

What advice will SACREs offer their local authorities in relation to:

1. The new secondary curriculum

The new curriculum will be launched in September 2008 in all maintained schools in England. It will be rolled out over the following three years, with full implementation expected by 2011. Because the changes affect the whole of the curriculum there will be impacts on arrangements for RE, but it is good news that RE has been included from the start of this initiative. RE materials will therefore be appearing alongside all other curriculum subjects on the new website.

RE remains a statutory subject in the curriculum. Schools continue to be required to teach RE according to their local agreed syllabus or, in voluntary aided schools with a religious character, in accordance with their trust deed.

SACREs could consider how they are going to advise schools (through the local authority) how to fulfil this requirement while ensuring RE does not miss out on the opportunities presented in the new curriculum. For example, how will RE subject leaders be involved in planning for increased flexibility for cross-curricular projects/studies and how can they be encouraged to make use of the online support material developed to help teachers design 'compelling learning experiences'?

2. Monitoring school performance

Many SACREs currently make use of the AREIAC/REonline self-evaluation toolkit in monitoring performance of their schools in relation to provision and quality of RE.

SACREs could consider how best to gather information from schools with KS3 and 4 students regarding the impact of the new curriculum on arrangements for RE, including compliance with statutory requirements, perhaps by including a specific question in any forthcoming self-evaluation activities. SACREs might also investigate take-up for the regional briefings taking place this term and consider how to reach schools that have not sent a delegate.

3. The agreed syllabus

QCA has produced new non-statutory RE programmes of study for KS3&4.

SACREs could consider what is new in these programmes and how this might impact on agreed syllabus review. For example, the programmes follow a concept-based planning process which helps structure material for schemes of work – should this be adopted in the next review?

4. SACRE budget and development plan

Many SACREs have a budget to support the continuing professional development of teachers, or initiate courses and conferences paid for by schools.

In the light of the new curriculum, SACREs could consider what direct professional support might be offered to RE teachers in the coming years. For example, SACREs could sponsor training that links the principles of the new curriculum with methods for improving standards in RE and/or as a contribution to social/community cohesion.

5. Young People and SACREs

The new curriculum aims to enable all young people to become *successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens*. Some SACREs have started to involve young people in their meetings and/or have set up 'Young People's SACREs'.

SACREs could consider how they are going to support young people in relation to the aims of the new curriculum. For example, individual SACRE members and representative communities could increase their involvement with visiting schools and with being open to receive visits from schools, offering an 'authentic encounter' with religions and beliefs in the local community.

6. Partnerships: LA advisers, diocesan advisers, faith / belief communities, regional subject advisers, schools

In order to support the roll-out of the new curriculum, a national subject lead has been appointed along with subject advisers in each of the DCSF English regions. These individuals have contracts with subject associations. For RE, the contract holder is NATRE / RE Today. The regional subject advisers (RSAs) have two days per month currently to support the roll out. NATRE / RE Today has kept all advisers, including representatives of religious bodies with secondary aided schools fully up-to-date with developments and information about the new curriculum.

SACREs could consider how the work of RSAs might best contribute to raising awareness of the opportunities presented in the new curriculum with its schools. RSAs' work is coordinated through NATRE / RE Today, so SACREs intending to request RSA contributions to their school networks should use the contact details below. Local authorities are being kept in touch with new curriculum matters through a regional Association for Professionals in Education and Children's Trusts (ASPECT) officer.

7. Working together for improvement in RE

Many RE subject leaders have registered for the new secondary curriculum briefings taking place across the country this term, but none of the regions is yet up to the maximum 100 places available.

SACREs could consider how more SLs might be encouraged to attend these important awareness-raising events. Thereafter they could consider how the 'harder-to-reach' schools might be included in the forthcoming developments. In addition, SACREs could consider what opportunities there are within the new secondary curriculum to further encourage the recruitment of RE teachers.

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