



Stuart Figini
Committee Officer
Law and Democratic Services
Swindon Borough Council

Tel: 01793 463612

Email: sfigini@swindon.gov.uk

Web: www.swindon.gov.uk

Swindon SACRE would like to offer the following as part of our evidence to the Commission on Religious Education. We have decided to focus on question 3 as this is the one that we think effects our schools in Swindon detrimentally the most:

3) Common baseline entitlement to RE

Currently, as the legal framework stands there is a legal requirement for all schools to teach RE to all pupils registered in maintained schools in England from KS1 - 5.

For sometime this has been flouted in 6th forms and the legal requirement for RE at post 16 in non religious foundation schools is probably a necessity that should be dropped from any legal expectations.

However with the introduction of the EBacc and the pressure on schools to help students achieve high standards in English and Maths and to have high achievements in the “bucket of 8” subjects as a published indicator of school success, Religious Education has suffered.

The Academic content of the new GCSE curriculum is weighty and cannot be successfully be taught in the limited time that has in the past been afforded RE when short course RE still counted as a performance indicator. Therefore RE for all at GCSE has suffered and schools have cut curriculum time and in some instances have dropped RE totally except for occasional “drop down days”.

RE teachers in Secondary Schools in Swindon have reported that their curriculum has been cut and staff have lost jobs and find themselves isolated and teaching RE to the whole school with less resources.

One member of staff from Nova Hreod Academy has been asked to teach the whole year at a time : “I have been given the role of planning fortnightly drop down time (non examination) for year 10 (current year 9) next academic year. The idea is that it will be delivered to the whole of the year group for one lesson (75 minutes) a fortnight (a total of 15 across the year).

At Lydiard Park Academy the only RE specialist teacher has resigned “I am no longer head of RS. I handed in my notice as they have got rid of RE at KS4. They are going to do a unit of it in year 10 PSHE: 6, one hour lessons,(which is taught in tutor time by non-specialists). I didn’t want to be part of that so I handed in my notice as a non- violent protest!”

At Isambard Academy the school to be renamed in September 2017, as “Abbey Park School.” In partnership with the Park Academies (who also run Lydiard Park Academy) both RE teachers are actively looking for new jobs as “....in a nutshell; RE isn’t going to exist in its current format from September onwards.”

In 2015 and 2016 Swindon had the lowest levels of public examination entries for RE nationally.

Therefore as Swindon SACRE, we are hugely concerned about the entitlement to RE for KS4 pupils. Evidence is showing that several Academies or Academy chains in their struggle to deliver measurable outcomes are not meeting their legal requirement for RE or are complying in such a cursory manner that no depth of religious literacy can possibly be achieved.

We would like there to be an enforced curriculum entitlement to RE that is part of a limiting judgement in the Ofsted framework in order to pupils to be able to properly understand the religions and beliefs of modern Britain.

Katy Staples Adviser to SACRE