

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

Sir Michael Wilshaw
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Religious Education Council
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Dear Sir Michael,

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May we start by congratulating you on your new post and wishing you a long and successful time in office.

We are writing as members of a religious education community which has had a long history of very positive relationships with Ofsted. The RE Council and the National Association of Teachers of RE have valued the opportunity to work closely with the current and previous national advisers for the subject over a number of years. We recognise the key influence which Ofsted's reports have on developing the subject nationally.

RE is currently facing many challenges generated by different aspects of individual Government policies. These include the omission of RE from the English Baccalaureate and the national curriculum review, the pressures on Standing Advisory Councils on RE (SACREs) and local authorities, and the reduction in initial teacher education places. These changes are having major negative consequences on the quality of the provision for RE. We are pleased to say that the ministers concerned have begun to recognise the unintended impact of these policies on RE.

This highlights the importance of Ofsted's inspection role. The recent Ofsted long reports on RE, most notably *Transforming Religious Education* (2010), have proved invaluable as a mechanism for monitoring RE within schools, reporting on current trends, and setting the agenda for further improvement.

The Section 5 inspection arrangements have a crucial role in ensuring that schools continue to offer a broad and balanced curriculum which includes the provision of RE. To this end, the RE Council and NATRE welcome the renewed emphasis on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the 2012 Framework and the recognition of the key role RE can play in promoting this area of pupil development.

We are glad to see that the supplementary guidance issued to Section 5 inspectors highlights the importance of ensuring that pupils' entitlement to RE is secured. We have also noted the phrase '*Where a school does not provide the National Curriculum and RE, inspectors will need to explore fully the school's reasons.*' We would be interested to know how Ofsted anticipates reporting on schools which do not make available an appropriate provision of RE and would be grateful if you could give us some indication of how this is likely to be done.

We look forward to working with you from now onward and also to receiving your response on the above issue.

Yours sincerely,



John Keast, OBE
Chair, RE Council of England and Wales



Ed Pawson
Chair, National Association of Teachers of RE