

Lancashire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Monday, 26th November, 2012 at 10.00 am in Cabinet Room 'D' - County Hall, Preston

Agenda

No. Item

Part 1 (Open to Press and Public)

- 1. Nominations for Chair and Vice-Chair**
- 2. Apologies for Absence** (Pages 1 - 8)
- 3. Minutes and Matters Arising**
Confirmation of the minutes of the last meeting held on 24 September 2012
- 4. SACRE Membership** (Pages 9 - 10)
Members are asked to consider the appointment of a co-opted member representing the Secondary Sector to the SACRE
- 5. Collective Worship** (Pages 11 - 12)
Consideration of the next steps for school visits by SACRE members to share in schools' Collective Worship.
- 6. Lancashire SACRE Development Plan 2011 - 2013** (Pages 13 - 16)
Members are asked to consider progress against the Development Plan.
- 7. SACRE Annual Report 2011/12**
Members are asked to comment on the draft Annual Report. The report will be circulated in advance of the meeting.
- 8. RE Quality Mark Update**
Verbal update

- 9. RE Council RE Subject Review Consultation** (Pages 17 - 58)
Members are asked to consider the RE Council's subject review consultation. A covering letter, draft report , addendum and review website questionnaire are attached.
- 10. Report of the Quality and Standards Sub-group** (Pages 59 - 64)
Members are asked to note the minutes of the meeting of the Quality and Standards Sub-group which took place on 8 November 2012.
- 11. National Update on Religious Education**
The Religious Education Consultant to the SACRE to update members on the national situation of RE.
- 12. Observers' Contributions**
- 13. Correspondance**
- 14. Any Other Business**
- 15. Date of the Next Meeting**
Members are asked to note that the next meeting of the SACRE is scheduled to take place on Monday 4 March 2013, at 10am, in County Hall, Preston.

Roy Jones
Clerk to the SACRE

County Hall
Preston

Agenda Item 2

Lancashire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 24 September 2012 at 10.00 am in Cabinet Room 'D' - County Hall, Preston

1. Present

Christian and other Religious Groups appropriately reflecting the Principal Traditions in the Area

Roman Catholic Church

Ms J Busby

The Free Churches Group

Mr P Baker
Mr C Wills

Islam

Mr N Anwar
Mr I Nakhuda

Hindu Faith

Mrs K Parekh

Teachers Associations

Ms J Crabtree (NUT)
Mrs S Greenhow (NASUWT)
Mr P Martin (ASCL)
(Chair)
Mrs A Robinson (ATL)

Church of England

Miss L Fenton
Mrs H Sage

Lancashire County Council

County Councillor P Malpas
County Councillor Y Motala
Mr F Williams

Co-opted Members

Mrs K Cooper (LASGB)
Mrs J Sawyer (Teachers in the Primary Sector)

Observers

Mr A Brennand (Pagan Federation)
Mrs E Saunderson (Society of Friends)

Religious Education Consultant

Mrs H Harrison

Officers in Attendance

Mr J Hewitt
Mr J Mynott
Ms K Dale

2. Apologies

Apologies for absence were presented on behalf of Rabbi D Braunold, Dr M Craig, CC K Ellard, Mr D Fann, Mr S Jogi, Mr H Mulla, Mrs J O'Rourke, Mr C Pountain, Mrs H Shukla, CC A Thornton and Mrs A Tidswell.

3. Minutes and matters arising

With regard to the minute 'National Update on Religious Education', the bullet point dealing with the Religious Education Council was changed to read as follows:

- The Religious Education Council (REC) was seen nationally as representing the collective interests of a wide variety of RE groups.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Lancashire SACRE held on 18 June 2012, subject to the amendment being made, be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

4. SACRE membership

- i. Members noted the recent appointment to the SACRE of Mr Ismaeel Nakhuda, representing the Lancashire Council of Mosques, within the group entitled: 'Christian and other Religious Groups appropriately reflecting the principle traditions in the area' and welcomed him to the meeting.
- ii. Members noted that Mr Bob Waring representing the ATL had recently stepped down from the SACRE to allow for the re-appointment of Mrs Alice Robinson following her year as ATL national president.
- iii. Regarding the appointment of a co-opted member representing the secondary sector, it was suggested that applications be invited from teachers whose schools were members of the Youth SACRE, and that a process be entered into to evaluate any applications received, with a view to SACRE making an appointment at its next meeting on 26 November 2012.

RESOLVED: i That applications for the co-opted position on the SACRE representing the secondary sector be invited from teachers whose schools are members of the Youth SACRE.

ii That a process to select a co-opted member representing the secondary sector be entered into in order to enable SACRE to appoint to the position at the meeting on 26 November 2012.

5. Collective Worship

i Draft protocol for School Visits by Members to Observe Collective Worship (CW)

Members considered the draft protocol for school visits by members to take part in Collective Worship and through discussion the following comments were made:

- The invitation to visit a school would need to come from the Head teacher
- Strategies including those listed below could be used In order to raise awareness of the offer by members to visit schools
 - Through the Youth SACRE
 - Via the Primary network groups
 - Through school governors
 - With the introduction of the revised Agreed Syllabus for RE
- The bullet point in the draft protocol regarding supporting schools in providing excellent Collective Worship referred to offering SACRE's help through discussion with schools
- It was felt that it would be helpful to give an explanation as to why members were requested in the draft protocol not to make notes, although the duplicated reference to the point could be deleted
- Training was available, provided by the Authority, on the Collective Worship resource - the recently revised CD 'Mirrors and Doors', which members could access themselves via the RE and Lancashire SACRE web site at the following address:
http://www.lancsngfl.ac.uk/curriculum/re/index.php?category_id=76&page_no=

A password is required to gain access to 'Mirrors and Doors' – this was given to members at the meeting (for their personal use only).

ii Training Exercise on Collective Worship (CW) led by the RE Consultant with reference to Mirrors and Doors

Members were asked to split into groups to take part in a training exercise on Collective Worship. Each group was provided with four Christmas carols and asked to report back on which carol they would choose, if any, to use for a Christmas act of Collective Worship in a medium sized Community Primary School.

It was explained that Collective Worship might be at class or group level and not necessarily for the whole school.

According to the law all pupils are required have a daily act of CW which must be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character'. However, there still remained the right of parents to withdraw their child from CW.

Mirrors and Doors' states that CW is 'to provide opportunities for the school community to reflect on, and develop, a deeper understanding of the dignity and worth of each individual and their contribution to the school and wider communities'. The interpretation of 'wholly, mainly, broadly Christian' relates to the character not the content. Certain principles could be mapped against other faiths. CW should be inclusive and both diversity and difference explored and celebrated.

Mirrors and Doors policy sets out the aims of CW in relation to both the school and the pupil.

Members were then asked to discuss in small groups how CW contributed to Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development with each group focusing on a particular aspect and reporting back their comments to the meeting.

As a final exercise members were asked to consider individually and write down what they felt would be lost and what would be gained if the requirement for a daily act of Collective Worship were to be abolished. Members' comments would be collated for consideration at a future SACRE meeting.

RESOLVED: That the protocol for School Visits by members to observe Collective Worship be amended with regard to the comments made by members at the meeting.

6. Lancashire SACRE Development Plan 2011 - 2013

Members noted the Development Plan 2011 - 13 as updated by the Quality and Standards Sub-group at its meeting on 17 July 2012. A copy of the Development Plan, as presented, is on record in the minute book.

7. Youth SACRE/Youth Voice

A record of the Youth SACRE Phase 3 teachers' meeting which took place on 11 July 2012 was noted. Two issues were raised in the note as follows:

- Request for approval from the SACRE for a change in name from the Youth SACRE to the Lancashire SACRE Youth Voice
- Request that letters of thanks be sent out to the schools involved, together with certificates recognising the work of the individual students involved

RESOLVED: That:

- i. The change in name from Youth SACRE to Lancashire SACRE Youth Voice be approved.
- ii. That letters of thanks be sent from the SACRE to the schools involved in the Youth Voice together with certificates recognising the work of the individual students.

8. Report of the Quality and Standards Sub-group

The minutes of the meeting of the Quality and Standards Sub-group (QSS) which took place on 17 July 2012 were noted.

The QSS had worked on and updated the SACRE Development Plan. In order to raise awareness of the Lancashire Agreed Syllabus an item was to be included on school governors' meetings agendas as governors are responsible for ensuring the delivery of RE in schools. It was anticipated that future training on the curriculum would highlight RE. A primary conference had been arranged for the Spring Term 2013 and this would also help to raise the profile. The Officer to the SACRE would raise the issue of support for CW with the Lancashire Association of Secondary School Head teachers.

The comment was made that in order to help raise the profile of CW the Youth Voice could produce its own leaflet explaining the function of CW.

9. Verbal Report from the Advanced Skills Teacher, Primary (AST)

Jo Crabtree updated members on her activities as AST, Primary, as follows:

- Jo had received several requests from schools for support which would carry through to January 2013
- Rossendale and Burnley network groups were still running
- Planning grids for every religion in every primary year group had been produced and put on the web site
- Jo had worked on the web site over the summer and had asked teachers via email to let her know of any glitches which would need sorting out before April (when the post of AST comes to an end).
- Teachers were asking for more guidance on how to write their own planning grids
- Jo received emails for help on a daily basis, the main focus of which was now Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development (SMSC) with

requests for information on trips to faith venues and for faith visitors to schools. Jo directed such requests to the DIFA web site. It was noted however, that the DIFA web site was very sparsely populated and a request was made for details of individuals or groups who were willing to help. It was up to individual organisations to decide whether a charge (and how much) would be made for visits by schools. The need to ensure that the sites posted on the website should be official sites was outlined as individuals could not be endorsed by the County Council.

RESOLVED: That the work by the AST primary be noted.

10. National Update on Religious Education

The Religious Education Consultant updated members on the national situation regarding RE.

- The Religious Education Council (REC) represented a wide range of RE bodies and its Chairman, John Keast, provided a voice for RE in the media.
- David Laws MP recently replaced Nick Gibb as Minister of State for Schools and Elizabeth Truss was named as Under Secretary of State for Education and Children. The REC deemed it essential to continue communication with ministers as well as the Department for Education especially as they begin the RE curriculum review
- Although RE remained statutory, Academies and Free Schools were not required to follow Agreed Syllabuses - Academies' funding agreements, should however, have reference to RE. Any individual or body could write to Academies asking what provision is made for RE, for example, via referral to Regional Education Funding Agencies
- It was envisaged that the report on the curriculum review would be published in July 2013
- Subject inspections of RE by HMI would end in the new year
- Short course RE entries in England were down 10% with a rise of 5% in Wales. Full course entries were up.
- Alan Brine's(HMI) long report was due to be published in December 2012
- NATRE was about to release a survey of 625 RE teachers hoping for Times Education Supplement interest and that individuals would contact their MPs about their findings.
- The RE Quality Mark pilot scheme had been hugely successful nationally

- The REC was looking at fundraising and ways to raise the profile of RE nationally and hoped to find 20 groups of 50 people nationwide to raise funds by taking part in a sponsored walk. The educational aim would be to bring together schools and local faith groups, with each walk taking in several sacred spaces which could then form an RE Trail for future use by schools. The proceeds of the walks would be divided up 50% to the REC and 50% to charity.
- Notes of REC meetings were usually circulated to faith groups

A copy of the RE Consultant's national update presentation is on record in the minute book.

11. SACRE members' news

Colin Wills informed members that interfaith week this year had been extended to ten days and would be taking place between 18 and 27 November 2012.

12. Correspondence

It was noted that correspondence had been received from Building Bridges in Burnley thanking the SACRE for holding its last meeting on 18 June 2012 in Burnley and for making a valuable contribution to the Building Bridges in Burnley 10th Anniversary Celebrations.

13. Date of the Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting of the Lancashire SACRE was noted as Monday 26 November 2012 to take place at County Hall, Preston.

Roy Jones
Clerk to the SACRE

County Hall
Preston

Agenda Item 4

Co-opted member of SACRE from Secondary Schools

Following an invitation to schools involved in Youth Voice to nominate a representative from secondary schools to be co-opted onto the SACRE, two expressions of interest were received.

The role was discussed with the two teachers and they have suggested that they would like to share the role for the following reasons:

- It would ensure that there is good attendance at meetings
- It would provide two points of contact for schools wishing to engage with SACRE
- It would give greater coverage across Lancashire as one school is in Preston and the other is in Accrington
- It would share the workload

The two teachers would attend meetings on a rota basis to be agreed with SACRE.

Decision required

To agree the proposal to co-opt two teachers to share the representation of secondary schools on the SACRE

Agenda Item 5

SACRE support for Collective Worship

At the last meeting of the SACRE on 24th September 2012 the following protocol was agreed:

Protocol for School Visits by Members to Observe Collective Worship

Members of SACRE are encouraged to visit schools to share in Collective Worship in order to:

- Promote the value of Collective Worship
- Gain a greater understanding of how different schools provide Collective Worship
- Support schools in providing excellent Collective Worship

When visiting schools it is important that SACRE members:

- Agree the purpose of the visit with the school prior to the visit
 - Agree the arrangements with the school (headteacher): time of arrival, where to report
 - length of visit
 - who is visiting
 - role (are you going to participate actively, how do you wish to be introduced?)
- Confirm the arrangements in writing (sample letter with SACRE leaflet)
- Send a letter of thanks to the school

In order to make visits successful the following guidance is offered:

- Be aware of body language (smile!)
- Do not make notes
- Offer positive feedback wherever possible
- Offer to discuss how SACRE does/might support Collective Worship (eg Mirrors and Doors)

It was suggested at the meeting that the work of SACRE members with schools might be piloted with schools whose headteachers are members of SACRE in order to explore this approach and consider how to take this forward.

Recommendation

Identify SACRE members who would be interested in participating in the Pilot and contact headteachers on SACRE to discuss this proposal.

Agenda Item 6

SACRE Development Plan review October 2012

Priority 1: Standards and Quality of Provision of RE

Target: Develop partnership with CYP to monitor and evaluate the quality of provision for RE and CW in schools. Develop strategies to improve standards and quality of RE provision

Intended impact: Issues for Locally Agreed Syllabus for RE are identified in county schools through working with CYP to develop effective monitoring and support for RE and Collective Worship

Action to date

- An article written by the Chair of SACRE has appeared in the "Lancashire Governor" newsletter to highlight and promote the value of RE in the curriculum
- An item on the implementation of the revised Agreed Syllabus has been included in the Core Agenda for relevant governing bodies
- The training for governors on the Curriculum will include information on the revised Agreed Syllabus
- OfSTED inspections are monitored for any key issues relating to RE in Community and Voluntary Controlled schools with none identified up to 26th October 2012. The inspection reports are, however, very brief and do not comment specifically on most areas of the curriculum.
- The primary RE conference is booked for Spring Term 2013.

Status : on track

Priority 2: Management of Lancashire SACRE and Partnership with the LA and other Key Stakeholders

Target: Ensure SACRE is truly representative of Lancashire by working with reference to the priorities of the Local Authority, young people and parents

Intended impact: Lancashire's RE provision is relevant and supportive of local issues and needs

Action to date:

- The importance of including RE in the training for the new primary curriculum has been raised with the trainers but the implementation of the curriculum has been delayed until 2014
- The most recent Youth Voice session gathered the views of young people on a number of key questions including the value of RE in the curriculum and the key elements of future RE conferences for Young People.

- The primary AST is continuing to organise network meetings with primary schools.
- The possibility of creating a parents' page as part of the SACRE website is currently under consideration by LCC officers. This has also been an area of focus for Youth Voice with findings shared with SACRE.

Status : on track

Priority 3: The Effectiveness of the Lancashire Agreed Syllabus for RE

Target: To make arrangements for the 2011 review, creation and dissemination of the Lancashire Syllabus for RE in partnership with CYP and National RE organisations/guidance

Intended impact: Locally Agreed Syllabus for RE is created in a way that is appropriate and effective in relation to local needs and national guidance

Action to date

- Primary network meetings have been organised to support the teaching and learning of RE including the implementation of the revised Agreed Syllabus. The impact of these meetings will be reviewed in Spring 2013.
- Exemplification materials have been developed in both the primary and secondary phases.
- Schools that have gained the RE Quality Mark are being highlighted on the RE website so that other schools can share their good practice
- A leading teacher model for RE is being developed and will be shared with schools.

Status: on track

Priority 4: Collective Worship

Target: Raise awareness of and support for the Lancashire Guidance for Collective Worship

Intended impact: Schools deliver appropriate acts of Collective Worship that have a positive impact on pupils' spiritual development

Action to date

- A protocol to support SACRE members in visiting schools to share in Collective Worship has been established.
- Training on Collective Worship has been offered to schools but there has been little take-up to date.

- Training has been provided for SACRE on the Mirrors and Doors material to support Collective Worship in schools
- Schools have been informed about the availability of Mirrors and Doors

Status : not on track

Priority 5: Contribution of SACRE to the Social and Racial Harmony Agenda

Targets: Greater understanding and contact between schools and faith communities

Intended impact: Effective use of visits and visitors from local faith communities to develop Syllabus attitudes of open mindedness, respect for all and self awareness

Action to date

- SACRE membership has been monitored to inform discussions relating to the make-up of SACRE
- The DIFA website has been reviewed and a strategy to strengthen support for visits to places of worship and visitors to schools from faith communities is being proposed.
- SACRE meetings and Youth Voice meetings have been held in places of worship across Lancashire
- The proposed Youth Conference for 2013 is being held in a place of worship
- Feedback suggests that the Youth Voice has informed members of faith communities about the nature, purpose and impact of RE by engaging directly with faith leaders.
- The "Faith Shorts" winner of their category in the Tony Blair Foundation film competition was the Hollins Secondary School in Accrington. Their winning entry "Mohammed in Accrington-Inspiring me" was presented to a range of audiences including SACRE and the Youth Conference.

Status : on track



Agenda Item 9

Religious Education Council
14-22 Elder Street
London E1 6BT
Phone: 0207 859 1612
Email: info@religiouseducationcouncil.org
Web: www.religiouseducationcouncil.org

Working together to strengthen the provision of religious education in schools, colleges and universities

12th November 2012

Dear Colleagues,

RE Council RE Subject Review, England, Phase 1 Expert Panel Report

Thank you for your interest in this highly significant project concerning the future of RE in schools in England. Further information about the project as a whole is available on the [REC website](#).

Phase 1 of the review is currently entering an important stage of consultation and we invite you to read the draft report of the Expert Panel and to send us your thoughts and comments.

May I make a few points to help you place the report into context.

Background

1. This report seeks to summarise accurately and comprehensively the perceived state of play in RE and to make recommendations for future action. Phases Two and Three will be developmental and take the review process forward.
2. The [Scoping Report](#) commissioned for the RE review proposed four foci for the review. These are: Aims and Purposes; Curriculum; Exemplifications of Good Practice; and Assessment and Qualifications. The REC's Curriculum, Assessment and Qualifications Committee (CAQC) accepted the findings of the Scoping Report, with certain modifications, and it was also approved by the REC Board. These form the framework within which the REC RE Review operates.
3. The Phase 1 Expert Panel's report has been put to the REC CACQ Group, which acts as Steering Group for the project (Wednesday 31st October). A wider Reference Group, including members from all the REC member bodies, considered the report at an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) on Wednesday 7th November.

Wider Public Consultation Procedure

1. Please print or download [draft 2 of the Phase 1 Expert Panel report](#) and [Addendum](#).
2. We invite public responses to this report in writing, in one of 3 formats:



Religious Education Council
14-22 Elder Street
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Email: info@religiouseducationcouncil.org
Web: www.religiouseducationcouncil.org

Working together to strengthen the provision of religious education in schools, colleges and universities

- a. By letter, addressed to me as Chair of the Steering Group of the RE Subject Review for England, via the REC Offices.
- b. By [questionnaire](#), available on the REC website
- c. By questionnaire, following this link to Survey Monkey
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/REReviewSurvey12012>

There is considerable pressure of time on the RE review process, due in large part to the financial constraints within which the REC is working. The Government has refused to fund the RE Review in the way it is funding the review of the National Curriculum, so the REC has been entirely dependent upon voluntary donations to support the process. With regret, wider public consultation will take place electronically during a three week period from Monday 12th November – Friday 7th December during which we hope you and/or any organisation to which you belong will contribute your responses to the Report. Please play your part by inviting others, including pupils and students studying RE, to make their contribution.

Thank you in anticipation for your attention and response to the RE Review process.

Yours sincerely,

Mike Castelli
Chair of Steering Group
RE Subject Review, England



**SUBJECT REVIEW OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
IN ENGLAND**

PHASE 1

REPORT OF THE EXPERT PANEL

DRAFT

Draft report for consultation only

12 November, 2012

RE Expert Panel Members

Lat Blaylock

Bill Gent (Chair)

Julian Stern

Karen Walshe

Acknowledgements

This report represents the collective findings and recommendations of the RE Expert Panel. The members of this panel would like to acknowledge the contributions made by:

- Dr Janet Orchard, the project manager of the whole REC RE Subject Review, for her constant support, encouragement, advice and back-up;
- Dr Sarah Smalley, REC Executive Officer, who, amongst other things, showed a remarkable gift in minute-taking during the two long, face-to-face meetings of the panel; and
- each of the expert witnesses who submitted detailed notes and comments and/or who provided oral evidence.

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Introduction

The origin of this report

Under the present coalition government, an extensive review of the National Curriculum is taking place. As changes in curriculum and assessment arrangements for other subjects have implications for religious education (RE), this provides an opportunity to clarify RE's distinctive place within the wider school curriculum. As part of its Strategic Plan, the RE Council (REC) has undertaken to carry out a review of RE, following a similar pattern to that adopted by the National Curriculum Review. There was support from the Department for Education (DfE) in that ministers affirmed that the REC was 'well placed' to carry out such a review.¹

A scoping exercise was commissioned in preparation for this process. The subsequent report, published on the REC website in June 2012, declared that: 'in the midst of an apparently threatening, divisive and destructive situation, the RE community has a unique opportunity through the leadership of the REC, to build on the considerable achievements of the last two decades'.²

The Subject Review of RE in England stemmed from the scoping report and Dr Janet Orchard was appointed manager of a project consisting of two phases. During phase 1, an expert panel of four members would meet to review key documentation and submissions by expert witnesses with two purposes in mind. First, to identify strengths and weaknesses in current RE provision in schools in England; second, to make recommendations for future action in phase 2 of the review and beyond related to four particular foci. These foci were identified by the scoping report and agreed by the REC Board and set the boundaries for the panel's work. They are: aims, curriculum, exemplification of good practice, and qualifications and assessment.

The members of the expert panel, chaired by Dr Bill Gent, began their work of reviewing key documentation and expert witness submissions in July 2012. Their primary tasks were, through a careful and sensitive reading, to present a summary of points raised in the documents and submissions, and to make a judgement on the implications of this evidence for the future of RE. They met twice, once in London in August and once in Birmingham in September 2012. A first draft of the panel's report was presented to the project's steering group at the end of October 2012.

The REC is committed to wide consultation among all of the various stakeholders with a direct interest in RE and beyond. Hence, a second draft of the phase 1 report was considered in early November 2012 by an Extraordinary General Meeting of the REC which represents the views of its 59 member bodies, including professional and faith-based groups. A third draft of the report is now being placed in the public domain for a period of three weeks in November and December 2012 for general consideration and

¹ Letter from Nick Gibb, DfE, to John Keast, Chair of the REC, 25 January 2012.

² This sense of urgency was reflected in many of the written submissions made to the expert panel. It is clear that many members of the RE community believe that RE's undoubted gains in recent decades across a wide age range are currently threatened and in jeopardy. As such, this review of RE - in the words of one expert witness - 'is a precious opportunity and I hope that we do not waste it'.

comment. A further revision will then be made to take account of these soundings and this final version of the report will be presented to the REC Board and the steering group for ratification.

The report's style, layout and length

The Expert Panel was asked to produce a report which would have credibility amongst the professional RE community and would be free of technical jargon to ensure its accessibility by a wide public audience. For example, footnotes have been used – mainly to identify key documentation and sources of further information – but sparingly. Acronyms cannot be avoided entirely but they have been explained in full when they appear first.

The panel agreed that the key element of the report is its recommendations of which it has made nine. Seven relate directly to the four specific foci of the review and two further recommendations follow. These form the executive summary to be found at the beginning of the report.

Each of the four main sections of the report, based around the four foci, begins with the recommendations for that section. The text that follows each recommendation provides commentary to support it that falls into three parts: background, main strengths, and main weaknesses.

The expert panel was asked to produce a report of about 10,000 words in length. It has succeeded in doing this but one of the consequences was that it left little room for detailed information about particular points made. Nonetheless, the purpose of the report was always to provide a general overview of the English RE scene, including its 'highs' and 'lows', in order to provide a basis for further, more detailed work later in the review process.

Underlying principles of the panel's work

As they engaged in their deliberations, certain principles informed the panel's work. These have been captured in the following brief statement:

1. The RE Subject Review for England should defend and enhance the place of RE in the curriculum of English schools.
2. The RE Curriculum in schools in England should reflect wider educational aims, including the aims of the new National Curriculum. It should respect the principles of freedom, responsibility and fairness, and show commitment to raising expectations of the quality of RE received by all children.
3. Local determination of the curriculum has been recognised in the statutory arrangements for RE over many years. The Expert Panel has worked on the assumption that any new guidelines for the subject must continue to balance the value to RE of wide national compatibility with that of vesting power in local communities.
4. The Expert Panel is committed to diverse forms of high quality RE; its members recognise that the subject, like religion itself, is contested. Plural traditions of RE in

England have integrity and value, and their practice should be encouraged and developed. Common to these traditions is a widely shared commitment to being educative rather than coercive, each in their own way.

5. At the same time, Religious Educators need to be much clearer about the reasons which make the plural aims of RE legitimate and how these relate to the overall purpose of the subject.
6. RE's place in the curriculum will be strengthened if its role and importance are communicated as widely, effectively and meaningfully as possible to all stakeholders.
7. RE in England compares favourably with equivalent curricula in high performing jurisdictions around the world and the Expert Panel has regarded it a privilege to reflect on some of the best collective wisdom about how children learn in RE and what they should know.
8. The RE Curriculum should embody rigour, high standards and coherence. There are diverse interpretations of high standards and rigour in RE but one key element is the opportunity all children should have to acquire core knowledge and understanding particular to this curriculum area.
9. This requires a well-trained workforce of teachers with continuing professional development to support them and adequate time in which to teach the subject.
10. RE continues to be a statutory requirement for maintained schools and should remain a national benchmark of excellence for any school. Any school aspiring to be a good school should aspire to offer good RE.
11. The Expert Panel seeks to work in a spirit of generosity towards all those who teach and care about RE. Contributions to the RE Subject Review from many perspectives have been wholly welcome and gladly received. It has summarised and synthesised that expertise for the good of RE, based on a careful reading of documentation in relation to the four foci identified.

Executive summary

Having considered a range of key documentation as well as submissions by a significant number of expert witnesses - a number of whom were met face-to-face - the RE Subject Review Expert Panel agreed that the following nine recommendations should be put before the REC Board for further consideration and action:

1. **that clear and cogent aims for RE, applicable across the range of school settings, are proposed, as well as ways of communicating them to different stakeholders;**
2. **that clear accounts that re-evaluate the core knowledge and understanding in RE, appropriate to pupils in particular age groups and stages, are produced;**
3. **that guidance on pedagogy and learning methods in RE are developed for teachers and curriculum-shapers, that promote high quality teaching and learning in RE while allowing for diversity;**
4. **that evaluative principles are developed and published that enable teachers to make sound professional judgements about what constitutes good professional practice, promoting high standards of learning in RE;**
5. **that strategies are explored through which the collective efforts and wisdom of the individuals and groups which make up the RE community can be brought together and made known effectively for the benefit of the subject and the young people studying it;**
6. **that new instruments for describing achievement in RE are created that teachers can use working alongside the DfE's new descriptions of achievement in subjects like English, mathematics and science;**
7. **that maximum influence is sought with the relevant examination Awarding Bodies in order to promote:**
 - (a) **coherence and progression between 4-14 programmes and public examinations used at 14-19; and**
 - (b) **the study of religions in religious studies³ qualifications 14-19, in appropriate relation to studies of, for example, ethics and philosophy;**
8. **that the 2004 *Non-Statutory National Framework* for RE is reviewed and replaced with an updated and recast document;**
9. **that increasingly influential links are built and used with the DfE in order to promote RE in all schools, in line with the REC subject review's work and recommendations (above), challenging and encouraging government to act to improve RE.**

³ At public examination level, RE is referred to as religious studies (RS).

Focus 1: The Aims of RE

Recommendation 1

That clear and cogent aims for RE, applicable across the range of school settings, are proposed, as well as ways of communicating them to different stakeholders.

Aims: Background

- 1.1 The nature and purpose of RE are not easy to define in straightforward, unequivocal ways. The reasons for this are many. People's ideas about the role of both 'religion' and 'education' in society have changed over time. Moreover, religion itself is a complex concept, fundamental to the lives of some citizens whilst highly problematic for others, so that the issue of whether religion has a part to play in a nation's public education system at all is contested.
- 1.2 A consistent feature in many of the submissions that the Expert Panel received was a strong perception that, despite the considerable amount written on the nature, purpose and aims of RE in all kinds of documentation, many people still don't 'get it'.⁴ That this was often linked to a sense of persistent frustration on the part of members of the RE community was demonstrated well in the document reporting a meeting of key members of the RE community that took place in late 2011: 'A lack of consensus on the rationale and purpose of RE, and a failure to find a simple accessible way of explaining RE to the public, media and government, struck many present as the most serious weakness'.⁵
- 1.3 A strong feeling persists, therefore, that both the purpose of RE as well as its aims need further articulation in ways and forms that people of all backgrounds can better understand and relate to. ('The issues are not in the aims themselves', said one expert witness, 'but in the communication of them'.) Is the RE community itself partly to blame for the confusion that exists? A recent major research project, *Does RE Work?* concluded bluntly that RE has tried to do too much⁶, re-inventing itself to include within its brief additional whole-school priorities – 'community cohesion', for example – and seeking to provide social, moral and values education so that the sense of a substantive core or essence of the subject has been eroded.
- 1.4 There is some concern about the title of the subject itself. At a national level, the term 'religious education' has been enshrined in legislation since 1988 (superseding the term 'religious instruction'). Some secondary school departments in particular have been experimenting with alternative titles which they judge to be more appealing to

⁴ See, for example: IPPR (2004) *What is Religious Education for? Getting the National Framework Right*.

⁵ St Gabriel's (2011) RE Community Conference 2011, 16.

⁶ See: www.gla.ac.uk/schools/education/research/currentresearchprojects/doesreligiouseducationwork/

the pupils they teach. These new titles (such as 'Beliefs and Values', 'Philosophy and Ethics' and 'Religion and Belief') reflect the increasing emphasis on the study of philosophy and ethics in secondary school RE in recent times.

- 1.5 The publication of the *NSNF* for RE in 2004 was a milestone in the history of English RE. In particular, its statement on 'the importance of RE'⁷ was an attempt to provide coherence for the subject at a national level while respecting the value of the subject's adaptability to local needs and requirements without inappropriate and unhelpful levels of prescription. There have been criticisms of the *NSNF*; some, for example, have suggested that, no matter how 'educational' such guidelines are, there is still the assumption that it is better to be religious than not. Others criticise the *NSNF* for encouraging a single view of RE and undermining the independence of local determination. Nonetheless, the *NSNF* was ground-breaking because it gained the broad agreement across the full range of professional RE associations and faith communities. About 150 local agreed syllabuses have followed it in varying ways.⁸
- 1.6 Although RE is a statutory requirement for all state schools, in schools with a religious character the understanding of the nature and purpose of RE might be promoted in slightly different ways to that in a community school. At worst – as one expert witness pointed out – this can lead to a kind of 'us and them' mentality with the underlying assumption that the only 'proper' RE is that which takes place in schools without a religious character. However, members of the expert panel agree that diversity of provision has considerable advantages; the purpose and aims of RE can be expressed in ways that respect the varied integrities of RE practice in different schools and different contexts.

⁷*NSNF*, 7.

⁸ The expert panel is aware of less than 10 local authorities and SACREs that have chosen not to use the *NSNF* to support the development of their locally agreed syllabus.

Aims: Main strengths

- 1.7 A tradition of inclusive and multi-faith RE has developed over time in England so that it is held in high esteem internationally. An expert witness with strong international links pointed out that, 'Specialists in religion and education from many countries appreciate the attempts in England, Wales and Scotland to have an *inclusive* form of religious education, which is 'open'. They also appreciate the fact that Britain ... has regarded religion as a legitimate subject for public discussion, including within education'.
- 1.8 The wide acceptance of the 2004 NSNF indicates some broad agreement about the nature of RE in schools. As one expert witness commented: 'Remarkably, it did provide an agreed reference point intended to be relevant not only for LA ASCs [Local Authority Agreed Syllabus Conferences] and SACREs [Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education] but also for those responsible for shaping RE in schools of a religious character'.
- 1.9 Teachers of RE have often made a strong contribution to the delivery of whole-school policies, including community cohesion and respect for all, critical thinking and citizenship. In its long subject report of 2010, Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) identified the contribution of RE to the promotion of community cohesion as a strength of the subject in most of the schools that had been visited.⁹
- 1.10 The existence of a widely based professional 'RE community' consisting of RE practitioners including teachers, advisers and consultants, professional bodies and interested faith community groups. Such groups and individuals represent a diverse group of people and organisations whose common bond is a commitment to supporting and promoting the educational aims of RE.
- 1.11 The legislative requirement that each local authority determines its own agreed syllabus for RE is considered a strength by some expert witnesses. At its best, this has meant that local groups of educational professionals, faith, and community representatives have thought through the purpose and aims of RE together and reached agreements about the best possible curriculum for children and young people in their particular areas. This is in the spirit of current national policies to devolve power over the curriculum to local stakeholders.

⁹ Ofsted (2010) *Transforming religious education*, 47-49.

Aims: Main Weaknesses

- 1.12 There is still widespread public uncertainty about the nature and purpose of RE. This is evident among a significant number of teachers¹⁰ as well as the wider public. Some expert witnesses judged there to be too much diversity, complexity and variation in articulating the aims of RE. They went on to argue that this became more confusing still in aims statements that failed to distinguish between general aims of schooling, to which RE made a contribution, and particular aims specific to RE.
- 1.13 There is a lack of confidence and subject knowledge¹¹ among a significant number of teachers and practitioners. In increasing numbers of primary schools Higher Level Teaching Assistants are teaching and leading RE rather than teachers: their capacity to operate as fully functioning teaching professionals in the subject is severely limited. Furthermore, a lack of continuing professional opportunities in RE for all teachers and practitioners limits the scope for them to further develop their practice.
- 1.14 There is evidence of agreement that the development of knowledge and understanding of religion/religions is a core element of RE, and a widespread belief that pupils' knowledge and understanding is increasingly insecure. This point was made very strongly in the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) / Warwick University report on *Materials Used to Teach About World Religions* (ref) and commented on frequently by expert witnesses.
- 1.15 Though the NSNF was a milestone in the development of RE in England and Wales, it now needs to be updated and its usefulness extended in order to take account of the many changes that have taken place since 2004¹², both within RE and the wider educational scene. Furthermore, its statement about the 'importance of RE' in particular is not yet sufficiently clear or direct to be fully fit for purpose.
- 1.16 The locally determined nature of the RE curriculum is regarded as a weakness by some well-respected commentators. For them, this is a matter of urgency; they believe that the future well-being of RE is dependent upon radical reform of the legislation governing RE. The need to review this issue is heightened by recent radical revisions of local authority control over education. With increasing numbers of schools moving to academy status, thus outside local authority control and the requirement to follow the local agreed syllabus for RE, the future viability of SACREs is under threat, particularly in smaller districts and areas.

¹⁰ See, for instance: Ofsted (2010) *Transforming religious education*, 51, n147.

¹¹ As one of the expert witnesses pointed out, this would include 'pedagogical knowledge' – that is, an understanding of why and how I am teaching RE so that pupils make progress.

¹² Including subsequent key projects and documents from Government and its agencies which largely follow the settlement that the framework achieved.

Focus 2: The RE Curriculum

Recommendation 2

That clear accounts that re-evaluate the core knowledge and understanding in RE, appropriate to pupils in particular age groups and stages, are produced.

Recommendation 3

That guidance on pedagogy and learning methods in RE are developed for teachers and curriculum-shapers, that promote high quality teaching and learning in RE while allowing for diversity.

Curriculum: Background

- 2.1 As a result of progress made in recent decades, many parents and teachers now think of RE as a 'subject', alongside other subjects of the curriculum. However, questions remain about what *is* and what *ought to be* taught in the RE curriculum. On the one hand, there appears to be a relatively widespread expectation that the key focus of a subject called 'RE' will be on studying 'religion/s', particularly Christianity and the other principal religions represented in Great Britain (usually named as Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Sikhism). On the other, a further relatively well-established expectation is that the RE children receive in school will equip them for living in a plural society made up of people who, to a lesser or greater extent, follow many religions and beliefs. Beyond this, agreement is less certain. Hence the various meanings of 'religious education' and its associated concepts have been the legitimate subject of often intense debate within the RE community and beyond. This was apparent in many of the key documents and submissions received from expert witnesses.
- 2.2 Sometimes, these debates reflect wider concerns about how to structure learning and teaching which affect the curriculum as a whole. For instance, the need for a school curriculum to be organised around traditional 'subjects' has been challenged at the level of principle¹³ as anachronistic, and in practice because it leads to needless repetition of certain topics which do not fit neatly into any one subject's schemes of work. Experienced primary school teachers who began their careers using a 'theme'- or 'topic'-based model to plan the curriculum, were then later encouraged to focus on 'subjects'. Later still, they were encouraged to use more 'creative' styles of planning which, in spite of official rhetoric to the contrary, seemed

¹³ See: White, J (2004), Wright, A (2004), and material related to the 2008 New Secondary Curriculum.

to some to be a reintroduction of topics and themes, albeit under another name and to be 'delivered' with more 'rigour'.

- 2.3 Within RE, the idea that the principal focus of teachers should be on the RE 'curriculum' has been challenged on a number of levels. Some have pointed to an undue emphasis on subject content resulting in 'curriculum overload'. A number of expert witnesses were of the view that there has been too much emphasis on 'curriculum' at the expense of 'pedagogy'. This begs the questions, of course, as to what both the words 'curriculum' and 'pedagogy' mean and their relationship, there being evidence that there is often a lack of clarity in the use of both of these terms.¹⁴
- 2.4 There is strong evidence that, particularly since the publication of the *NSNF* in 2004, there has been a greater uniformity across local agreed syllabuses for RE – in their adoption, for instance, of the notion that the dynamic of RE is bound up with the twin processes of 'learning about' and 'learning from' religion which provides a basis for describing pupils' 'levels of attainment' across their school careers. However, there is still substantial variation across local agreed syllabuses with a small number of notable examples which enshrine a very particular or original approach to RE: that, in essence, for example, RE aims at the development of individuals and of society across a range of 'dispositions'.¹⁵ In another example, RE is framed as an exploration of the question, 'what does it mean to be human?'¹⁶
- 2.5 Even when the assumption that RE is primarily concerned with the study of 'religion/s' is broadly agreed, both the meaning of the concept of 'religion' and the most fruitful way of studying it are hotly contested. Within the English RE community, there has been an on-going debate between those academics who regard 'religions' as 'substantial social facts' and those who regard 'religion' as a flawed, outmoded concept. Those of the former view regard the concept of 'religion' as helpful in discussing such things as religious truth claims. Those of the latter view are wary of the term in that they think that it encourages people to think of 'religions' as fixed entities disregarding real life evidence that 'religions' are changing, internally diverse and have blurred boundaries.¹⁷
- 2.6 It follows from the identification of the principal religions to be included in RE (see 2.1 above), that there will be some dissatisfied by apparent exclusion. Members of religious communities that are globally significant, but have small numbers of members in the UK would like to see study of their faith traditions included in the curriculum. Atheists and agnostics – of whom those in the British Humanist Association (BHA) are the most visibly well-organised – draw attention to the fact that religious practice in the UK is a minority occupation, with many or most living as

¹⁴ One expert witness suggested that the title of Michael Grimmitt's well-known book, *Pedagogies of Religious Education* (Great Woking: McCrimmons, 2000), was really about 'methods' rather than 'pedagogies'.

¹⁵ See the 2007 Birmingham agreed syllabus: www.faihtmakesadifference.co.uk

¹⁶ See the 2011 Lancashire agreed syllabus: www.lancsnqfl.ac.uk/curriculum/re/index.php?category_id=136

¹⁷ See: Wright (2008) & Jackson, R (2008).

practically non-religious, and urge the more focused study of, for example, non-religious ways of living and arguments for atheism in the classroom.

- 2.7 In terms of the historical and social phenomenon of 'religion', the once common Western idea that religion will gradually 'die out' has been increasingly challenged by research into what has been called 'the persistence of faith'.¹⁸ In its place, religion is increasingly seen as a key global phenomenon which is expressed in many and varied ways. A number of key documents¹⁹ and expert witnesses expressed concern that the concept of religion as used in RE has not kept pace with such developments.
- 2.8 In addition to the challenges to any simple notion of a straightforward RE 'curriculum' already highlighted, contemporary changes (or emerging changes) in the national educational field need to be taken into account: the insistence of the DfE 2010-2012 that schools should have greater freedom to innovate and to devise their own curricula at school and community level, for instance. Expert witnesses commented that not only may a subject such as RE be left to wither in some schools, but also, the very idea of organising the curriculum into subjects will be set aside by others. So RE in the future will have to rely less on being a mandatory subject for all pupils by legislation, and much more on the *intrinsic worth of the learning opportunities it offers*. For example, academies will need to be convinced of the merit of the locally agreed syllabus if they are to choose to use it. The RE subject review should take these radical insights seriously.

¹⁸ See: Sachs, J (1990) *The Persistence of Faith* (London: Continuum).

¹⁹ See, for instance: Ofsted (2007) *Making Sense of Religion*, 7.

Curriculum: Main strengths

- 2.9 The 2004 *NSNF* provides an outline of the RE curriculum in terms of knowledge, understanding and skills to which most RE professionals could consent and from which almost all local agreed syllabus conferences have drawn in devising their own agreed syllabuses. Really weak agreed syllabuses appear less common, post-*NSNF*, than they were before.
- 2.10 Though the continuing usefulness of the terms ‘learning about’ and ‘learning from’ religions has been challenged²⁰, they have nevertheless become embedded in the thinking of many primary and secondary teachers who, as a result, understand that RE consists of more than just ‘content’. This recognition of the need for balance is particularly significant in the context of the current national emphasis on the need for the identification of ‘bodies of core knowledge’ within subjects.
- 2.11 Evidence suggests that, since Ofsted began inspecting RE in 1994, more and better RE is being taught in more primary schools. Provision remains patchy, but inspection reports suggest a decline in the once common total neglect of the subject in many schools, and this improvement may have been helped by the five-yearly cycle of agreed syllabus review.
- 2.12 One way the strength of the RE teaching force has been developed and shown is through the 2008-2010 RE contribution to the New Secondary Curriculum through which 1016 secondary schools, involving over 1500 teachers, received professional development from 25 regional RE subject advisers.

²⁰ See, for example: Ofsted (2007), 38

Curriculum: Main Weaknesses

- 2.13 The lack of curriculum time made available to RE in many schools combined with the use of 'creative curriculum planning'. In some primary schools, for instance, teaching assistants²¹ (or Higher Level Teaching Assistants) have been used to teach RE, sometimes in PPA time²², lowering the status and the probable impact of RE in the school (REC 2007, p. ?). Many teachers have identified a lack of understanding of, and support for, RE among senior school leaders and policy-makers as a significant cause of weakness in RE provision.
- 2.14 Within the secondary phase, the recent decision of the DfE not to include RE as one of the humanities subjects of the 'English Baccalaureate' ('EBacc') has compromised the future of RE in secondary schooling. A series of National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE) surveys of English secondary school RE departments²³ revealed widespread unsettlement, reporting a general feeling that RE had been unfairly 'downgraded' within the school curriculum as a result. The October 2012 Ipsos Mori report on *The Effects of the English Baccalaureate* reported that, 'Almost all case study schools questioned the exclusion of RE as an EBacc subject'.²⁴
- 2.15 The limited opportunities for teachers and other practitioners to increase their professional knowledge, understanding and expertise through RE-specific initial and continuing professional development. Many local authorities and SACREs no longer make any provision for continuing professional development in RE, due to reduced resources and/or a lack of subject-based advisory support.
- 2.16 The frequent misrepresentation of religion in both teaching and the literature produced to support RE in schools.²⁵ There is often concern with 'coverage of religions', noted one expert witness, 'rather than a commitment to understanding and impact'. Another pointed to the tendency to 'sanitise' religions leading to an avoidance of diversity and controversy.

²¹ REC (2007) *Religious Education Teaching and Training in England: current provision and future improvement*, p35, identified a need for training for teaching assistants in RE.

²² The Workload Agreement guarantees teachers in maintained schools in England and Wales ten per cent of their timetabled teaching to be set aside as preparation, planning and assessment (PPA) time during the school day.

²³ See NATRE website: www.natre.org.uk.

²⁴ DfE (September 2012) *The effects of the English Baccalaureate*, 19.

²⁵ See, in particular: DCSF/Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit (2010) *Materials used to Teach about World Religions in Schools in England*.

Focus 3: Exemplification of good RE

Recommendation 4

That evaluative principles are developed and published that enable teachers to make sound professional judgements about what constitutes good professional practice, promoting high standards of learning in RE.

Recommendation 5

That strategies are explored through which the collective efforts and wisdom of the individuals and groups which make up the RE community can be brought together and made known effectively for the benefit of the subject and the young people studying it.

Exemplification: Background

- 3.1 Good quality RE grows where best practice is widely known and understood. The term 'exemplification of good practice' is far-reaching, however, and the panel therefore took a broad view of what this category required it to address. With more time, the panel would have attempted to define the field more tightly.
- 3.2 Primary teachers have often looked to local SACREs and agreed syllabuses as well as commercially-published resources for their classroom approaches; notions of good practice have often been drawn from practice in other subjects. At the same time, poor subject knowledge and understanding and low confidence have often undermined the quality of primary RE practice.
- 3.3 Secondary teachers, in those schools in which teachers with other specialisms are in a majority, can be more influenced than they realise by the quest for parity with history and geography at both Key Stages 3 (11-14) and 4 (14-16). Advantages and disadvantages stem from these comparisons. Secondary schools have generally been less concerned than primary schools to implement their local agreed syllabus. In the case of new-style academies, the link with local arrangements for RE (including resources) is currently loosely defined.
- 3.4 In the last eight years, guidance produced by the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA)²⁶ has been widely used, though this has improved good practice less than would have been wished. The marginal position of RE within the curriculum and small amounts of curriculum time account for much of the weakness of teaching and learning which HMI observe in RE.

²⁶ Such as the New Secondary Curriculum Initiative and work on Assessing Pupil Progress (APP) in Foundation Subjects to define and exemplify levels.

- 3.5 There are many national projects which provide high-quality exemplification, some originating in research, some funded and supported by RE's major donors, funders and agencies. Various REC member bodies have also produced exemplification material, such as the Islamic Council of Britain's package for learning about Islam, the BHA's 'Humanism for Schools' website, and the Jewish Way of Life exhibition. In general, these are less well known than they deserve and probably lack widespread impact, even where they would meet needs widely.
- 3.6 An increasing amount of material is available digitally via the internet and, in the context of increased globalisation, from a wide range of international sources. However, such material is unregulated and raises issues – particularly for those lacking subject knowledge or confidence – about resource selection, balance and quality. Furthermore, best practice would suggest that such material has to be tailored to the particular situation in which it is going to be applied; an exercise that requires professional judgement, flair and expertise.
- 3.7 RE has relied on agencies of government for exemplification of good practice. Key examples include HMI, QCD, the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) and the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTa). Local agencies – SACREs being the key example – have also often made a contribution to exemplification. Following the closure of some of these agencies²⁷ and in view of the current austerities which affect many (though not all) SACREs, the RE community must look to other sources for the support of exemplification of good practice.
- 3.8 One particularly significant factor has been the reduction in the number and availability of 'experts' (including specialist RE advisers, advisory teachers and advanced skills teachers) to support teachers and schools. Where they continue to exist, local subject-specific groups of teachers have been a lifeline for many with meetings often focused on sharing examples of good practice. Some faith communities, such as Roman Catholic and Anglican dioceses, have continued to offer support to their own networks, sometimes beyond. However, many teachers of RE report feeling isolated, and do not feel well placed to see how exemplification of good practice can help them practically.
- 3.9 Some 'pull factors' have been having a good impact, but usually only on schools numbered in their hundreds at best.²⁸ These include quality marks and awards (such as the RE Quality Mark²⁹ and the Hockerill/NATRE prize for Innovation in RE Teaching³⁰); competitions (such as those associated with 'Spirited Arts'³¹); and

²⁷ BECTa, for example, was closed down on 31 March 2011.

²⁸ The evaluation report on the RESilience Project, for example, noted that, 'The number of English schools that chose to participate was disappointing. This was due in part to external factors but the final number fell far short of the revised aspirational target of 400'. *An Evaluation of Resilience/At Gyfnerthu 2009-2011*, 25.

²⁹ A recently introduced award aimed at 'recognising outstanding learning in religious education'. See: www.reqm.org

³⁰ Now in its third year. See: www.hockerillfoundation.org.uk/Prize.aspx

projects and initiatives (such as the Celebrating RE Month held in March 2011³² and developing students as ‘ambassadors of faith and belief’³³). These initiatives, which require opting into, often feature schools who already exhibit good practice in RE.

- 3.10 Many schools and teachers, lacking trust in their own ability to be curriculum innovators and evaluators, turn to commercially published schemes of planning and resources. While some of these provide professional guidance ‘on tap’, others are insufficiently coherent to please faith community groups and insufficiently creative to please pupils.
- 3.11 Published research projects into RE-specific learning methods and pedagogy have been influential. These methods, based on enquiry, ethnography, interpretation, religious literacy, experiential approaches, conceptual development and the quest for human meaning, are all used in some classrooms; at best, each is effective largely in relation to its own version of RE’s aims. Many teachers make eclectic use of these learning methods, often driven by the desire to make RE lively or relevant. The quest for ‘relevance’ in RE is sometimes pursued superficially, however: featuring a story of a Muslim boxer or a Christian pop star may in itself do little, if anything, to improve the quality of learning.

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³¹Including ‘Art in Heaven’, an annual art competition which, since 2004, has involved 250,000 pupils. See: www.natre.org.uk/spiritedarts/

³² See: www.religiouseducationcouncil.org/content/blogcategory/51/81/

³³ See, for example: <http://www.save-glasbury.org/aims.php>

Exemplification: Main strengths

- 3.12 There has never been a 'golden age' for RE, and it is a reasonable conjecture that there is a much stronger base of practice at a sound standard than ever before in both primary and secondary school RE. In a significant number of schools – primary, secondary and special – RE is identified by HMI as a subject which makes an important contribution to whole school priorities.
- 3.13 The capacity - despite a sense of being marginalised by central government decisions and a persistent belief that the subject is under-funded relative to other subjects - for RE-related groups, locally and nationally, to organise innovative and exciting projects and initiatives which both promote and bring together a wide range of exemplary practice and material.
- 3.14 The number and range of professional associations and other organisations which have exemplified their vision of RE in accessible ways through resources from which schools and teachers can benefit. While sometimes these are for sale, others are heavily subsidised and some are freely available.
- 3.15 Though there is widespread concern about the diminishing amount of initial and continuing professional development opportunities available to teachers, where good quality subject-specific training does exist it is valued highly and can have an impact. A significant number (though not enough) of teachers benefit annually from this sort of provision from SACREs, professional associations and commercial providers.
- 3.16 Best practice in RE is simultaneously alert both to pupils' own interests and questions and to the academic disciplines of theology and religious studies (in some cases, biblical studies or philosophy). Linking these two poles through learning about spirituality, ethics and religions enables learners in RE to get a strong sense of how the subject encourages them to think deeply about their own questions of identity, meaning and value and of what it means to be human.

Exemplification: Main Weaknesses

- 3.17 Even after 10-15 years of solid progress, there are still too many schools which do not take RE seriously; it may still be treated in tokenistic ways by school leaders who are unaware of (or unreceptive to) the potential of the subject. Too many schools continue to deliver RE from a sense of legal duty rather than an appreciation of its value. Such schools have never seen best practice exemplified in ways that might inspire them to seek to replicate it in their own setting.
- 3.18 Though researchers have contributed to the exemplification of good teaching and learning in RE, primary and secondary teachers have not always known about this and/or have had difficulty persuading others of its value. The circle of well-informed and practically skilled users of RE learning methods is small.
- 3.19 Clear criteria by which to judge what makes RE practice or resources 'good' or 'outstanding' are not readily available either to many teachers of RE or other stakeholders.
- 3.20 The time allocated to beginning primary teachers during initial teacher education is too limited – in many cases this is less than five hours tuition or even self-study to prepare primary graduates for teaching RE. The move to locate initial teacher education in schools (in which there can be no guarantee that beginning teachers will see good practice in RE exemplified) is worrying.
- 3.21 Despite good take-up of those CPD opportunities which are available, overall the amount of subject-specialist professional development available to subject leaders and specialist RE teachers is inadequate.

Focus 4: Assessment (including Qualifications)³⁴

Recommendation 6

That new instruments for describing achievement in RE are created that teachers can use working alongside the DfE's new descriptions of achievement in subjects like English, mathematics and science.

Recommendation 7

That maximum influence is sought with the relevant examination Awarding Bodies in order to promote:

- (a) coherence and progression between 4-14 programmes and public examinations used at 14-19; and**
- (b) the study of religions in religious studies¹ qualifications 14-19, in appropriate relation to studies of, for example, ethics and philosophy.**

Assessment: Background

4.1 There has been substantial work on assessment in RE in recent years, to which many expert witnesses have drawn attention. The most recent reference point is the Association of RE Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants (AREIAC) assessment working group. The work of the HMI and of QCDA's Assessing Pupil Progress in RE work is also pertinent. Though there is clearly 'unfinished business' in the area of assessment and RE, there is evidence that, with skilful and knowledgeable handling, the use of levels can promote progress in RE but that, generally, too few teachers and schools have the confidence or expertise to use assessment techniques well. From the pool of schools that has been visited in recent years, HMI judges assessment in RE overall to be relatively weak in relation to other subjects³⁵. There is also divided opinion over the usefulness of the 'learning about' and 'learning from' dichotomy as a means of carrying out assessment. At best, it has been suggested, it gives people a good sense of the subtle nature of RE and 'learning from religion' provides a strong starting point for higher order thinking in RE, including skills of critical and personal evaluation. At worst, however, it leads to a narrow interpretation of each element so that "learning about' becomes synonymous with 'facts' and

³⁴ The title of the fourth focus as given to the Expert Panel was 'qualifications and assessment of RE'. Following discussion, however, panel members decided that it was helpful to reword this as 'assessment (including qualifications)' and to interpret 'qualifications' as applying predominantly to the GCSE and GCE public examinations in religious studies (RS) available to pupils at school.

³⁵ See the two long Ofsted reports (2007, 2010) on RE in schools visited.

'learning from' with 'feelings'. Many expert witnesses stated that some teachers are confused about what the terms actually mean³⁶.

- 4.2 A review of qualifications in RE/RS³⁷ also presents a mixed picture. On the one hand, there has been a spectacular increase in the number of students taking RE/RS public examinations in recent years³⁸, both at GCSE and GCE levels, with solid rates of achievement being recorded. Evidence suggests that the worth of RE/RS examinations has risen in the esteem of students, many of them seeing the kinds of issues-based RE/RS examinations that have developed as being helpful for living in the modern, plural world. The increased popularity of RE/RS examinations has also meant that they have become a significant commercial factor for the examination Awarding Bodies: RE/RS has, in short, attained a strong market position. On the other hand, there are currently significant and fast-moving changes taking place in the national examination scene, some expert witnesses voicing concerns that there is a danger the RE community will not be able to respond quickly enough so as to influence decisions that will impact on the future of RE/RS as an examination subject.
- 4.3 There is also evidence, however, that the rapid growth in the number of candidates for RE/RS public examinations has come at a cost. For example, concerns have been expressed by some expert witnesses that: the GCSE short courses lack rigour and challenge; the full GCSE courses are too content-based so that they encourage 'teaching to the exam'; and that the popularity with students of A level philosophy and ethics-type RE/RS courses has led to a belief that 'anything goes' (in terms of argument) and that 'philosophy' and 'philosophy of religion' (which usually means Western philosophy) have become conflated so that both become distorted. There is also a much-repeated concern that, all through the school years – but particularly in Key Stages 4 and 5 when examinations predominate - pupils exhibit a diminishing understanding of the nature of religion in general as well as of the basic theological positions of particular religious traditions and the questions that they raise. In the words of one expert witness: 'The focus on so-called 'philosophy and ethics' has reduced religions at Key Stage 4 to providers of proof texts, learnt by heart, to illustrate religious attitudes to "issues"'.
- 4.4 If the above factors are, to a lesser or greater extent, within the control of RE/RS and examination professionals, the same cannot be said for changes that emanate from decisions made at government level and which can leave educational professionals feeling helpless, frustrated and often angry. Such has been the case with the decision not to include RE/RS as one of the humanities subjects which combine with others to form the measure of school examination performance termed the 'EBacc'.

³⁶ See, for example: Teece, G (2010).

³⁷ The term RE/RS has been used in this section as a reminder that, at public examination level, RE is termed 'religious studies' (RS).

³⁸ Over 450,000 students have been certificated at GCSE each year in the last six years. In the last 15 years, over 25,000 students have sat the AS level in Religious Studies.

Recent surveys³⁹ have demonstrated that this one move has done much to undermine the status and staffing of RE in a significant number of English secondary schools. It is, many have claimed, a cruel example of damaging RE 'by default'; that is, educational decisions not specifically related to RE nevertheless having a negative impact on RE, thereby undermining its position in schools. Some expert witnesses also expressed concern at RS not being listed as a 'facilitating subject' by the Russell Group of universities, saying that this has fuelled negative perceptions of RE amongst some pupils and members of the wider public.

- 4.5 The pattern of recent years through which students have gained teaching qualifications through a course in initial teacher education is also currently undergoing fundamental change with the number of post-graduate students being accepted for RE-related courses being reduced (resulting in some long-established university post-graduate certificate of education [PGCE] RE courses folding) and a clear national government-led preference for initial teacher education taking place 'on site' in schools themselves. Those currently involved in initial teacher education work, the quality of whose work is regularly monitored, have voiced concerns about there being no apparent safeguards to ensure that the school RE that beginning teachers will experience will be of an appropriately high standard. Taking a wider perspective, questions are continually asked about how school and university courses prepare future teachers to engage professionally in informed and engaging RE teaching, whether at primary or secondary level.

³⁹ Particularly the four surveys, each of which attracted a significantly high number of responses from English secondary schools, which were conducted by NATRE 2010-2012.

Assessment: Main strengths

- 4.6 The quality and wide use of the RE eight-level scale from the Framework is not without problems, but is perceived to be a strength of the subject by many teachers and syllabus-makers. By offering a common platform with subjects such as history and geography, the eight-level scale has led to greater coherence and rigour in the ways that teachers describe achievement and progression in RE for 5-14s.⁴⁰ It has also been suggested that self-assessment and peer-assessment has become more popular in RE, giving pupils greater agency and ownership.
- 4.7 It is a strength that RE has for over a decade shared parity of language and structures for describing assessment with, for example, history, geography and art. This has had a benefit for the strength of the subject's assessment work and for the status of RE in the eyes of teachers, parents and pupils.
- 4.8 The spectacular increase in recent years in the number of students taking examination courses at both GCSE and GCE levels, the short course GCSE being particularly strategic in helping schools to fulfil the legislative requirement for all students to take RE (unless withdrawn by parents or carers) at Key Stage 4.
- 4.9 The raised status of RE amongst 14-18 pupils, particularly with the popularity of issues-based/philosophy and ethics-type GCSE and GCE courses.

⁴⁰ One example of the impact of the scale is that over 2,600 teachers have benefitted from continuing professional development courses on assessing RE organised by RE Today.

Assessment: Main Weaknesses

- 4.10 The general standard of assessment in RE is relatively weak in relation to other subjects. Contributory factors include including lack of teacher confidence, decreasing opportunities for initial and continuing professional development, lack of curriculum time, the unrealistic amount of assessment required of some teachers, and lack of clarity about the aims of RE.
- 4.11 The debilitating impact of RE not being included as one of the humanities subjects of the EBacc, evidence suggesting that it is making some schools question the value of running RS short/full GCSE courses or even to eliminate such courses entirely. In such schools, the negative impact on the perception of RE's value and on the morale of teachers can be marked.
- 4.12 There is widespread concern that the popularity of philosophy and ethics examination courses post-14, at the expense of a study of world religions or religious texts, has led to a shallower understanding of the nature of religion/s. This, in turn, will impact on the knowledge and understanding of future entrants into the teaching profession.
- 4.13 Since 1997, the GCSE short course in religious studies has been the most popular of all short courses, meeting a real need to certificate the core learning in legislatively required RE. If it were to continue, reform is needed because of a perceived lack of rigour⁴¹ (a perception that is also widely applied to the full GCSE course), There is a need to clarify the relationship of the short course with other qualifications (such as, presently, the full RS GCSE course, or any successor qualification). But, if the short course in RS were to be abolished, then another way of accrediting the learning entitlement of the RE required by legislation will be needed. The accreditation of learning at 16 or in Key Stage 4 (14-16) is currently a weakness in RE provision.

⁴¹ See, for instance: Ofsted (2010), 5.

Two Further Recommendations

Recommendation 8

That the 2004 *Non-Statutory National Framework* for RE is reviewed and replaced with an updated and recast document.

Recommendation 9

That increasingly influential links are built and used with the DfE in order to promote RE in all schools, in line with the REC subject review's work and recommendations (above), challenging and encouraging government to act to improve RE.

Note

Each of recommendations 1 to 7 is linked to one of the four foci of this report (aims, curriculum, exemplification of good practice, and assessment including qualifications). This is not the case with the final two recommendations which are more overarching in nature.

Recommendation 8 will draw from the outcomes of the work envisaged in the preceding recommendations. Recommendation 9 provides the backdrop to the RE Review as a whole and echoes one of the key aims of the REC.

A Final Word

There are many traditional adages that have, at their core, the truism that nothing that is really worthwhile is easy. Members of the expert panel have certainly discovered this anew over the three months of its work.

It was reassuring to know, however, that their report would be a beginning rather than an end: a starting point for further reflection and discussion which would lead to a refinement of both its findings and recommendations; a platform on which to base further action.

I wish to pay tribute both to my colleagues on the Expert Panel for the expertise, time and energy which they have brought to this task but also to the many other members of the RE community who have also contributed so willingly to the process culminating in this report and its later refinements.

Bill Gent

Chair of RE Expert Panel

November 2012

DRAFT

Annex 1: Expert Witnesses Consulted

Written submissions were received from the following:

Jo Backus
Dr Robert Bowie
Jane Brooke
Alan Brown
Roger Butler
Mike Castelli
Professor Trevor Cooling
Andrew Copson
Dr Nigel Fancourt
Professor Brian Gates
Professor Michael Hand
Patricia Hannan
Dr Mary Hayward
Daniel Hugill
Dilwyn Hunt
Professor Bob Jackson
John Keast OBE
Anne Krisman
Juliet Lyal
Carrie Mercier
Dr Joyce Miller
Dr Bill Moore
Mary Myatt
Dr Kevin O'Grady
Dr John Rudge
Joy Schmack
Dr Anna Strhan
Sandra Teacher
Dr Geoff Teece
Peter Ward
Michael Wilcockson
Dr Barbara Wintersgill

The following provided written submissions and met with Expert Panel members:

Professor Vivienne Baumfield
Alan Brine HMI
Dr Mark Chater
Rev Sior Coleman
Julia Conway-Diamond
Professor Denise Cush
Dr Marius Felderhof
Dave Francis
Guy Hordern
Ed Pawson
Deborah Weston
Professor John White

Annex 2: Key Documents Consulted

As the first part of their work, members of the Expert Panel agreed to read and take account of the following key documents. Additional documents were referred to by individual panel members.

DfE-related

National Curriculum Expert Panel Report (Dec 2011)

Text of address of Minister for Schools at REC AGM (May 2012)

Government response to Expert Panel Report (June 2012)

On-going communications between DfE, Expert Panel Members & RE organisations

REC-related

Scoping Exercise Report (Feb 2012)

RE-focused (excluding journal/magazine articles)

Baumfield, V (2011) 'Making RE Work: a thoughtful future for the subject' (Burn Hall Lecture)

Castelli, M (2012), 'What makes a good preparation to teach RE, and how important is subject knowledge?' (Discussion plan, March 2012 ITER summit)

Chater, M 'What's Worth Fighting For?' (RE online/Unlocking RE website, March 2011)

Cush D (2003) Notes on 'Religiate school leavers aged 16+'

Cush, D & Robinson, C (2012) *Developments in Religious Studies: Towards a Dialogue with Religious Education* (Talk at AULRE Conference, July 2012)

QCA/DES (2004) *Religious education: The non-statutory national framework*

DCSF (2010) *Religious Education in English Schools: non-statutory guidance*

DCSF/Warwick University (2010) Conclusions and recommendations to *Materials Used to Teach About World Religions in Schools in England*

Felderhof, M C & Whitehouse, S, 'The 2007 Birmingham Agreed Syllabus: Educating pupils and the community' in Grimmitt, M (2010) *Religious Education and Social and Community Cohesion* (Great Wakering: McCrimmons) + DVD to support 2007 agreed syllabus.

IPPR Report: *What is Religious Education For? Getting the National Framework Right* (2004)

ITE Summit (2012) *How will we prepare the next generation of RE teachers?*

Jackson, R (2011) *Learning about Religions & Non-religious Worldviews: European Research Findings & ongoing Policy Development in the Council of Europe* (ISREV Conference paper)

Jackson, R (2009/12) *Studying Religions: The Interpretive Approach in Brief* (European Wergeland Centre, Oslo)

Keast, J (2007) 'Does RE Matter?' (RE online/Unlocking RE website)

Mayled, J (2010) 'Religious Studies Examinations' (RE online/Unlocking RE website)

NATRE (April 2011) *Teacher Survey re impact of EBacc*

NATRE (June 2011) *Second Teacher Survey*

Ofsted (1997) *Making Sense of Religion*

Ofsted (2010) *Transforming Religious Education*

QCA (2004) *Non-Statutory National Framework for RE*

REC (2007) *RE Teaching & Training in England: current provision & future improvement*

RE Today Services (2012) Report on Westhill Endowment Trust Seminar Series, 2011-12

RE Today Services (date) powerpoint sequence on 'RE: Why do we have to do this?'

Rudge, J (2012) 'What is – and should be – happening to GCSE & A level RS as routes to University?' (Talk plan, March 2012 ITE summit)

St Gabriel's (2011) Proceedings of RE Community Conference, Wokefield Park, Reading, October 2011

Strachan, A (2011) 'The Future of RE: Looking backwards to look forwards' (RE online/Unlocking RE website)

Teece, G (2012) *Learning about religion & Learning from religion* + appendix (Paper prepared for the department of Education of the Swiss Canton of Zurich)

RE-focused (journal/magazine articles)

Blaylock, L (2009) 'Learning from Religion': a very short history', *REsource*, 31:2, 10-13

Brown, (2012), review of *Debates in Religious Education*, *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, 32:3, 368-370

Chater, M (2011) 'The Gove who kicked the hornets' nest', *REsource*, 33:3, 24-25

Habermas, J (2006) 'Religion in the Public Sphere', *European Journal of Philosophy*, 14:1, 1-25

Jackson, R (2008) 'Contextual religious education & the interpretive approach', *British Journal of Religious Education*, 30:1, 13-24

Keast, J (2011) 'Political change & the future for RE: looking into the glass darkly', *REsource* 33:2, 4-5

Lundie, D (2010) 'Does RE Work?', *REToday* 28:1, 38-39

Teece, G (2009) 'Religion as Human Transformation', *REsource*, 31:3, 4-7

Teece, G (2010) 'Is it learning about and from religions, religions or religious education? And is it any wonder some teachers don't get it?', *British Journal of Religious Education*, 32:2, 93-103

White, J (2004) 'Should religious education be a compulsory school subject?', *British Journal of Religious Education* 26:2, 151-164

Wright, A (2004) 'The justification of compulsory religious education: a response to Professor White', *British Journal of Religious Education*, 26:2, 165-174

Wright, A (2008) 'Contextual religious education & the actuality of religions', *British Journal of Religious Education*, 30:1, 3-12

Annex 3: Pen Portraits of RE Expert Panel Members

Lat Blaylock

Mr Lat Blaylock is the Editor of *RE Today* magazine, and a national RE adviser in the UK. He trains about 1500 primary teachers of RE and about 1500 secondary RE teachers every year through his professional development courses on topics including RE for infants, spiritual development 4-19, assessing primary RE and GCSE learning. He has built up a national reputation for practicality and inspiration. Before joining the RE Today advisory team, he was a classroom teacher of RE for 11 years in a large comprehensive school in multi-faith Leicester. As Head of Humanities, he developed interests in history, geography, social science and curriculum partnerships. His MA from the University of Warwick studied the implementation of local agreed syllabuses.

He has published numerous RE resources, including making four series of RE broadcasts for the BBC. 'Representing Religions' explores the teaching of six religions through multi-authored chapters by teachers who are also members of six different faiths. He has written four packages of visual learning materials, called 'Picturing Jesus' which use the global art of the contemporary Christian communities for RE. He has been a consultant on RE to the BBC, the Bible Society, the Inter Faith Network, Christian Aid, many local authorities and some Academy networks.

His long-term work on assessing RE led to his appointment as a partner in the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agencies 'Assessing Pupil Progress' project, from which new RE assessment materials for RE were published by Michael Gove's Department in 2010. He is the initiator of 'Spirited Arts', a National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE) strategy for creativity in RE in the UK, which is also used across Europe and in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

Bill Gent

Dr Bill Gent began his 15-year career as a schoolteacher in Birmingham, specialising in religious education. Early on developing an interest in the nature and problematic role of collective worship in schools, he wrote and spoke widely on this, building up a national reputation as an engaging and entertaining communicator. Following teaching, he moved on to advisory and inspection work where he worked with primary, secondary and special schools across the London Borough of Redbridge and beyond. He was involved in the writing and revising of a number of agreed syllabuses and, with his wife, wrote the Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 RE books in the popular Scholastic Curriculum Bank series. He also developed a particular interest and expertise in working with educational and faith groups in producing clear, agreed and authoritative texts.

His interest in the composition and educational life of religious communities led him to take an educational doctorate with the University of Warwick. His thesis explored the nature of supplementary schooling within the Muslim community, with a particular focus on Qur'ānic memorisation and recitation. He has published a number of articles and book chapters in this field and is currently working with a group of European scholars looking at how Muslim pupils move between different educational traditions in a range of settings. He is an Associate Fellow of the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit based at the University of Warwick.

From 2006, he has edited *REsource*, the journal of the National Association of Teachers of RE for the quality of which work he was awarded the prestigious Shap Award in 2012.

Julian Stern

Professor Julian Stern was educated at the Royal Academy of Music, London Institute of Education, and the universities of Oxford and Leicester. He is currently Professor of Education and Religion, and Dean of Education and Theology, at York St John University. He taught in UK schools for 14 years, and has worked in universities for 20 years (initially alongside school work), at the London Institute of Education, the Open University, Brunel University (as Deputy Director of the BFSS National RE Centre), the University of Hull (as Reader and Dean of the Institute for Learning), and now York St John University.

Julian has written eleven books, including *Teaching Religious Education* (2006), *Schools and Religions: Imagining the Real* (2007) and *The Spirit of the School* (2009), alongside general books for teachers and over 30 articles for journals as diverse as the *British Journal of Religious Education*, *Support for Learning*, the *Journal of Advanced Clinical Nursing*, and the *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*. He has worked in initial and in-service teacher education for both primary and secondary teachers, and has been involved in creating digital training materials and television programmes. He has been a consultant and researcher for primary, special and secondary schools, and universities across the UK and in Germany, Sweden, Hong Kong, Australia, and the USA. He is currently researching religious education, spirituality, dialogue, community, learning, loneliness, and the influence of research.

Professor Stern is General Secretary of ISREV, the International Seminar on Religious Education and Values (the major international research body in religious education with 243 senior researchers across 36 countries) and is on the editorial boards of the *British Journal of Religious Education*, the *Religious Education Journal of Australia*, and the *Journal of Spirituality Studies*.

Karen Walshe

Dr Karen Walshe is Senior Lecturer in Religious Education at the Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter, where she is Subject Leader for Secondary Post-Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) RE and Programme Director for the Secondary PGCE Programme. Having taught and led RE in secondary schools in Devon and Cornwall for ten years, she moved to the University of Exeter in 1989 to work as research assistant on the Biblos, Parables, and Teaching about Jesus research projects. She was awarded her PhD in 2009 for her research into young people's perceptions of Jesus in RE.

Karen has published a wide range of RE resources as well as professional and academic papers in the field of RE. She is currently working on a collaborative research project, funded by the Farmington Institute in Oxford, examining teachers' and trainee teachers' understanding of 'understanding' in RE.

Karen is Deputy General Secretary of the International Seminar on Religious Education and Values (ISREV) and a member of the Devon Standing Advisory Council for RE (SACRE). She also has extensive experience as an external examiner for secondary PGCE RE and Graduate Training Programme course.

Addendum: Examples of issues raised during two preliminary REC consultation meetings (31.10.12 & 7.11.12)

1. Reference to core skills and understanding (eg Recommendation 2) should also include reference to skills.
2. An overarching statement of the purpose and aims of RE (see Recommendation 1) may be neither possible nor desirable. It may be best for the review to focus on aims and purposes for RE in non-denominational schools as a resource that might be accessed/useful for faith-based schools if they chose to draw upon it.
3. The term 'religion and belief', used in many recent RE documents, is more inclusive than reference to 'religion' alone. The subject area is Religion and Belief, RE being the mechanism through which these are studied.
4. Principle 3 assumes that the current system of local determination of RE will continue. Some believe that this is detrimental to RE and standards achieved by pupils.
5. More evidence needs to be included of current views and perceptions held within the faith-based sector of schooling
6. Too much emphasis has been placed on the 2004 *Non-Statutory Framework* for RE at the expense of later initiatives and documentation (eg relating to the new primary curriculum and secondary curriculum) which marked further development.
7. The report sometimes implies confusion over aims whereas the issue is really diversity.
8. Work on Recommendation 1 needs to identify the different groups with whom we are communicating (eg governors, teachers, parents, faith groups, business, the public). It might be useful to think about what makes a child religiously literate and its value for life and employment.
9. Recommendation 9 relates to what has been central in the work of the RE Council. But we also have to recognise that we are living in a changed environment and there are other routes which might become more urgent and effective.
10. The idea of 'entitlement' to RE is missing (eg in Principle 10).
11. In Principle 3, how does 'authoritative' sit with recognition of diversity?
12. Is RE a discipline? Engaging with the nature of the subject is what RE is about.
13. There does need to be some kind of document that acts as a central reference point, but the nature of this document will need careful consideration.
14. What about the significance of RE's contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (particularly as this remains a focus of Ofsted inspections)? Should there have been an additional recommendation linked to this?
15. In phase 2, the review needs to have one expert/writing group rather than separate task forces working in discrete ways to produce something coherent.
16. Recommendation 7 could be widened further to include actual and potential providers. The RE community could also forge links with those not currently offering qualifications – like universities – and also become involved in vocational qualifications.
17. The whole area of legislation relating to RE is missing from the report; should it be?

RE REVIEW PHASE ONE QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for helping us to evaluate the Phase One Report of the RE Review. Please spend a few minutes considering and answering the following questions. The information we gather from you will give us valuable insights into how we can further improve the final version of the Phase One Report and ensure that the processes we are putting in place to review RE are fair and inclusive.

The questionnaire is available online on <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/REReviewSurvey12012> It would be very helpful to us in analysing the responses if you could complete the questionnaire online. However, if this is impractical for you for any reason, please email your response to info@religiouseducationcouncil.org or post it to the REC, 14 – 22 Elder Street, London E1 6BT. Please note that due to the limited resources available to support the RE Review we cannot promise to review any responses received after **Friday 7th December 2012**.

No one's responses will be identified by name from this process, either in the evaluation or the Review; nor will the names of respondents be shared with anyone external to those evaluating the Review.

Section 1: Background details

1. What is your occupation?
 - a. RE teacher
 - b. RE-related educational professional
 - c. Educational professional
 - d. Employee of a religion or belief organisation
 - e. Other

2. What is your religion/belief affiliation?
 - a. Baha'i
 - b. Buddhism
 - c. Christianity
 - d. Hinduism
 - e. Islam
 - f. Jain
 - g. Judaism
 - h. Sikhism
 - i. Zoroastrian
 - j. Non-religious world view
 - k. None
 - l. Prefer not to say

Section 2: Responses to the report

3. The Review assesses the present situation in RE accurately

Strongly agree	
Agree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

4. The Review assesses the present situation in RE clearly

Strongly agree	
Agree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

5. The Review is fair, balanced and credible

Strongly agree	
Agree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

6. The Review makes a valid case for the actions proposed

Strongly agree	
Agree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

7. The Review represents all stakeholders views without bias

Strongly agree	
Agree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

8. The Review represents dissenting views in a fair and balanced way

Strongly agree	
Agree	

Appendix C

Neither agree nor disagree	
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

9. The Reviews recommendations are the right ones

Strongly agree	
Agree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

10. Please feel free to make any additional comments in the box below

Thank you very much for your time and consideration of these important questions for RE
Dr Lorraine Peck, RE Review External Evaluator; Dr Janet Orchard, RE Review Project Manager

Agenda Item 10

Minutes of the Meeting of the Quality and Standards Sub-group CSSG Meeting Room 1, County Hall, Preston

Thursday 8 November 2012

Present

Mr P Martin
Mr A Brennand
Ms J Clarke
Mrs K Cooper
Dr M Craig
Kelsang Pagpa
Mrs C Mercier
Mrs A Robinson
CC A Thornton

Representing

ASCL (Chair)
Pagan (Observer)
NATRE
LASGB
Baha'i Faith (Observer)
Buddhism
Higher Education Sector
ATL
Lancashire County Council

Helen Harrison

RE Consultant

Officers in Attendance

Jonathan Hewitt
Josh Mynott

Officer to the SACRE, CYP
Democratic Services

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from CC K Ellard, Mr F Farrell, CC P Malpas, CC Y Motala, Mr I Nakhuda, Mrs H Sage, Mrs J Sawyer, Mrs H Shukla, Mrs J Singh, Mr F Williams

Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 May 2012 and matters arising

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2012, be agreed as a true record.

Membership Update

Members considered a proposal to fill the vacancy for a coopted member to represent the secondary sector on a shared basis between two teachers.

It was felt that this would be beneficial for a number of reasons, including ensuring good attendance and representation, lessening the impact on an individual school, and gaining extra expertise.

It was confirmed that, as a co-opted position, the decision was entirely in the gift of the SACRE.

Resolved: That the proposal to co-opted two teachers to share the representation of secondary schools on the SACRE be supported by the QSS for approval at the next full SACRE

Progress in Implementing the SACRE Development Plan 2011-13

Members were update on progress against the Development Plan.

Priority 1: Standards and Quality of Provision of RE

- On track. A further article aimed at Governors form the LASGB was to be discussed next week. In relation to the RE Conference, it was proposed to hold this on Friday 1 February at Woodlands.

Priority 2: Management of Lancashire SACRE and Partnership with the LA and other Key Stakeholders

- On track. The proposed "parents' page" of the website will be taken forward in line with the work being done by the Youth Voice. The Youth Conference takes place at the beginning of March 2013

Priority 3: The Effectiveness of the Lancashire Agreed Syllabus

- On track. The impact of the loss of Advanced Skills Teachers and the "leading teacher" model arrangements being put in place were explained. It was noted that this model had worked well in other subjects, and there would be full communication with schools.

Priority 4: Collective Worship

- Not on track. Whilst the materials were updated and available, it was the case that take up amongst schools is still very low. Efforts would continue to make schools aware.

Priority 5: Contribution of SACRE to the Social and Racial Harmony Agenda

- On track. It was reported that a business case had been put forward to allow the Youth Conference to take place in a place of worship, rather than a County Council owned venue as current guidance required.

Resolved: That the progress report is presented to SACRE in November

RE Quality Mark Update

Members were presented with an update on the RE Quality Mark. It was reported that the programme had moved on quickly, and attention was drawn to the website, www.reqm.org, which presented information on the award, details of successful schools and some general good practice examples of work in RE which could be accessed by all schools.

It was reported that the cost of the accreditation process was approximately £460 – comparable to similar schemes for other subjects – and lasted for 3 years.

It was felt that SACRE should take steps to promote the Quality Mark to schools.

Resolved: That SACRE promote the RE Quality mark and website to schools as appropriate.

Draft SACRE Annual Report 2011/12

Members were presented with the first draft of the Annual report for SACRE for 2011/12. It was explained that the intention was to produce a condensed report, which would include links to more in depth information. It was felt that this would make the report more likely to be read generally, whilst allowing those with specific interests to gain easy access to the information.

Members were invited to provide any comments to the draft to Jonathan.

Resolved: That the draft Annual Report be presented to the full SACRE meeting in November

Training for SACRE Members

Members considered possible future training requirements for SACRE. Whilst it was recognised that there was a need to ensure members were kept informed or up to date, this could be achieved in a variety of ways from short briefings to more in depth discussion sessions.

It was agreed that it would be useful to receive a brief update on developments in the higher education sector at a future SACRE meeting.

Ofsted RE report

It was reported that the 3-yearly subject report from Ofsted was expected in the next month.

Resolved: That SACRE members be kept informed on the Ofsted subject report for RE

Collective Worship visits

Following on from the agreement of the protocol for visits at the last SACRE, consideration was now given to the most appropriate next steps.

It was proposed that schools known to or represented on the SACRE would form the “pilots” to offer a critical friend perspective on the visits.

Resolved: That the full SACRE be invited to consider the proposal for the next steps on Collective Worship visits

RE Council Update

Members were advised that a draft subject review was due to be published for consultation imminently.

It was agreed that a response be drafted to the consultation for the full SACRE meeting to consider.

Resolved: That the full SACRE consider a draft response to the consultation on the RECs subject review

SACRE agenda

A number of items were agreed for the agenda of the next full SACRE meeting, including:

- Election of the Chair and Vice Chair
- Appointment of the Secondary Sector co-opted representative(s)
- Collective worship visits – next steps
- Annual Report
- REC Subject review
- RE Quality Mark

Any Other Business

Members were reminded that Interfaith week runs from 18-27 November. Details will be circulated to members as and when available, including on the Common Ground exhibition, running from 19 November for the duration of the week

Date of the Next Meeting

It was noted that the date of the next meeting of the Quality and Standards Sub-group was Tuesday 5 February 2013, to take place at 10am at County Hall, Preston.

November 2012
County Hall, Preston

