but increasingly such advisers are working on a freelance basis providing consultancy on subject matters. Most C of E and RC dioceses employ an adviser with responsibility for RE.	HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectors; Lead inspectors employed by Ofsted to carry out inspection work.
AULRE	The Association of University Lecturers in Religion and Education.	INSET	'In service' training or CPD for teachers.
BHA	British Humanist Association	ITE	Initial Teacher Education; The first phase of a teacher's training, often in the past a PGCE at a university. Sometimes also referred to as ITT (initial teacher training).
Community school	A state funded school with no religious character and no involvement from another trust or foundation.	ITT	Initial Teacher Training; see ITE.
CPD	Continuing professional development	Key Stage	A unit for grouping different years/stages in schools, In the primary phase, Key Stage 1 covers ages years 1 - 2, and Key Stage 2 covers years 3 - 6. At secondary level, Key Stage 3 covers years 7 - 9, Key Stage 4 includes years 10 - 11, and Key Stage 5 covers years 12 - 13.
Diocese	An area under the supervision of a bishop.	NASACRE	The National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on RE.
English Baccalaureate	A measure of school accountability which recognises a pupil's success in obtaining a GCSE A* - C pass in all the following subjects: English, Mathematics, two Science subjects, a Modern Foreign Language and History or Geography.	NATRE	The National Association of Teachers of Religious Education
Free School	A new school set up and run independently of the local authority and funded directly by the Department for Education.	Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills; inspects and regulates services independently of government.
GTP	Graduate Teacher Programme enabling trainee teachers to begin their initial training directly in a school rather than in a university education department; the GTP will end after the school year 2012-13	PGCE	Post Graduate Certificate in Education. Until recently the most common way for graduates to train as teachers in either the primary or secondary phase, it being subject specific for the latter.
		PPA time	Non-teaching time for classroom teachers to carry out planning, preparation and assessment.



PSHE	Personal, Social and Health Education.
REC	The Religious Education Council of England and Wales.
RE specialist	A teacher who holds a qualification from higher education specifically in Religious Education.
SACRE	Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education. Each Local Authority is required to provide for a SACRE, composed of councillors, teachers and faith representatives, whose remit is to support and advise on Religious Education in the area.
School Direct	A new way of allowing schools to train their own new teachers in ITT, in partnership with an established provider, but with the possibility of becoming an accredited provider in their own right.
School with religious character	A school is designated at the DfE in a relation to its particular denominational or faith foundation.
TA	Teaching assistant. A role supporting teachers in the classroom, but with no whole class teaching responsibilities.
Teaching Agency	The organisation responsible for administering the recruitment, supply, quality and conduct of teachers, under the auspices of the Department for Education. Due to merge with the National College for School Leadership in April 2013, with the new name as yet undecided.
Voluntary Aided School (VA)	A school whose running costs are funded by the state but which has a trust or foundation (usually the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church or another religious body) substantially involved in its governance. A VA school teaches RE in accordance with its foundation.
Voluntary Controlled School (VC)	Constitutionally similar to a voluntary aided School, but with less involvement from the trust or foundation and more from the state. VC schools teach RE according to the local agreed syllabus.



# APPENDIX 2: RESPONSES TO THE APPG INQUIRY

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## 1. School questionnaires

Central to this inquiry is the need to understand what is happening in schools. Two separate questionnaires were written, one for primary RE subject leaders and one for secondary heads of department. Both asked questions about the structure of RE in the curriculum, the number and qualifications of those teaching RE and sources/regularity of support and training for RE teachers. In order to get the questionnaires out quickly and directly to the right people, advisers were asked to forward them through their email contacts. In order to get a good geographical spread, schools were targeted in the Southwest, the Midlands and the Northeast of England.

The APPG received over 300 completed primary questionnaires and 130 secondary ones. These have provided valuable statistical data.

## 2. Oral testimonies

Twelve people, most of them representing national organisations, have presented oral evidence at specially convened meetings of the APPG. The first was chaired by Stephen Lloyd MP and the second by Fiona Bruce MP.

Rev Janina Ainsworth	National Society (CofE)
Audrey Brown CBE	Department for Education
Alan Brine HMI	Ofsted
Mike Castelli	Association of University Lecturers in Religion and Education
Dr Mark Chater	Culham St Gabriel's
Fr Tim Gardner	Catholic Education Service
Prof John Howson	Data for Education
John Keast OBE	Religious Education Council
Lesley Prior	National Association of SACREs
Joy Schmack	Association of RE Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants
Deborah Weston	National Association of Teachers of RE
Linda Whitworth	Middlesex University

## 3. Call for evidence

A general call for evidence was publicised on all major RE websites and through all the key national RE organisations. 65 responses were received to date as follows:

### CORPORATE

Mark Plater	Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln
Judith Bainbridge MBE	Durham SACRE
Dr David Benzie	St Luke's College Foundation
Dr Berry Billingsley	LASAR (Learning about Science and Religion)
Dr. Bob Bowie	Canterbury Christ Church University
Professor Joy Carter	The Cathedrals Group





Dr Mark Chater  
 Robert Cheesman  
 Kate Christopher  
 Geraldine Cooper  
 Reverend Philip Davies  
 Elisabeth Drage  
 Bruce Gill  
 David Hampshire  
 Helen Harrison  
 Sarah Harris  
 Canon Dr Ann Holt OBE  
 Guy Hordern  
 Sue Holmes  
 Chris Hudson  
 Derek J Humphrey  
 Sion Humphreys  
 Imam Monawar Hussain  
 Steve Illingworth  
 Stephen Inglis  
 Rev'd Ken Johnson  
 Graham Langtree/Ed Pawson  
 Mary Myatt  
 Jill Stolberg  
 Bill Moore  
 Carrie Mercier  
 Sara Passmore  
 Rosemary Rivett  
 Jane Savill  
 Head of Humanities  
 Katy Staples  
 Karenza Passmore  
 Dean Pusey  
 Katy Staples  
 Mark T Stephenson  
 Lilian Weatherley  
 The Rt Rev'd Humphrey Southern  
 Dr Peter Schreiner.

Culham St Gabriels  
 National Union of Teachers  
 SE Essex RE Teachers' Network  
 Bradford SACRE  
 Rutland SACRE  
 Northamptonshire SACRE  
 National Association of SACREs  
 Cornwall SACRE  
 Lancashire SACRE  
 Surrey SACRE  
 The Bible Society  
 Birmingham SACRE  
 E Riding SACRE  
 Barnabas in Schools Team  
 Hockerill Educational Foundation  
 National Association of Head Teachers  
 The Oxford Foundation  
 Salford SACRE  
 S Tyneside Council  
 Nottingham SACRE  
 Devon SACRE  
 Suffolk SACRE  
 Sandwell SACRE  
 Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire SACREs  
 University of Cumbria  
 British Humanist Association  
 RE Today Services  
 Institute of Education  
 Lowton Church of England High School  
 Bristol SACRE  
 North East Religious Learning Resources Centre  
 St Alban's Diocesan Youth Service  
 Swindon SACRE  
 Rastrick High School Academy  
 E Sussex SACRE  
 Bishop of Repton  
 Council of Europe and President of the Intereuropean Commission  
 on Church and School

## INDIVIDUAL

Helen Boutle  
 The Rev'd Jane Brooke  
 Jane Chipperton  
 Professor James C. Conroy  
 Professor Denise Cush  
 Roger Daniels  
 Sarah Elliott  
 Dr Judith Everington  
 Dr. Marius C. Felderhof  
 Mary Freeman  
 Ron Gandolfo  
 Professor Brian Gates  
 Alison Greenfields  
 Patricia Hannam  
 Prof R Jackson

Jeff Laws  
 Jonathan Marshall MBE  
 Dr Janet Orchard  
 Mr C Pickering  
 Sabah Raza  
 Joy Schmack  
 Helen Sellers  
 Geoff Teece  
 Rosemary Walters  
 Rev'd Mike Warren  
 Linda Whitworth  
 Becky Wood



# APPENDIX 3: THE LEGAL CONTEXT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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Religious education must be taught to all registered pupils in maintained schools, including those in the sixth form, except to those withdrawn by their parents. This requirement does not apply to nursery classes in maintained schools. Religious education is a component of the basic curriculum, to be taught alongside the National Curriculum in all maintained schools. In all maintained schools, other than voluntary aided schools with a religious character, it must be taught according to a locally agreed syllabus.

Each LEA must convene an ASC to produce a syllabus. Once adopted by the LEA, the programme of study of the agreed syllabus sets out what pupils should be taught. The attainment levels set out the expected standards of pupils' performance at different ages. The Education Act 1996 states that an agreed syllabus must reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teachings and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain. Each LEA must have a SACRE. The SACRE may require a review of the agreed syllabus at any time. This is in addition to the requirement on LEAs to convene a conference to reconsider the agreed syllabus every five years .



## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank the witnesses who contributed oral evidence as well as the organisations and individuals that gave written submissions to the Inquiry. We are extremely grateful to the Parliamentary officers and members who supported this Inquiry and the the staff at the Religious Education Council of England and Wales.

Finally, we would like to give a special thank you to Dr Barbara Wintersgill to whom we are indebted for her dedicated work on putting this report together.



**THE ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY  
GROUP FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

