

## QCA/DCSF Curriculum Consultation

There are 4 parts to the consultation:

- Non-statutory guidance on religious education
- Primary curriculum
- Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education
- Level descriptions

**New non-statutory guidance on religious education** sets out the legal backdrop to RE and what a variety of stakeholders need to know:

- SACREs and local authorities
- School governors and headteachers
- Subject leaders and teachers of RE
- Parents and pupils

### **Issues:**

- There is no change in the law concerning RE or SACRE so this paper is just a mix of updated interpretation and examples of good practice.
- The non-statutory framework for RE (NSNFRE) is still seen as current guidance for RE in relation to this document.
- This document is clear that RE must be part of the curriculum in all maintained schools but it currently makes no reference to how RE fits into the revised primary curriculum. It does mention that there are obvious implications for RE of the introduction of PSHEE and Citizenship into the curriculum. *SACRE might want to consider drawing to the attention of the Local Authority how essential it will be to make clear to schools/teachers ways in which connections can be made between RE and other areas of learning in any training offered in relation to the new curriculum*
- Reflecting other legislative developments and discussion papers 'religion and belief' is now the usual terminology used in this document – highlighting the suggestion within the NSNFRE that secular belief systems might be included within the RE curriculum. *When the syllabus is next reviewed the ASC might want, once again, to pursue the development of material on Humanism.*
- SACREs are seen as a means by which schools can have links with local bodies which can support RE. *Perhaps the SACRE might want to review and update its guidance about this in.*
- RE's contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of young people is set out clearly (though there is very little mention of spiritual development and well being in the primary curriculum document)
- The role of SACRE in relation to community cohesion in general and through RE is highlighted (at 4 levels: school, local community, national and global). *Suggests SACRE should be well informed about religious and ethnic diversity in Bracknell Forest and perhaps devise ways of sharing this with schools to enrich RE possibilities.*
- There is clear guidance on the responsibility of all schools to provide high quality RE and SACRE's responsibility for monitoring RE is highlighted but no guidance is given on how this might be effectively achieved. It is also suggested that school action plans should identify the CPD needs of staff in relation to RE. *If the LA has access to these they could be a very helpful source of information for the SACRE in this regard.*
- Question on p22: 'How far does the SACRE's partnership with the LA enable it to help teachers and schools raise standards in RE and the quality of RE teaching?' *Bracknell Forest has offered regular RE meetings for teachers since the launch of the LAS in summer 2006.*

- There is no more clarity than before (perhaps even less) concerning Humanist membership of SACREs.
- Membership information (p25):  
If a SACRE is to be effective, its membership needs to be as inclusive as possible and to reflect the priorities for RE and for education more broadly in the twenty-first century. SACREs are local bodies and so should ensure that the religions and beliefs of the local area are represented. Membership of SACREs must be as required by law, comprising four committees or groups mentioned in Section 5.2 above. A SACRE may also include co-opted members who are not members of any of the four groups although it is often useful to attach, informally, co-opted members to one of the SACRE groups. Members of a group may well wish to take into consideration the views of co-opted members before taking a vote. SACREs should also make sure that their membership reflects, where possible, the breadth of study of religions and beliefs referred to in the non-statutory National Framework for Religious Education (the Framework) thus embodying a commitment to a RE which is inclusive, broad and balanced. It is therefore desirable that membership of a SACRE (through group membership or co-options) should include representatives who reflect both the diversity of religions and beliefs identified within the local agreed syllabus, and local commitment to inter-religious dialogue and community cohesion.
- LAS: should 'provide clear guidance about the process of learning which should underpin effective planning of pupils' learning in RE. *This is something the ASC will need to consider at the next syllabus review. Our syllabus does not currently include planning advice although we have published a supplementary paper on the subject which teachers have welcomed and said is helpful.*
- There is clarification which indicates it is acceptable, as long as the programme of learning from the syllabus is covered, for there to be little RE in some weeks, terms or even years of a key stage – eg GCSE completed by the end of Yr10 and no RE in Yr11.
- It is suggested that bridging units between Yrs 6-7 might be helpful. *Would the SACRE want to look at developing one?*
- In relation to those who might support RE:  
Providers hosting such visits are able to obtain the Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Quality Badge. The badge scheme enables schools and other users to more easily identify organizations which offer good quality learning opportunities, but it will also give providers a developmental framework through which to evaluate and develop their own learning provision. Individuals or small teams may also be invited into schools to speak, answer questions or take part in panel discussions. Ideally, community members who take on such roles are those who have some experience of the age group concerned and who can work with the group's teacher to plan a visit which will marry well with the children's programme of learning. They will also need to be reasonably confident about answering questions at a level which children can understand. Visitors should not replace regular teachers of RE. *Might the SACRE want to consider working with communities of faith to advise/train people to support RE in schools?*
- Schools should ensure parents are made aware of their right to withdraw their children from RE. However, some time ago the requirement on schools to include this in their prospectuses was removed. Schools should also ensure that parents wishing to exercise this right are made aware of the objectives and content of RE as well as the fact that their children will encounter and learn about religion in other areas of the curriculum from which they have no right of withdrawal. *This is an issue on which schools often seek clarification. Should the SACRE/LA provide schools with advice about this?*

### **Primary Curriculum**

- There is one very significant issue arising from this draft document from the perspective of RE and that is that there is no mention of RE. This is in line with advice from the DCSF lawyers and is because RE is not part of the National Curriculum (NC) and this is a review of the NC. However, the title does not indicate it is only about the NC. We might want to make strong representation for the idea that RE, albeit always linked with a reminder that this is locally determined and schools should refer to their LAS, should be frequently referenced in the final document. The same view might be taken about mentioning links between RE and the

programmes of learning in some of the six areas of learning. *If this does not happen, the SACRE might want to advise the LA that the importance of RE and its links with other subjects feature in any training provided on the new curriculum design.*

- *There is a non-statutory programme of learning set out for RE. An interesting feature of this is that it sets out recommendations for lower (KS1), middle (Yrs 3 and 4) and later (Yrs 5 and 6) stages of the primary school programme for RE. The ASC will need to take the finalised version into careful consideration when reviewing the syllabus next time. This is likely to mean being more specific about which elements of the KS2 RE curriculum should be addressed in the 'middle' and 'later' stages than is the case in our existing syllabus.*