



Report from



- March 2011 was the inaugural "Celebrating RE" month in England and Wales. The month was a great opportunity to showcase Religious Education at its very best by publicising the value and importance of RE for every child and young person.
- The first Celebrating RE month was a great success with events across the country.
- We spoke at conferences in London, Birmingham and Manchester
- JWOLE was seen by 1200 people in the Greenwich Heritage Centre
- We had seven "Seeing Jewish Life" tours – including one for the young choristers of Westminster Abbey!



RE in the English Baccalaureate

- Religious Education has not been included as a Humanities subject in the English Baccalaureate
- The government claim that this omission is because RE is already a statutory subject and they want to increase uptake in other subjects such as History and Geography
- HOWEVER – the consequences of this omission are wide-ranging and include:
 - a reduced uptake of GCSE RE
 - a knock-on effect on uptake of AS and A-level RE
 - a reduced supply of qualified specialist RE teachers
 - a removal of chances for students to debate the “big questions”
 - a general ‘de-valuing’ of the subject as schools focus on subjects which affect their positions in league tables

The number of MPs who have signed EDM 1375 which presses for the inclusion of RE in the EBacc has now risen to 98! This is an incredible achievement and testimony to the widespread effort and commitment of many people to engage their MP in discussion on this important issue and to encourage them to support RE’s inclusion.



The Review of the National Curriculum

- The call for evidence for the first stage of the National Curriculum review closed in mid-April. Over 4000 people contributed to the review (including us!!)
- This call for evidence asked for opinions as to what content the National Curriculum should cover in English, Maths, Science and PE. It then asked whether each of the remaining subjects should continue to be in the National Curriculum.
- There will be a second stage of the National Curriculum review in early 2012 and the new curriculum will be phased in from September 2013.
- HOWEVER – Religious Education does not feature in either phase of the review. The DfE say that “PSHE and RE are not part of the National Curriculum and are not being considered as part of this review.... no changes to the statutory basis for religious education are planned”
- Some people see this as positive as it allows the current model of SACREs and Locally Agreed Syllabi to continue. Others (including some in the RE world) feel that “it is alarming that RE is outside of any national definition of essential knowledge” (see Mark Chater’s “What’s worth fighting for in RE”)



Teaching RE in Academies and Free Schools

- Academies are independent schools which receive their funding direct from the government, as opposed to through their Local Authority. One of the freedoms afforded to academies is that they are not obliged to follow the National Curriculum; they can choose their own curriculum, as long as it is "broad and balanced. NATRE (National Association of Teachers of RE) contacted the DfE about the place of RE in academies and received the following heartening reply:

"In accordance with their funding agreement, where an Academy has not been designated with a religious character the Academy must ensure that religious education is given to all pupils at the Academy in accordance with the requirements for locally agreed syllabuses. This means that syllabus reflects the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain. Trust schools that are designated faith schools have to teach RE in accordance with the tenets of the faith. If they are not designated faith schools they must teach the locally agreed syllabus."

As more and more schools convert to academy status, this is something to watch out for in the future – how will it affect the landscape in RE.....??



Decreasing support from Local Authorities

- As we are sure you are aware, RE advisors and SACRE clerk positions across the country are being cut.
- NASACRE have surveyed SACRE chairs across the country to collect evidence which was taken to a meeting with the DfE in late April. This asked whether advisors and/or clerks were being provided next year, and how much budget (if any) the SACRE will receive.
- The RE community needs to think of ways to cope with these inevitable cutbacks – this could be through initiatives like the agreed syllabus collaboration network and by making increased use of technology and social networks to improve communication and partnerships between SACREs.



Useful websites for further information

- www.education.gov.uk
- www.nasacre.org.uk
- <http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org/>
- <http://www.retoday.org.uk/>
- <http://www.natre.org.uk/>
- www.bod.org.uk

