

Swindon SACRE responses to the Curriculum Reform Consultation

The Primary Curriculum

One central point about this curriculum that was raised by Swindon SACRE is the **absence of spirituality** in the aims and throughout the curriculum.

A further point, raised by the teachers group, was that in these plans there was still a **gap between theory and reality** and another layer of explanation seemed to be missing before they became useful for schools.

The change between the draft to the final report that excluded RE from the "Pizza diagram" was lamented by all. It was felt that changing the "human, social and environmental understanding" to "historical, geographical and social understanding" area of learning, was a retrograde move for the position of RE in the primary curriculum.

RE now apparently stands outside the important central part of the curriculum; this may lead many to make it even more of a periphery subject and may even cause schools to break the law of entitlement.

RE plays a central part in ensuring good **Community Cohesion** in schools, particularly in educating and encouraging debate about all faiths and none; to obviously marginalise this subject will not serve the needs of a peaceful nation.

Swindon SACRE would again like to reiterate its objection to RE no longer being easily included within this area of learning that has become "Historical, Geographical and Social Understanding". Other subjects suffer from RE not being able to be integrated with them and RE will suffer from it apparently being a subject where teachers are being encouraged to teach it separately in all situations. This may well **encourage the practice of teaching RE within PPA time**.

If the Government is serious about Community Cohesion, and really acknowledges the vital part that RE plays in this, it would be ensuring it was obvious to curriculum planners that RE should have an important place in the curriculum. For RE to seem vital to teachers it needs to be easily interpreted as being in the main circular diagram (as it was in the draft).

Swindon SACRE is happy that the format and organisation of RE is displayed in such a way that gives it parity with other subjects and makes organisation of cross-curricular planning easy. It also means that teachers will have a clear vision of standards and progression across the key stages. This shared language across areas of the curriculum is to be welcomed, however the apparent way that RE still stands on the side of the central curriculum is unfortunate and potentially to its detriment.

Another important point made seemed to be that there were **contradictions between this new curriculum and the inspection framework** – this leaves teachers and Headteachers in a confused and untenable position.

Non–statutory guidance for a statutory subject

Swindon SACRE is very pleased that the level descriptions **reflect secular viewpoints as well as religious ones.**

The fact they are non-statutory and the **confusion** schools may have in using these alongside the Locally Agreed Syllabus was raised. As they use exactly the same shared curriculum language as other areas of learning, is there a danger that they may render the Locally Agreed Syllabus a lesser used document?

The absence of the labelling of the essential knowledge under the **categories of AT1 and AT2** may lead teachers to plan programmes of study that do not blend the learning about religion with the learning from religion. This may lead to the exacerbation of racism and religious intolerance as pupils learn about beliefs and practices without considering how they can learn from those.

Religious Education in English Schools: Non –Statutory Guidance 2009

Swindon SACRE expressed that they felt much of this document was very practical and useful and were grateful for clear guidance.

The omission of any **time allocation** was noted and the fear that particularly at KS4 within the new 14 to 19 curriculum, with a greater complexity of curriculum routes for young people, schools may start to offer entitlement through inadequate “drop down days”.

There are equal fears for Primary Schools with the New Primary Curriculum and for KS3 with many schools offering a skills-based curriculum and offering little RE within that.

It was articulated that any guidance such as this had no teeth without “the stick” of prosecution/Ofsted down-grading, for non-compliance.

The section about **Academies** and SACREs is also woefully unhelpful. It fails to clarify what relationship a SACRE can hope to achieve with the Academies within its area. Legally, what RE curriculum can DCSF be recommending for individual academies as there is no curriculum other than the local RE curriculum according to the law? This seems to be a huge anomaly that the government needs to be urged to address.