

Report on the Pilot project focused on the use of the RE Subject Self-evaluation Framework

Background

How do RE subject leaders and teachers know that they are doing a good job in providing religious education in their schools and how do local and national monitoring agencies (e.g. SACREs, LAs and QCA) find out where good practice is happening or where there is need for support?

A self-evaluation toolkit for RE subject leaders produced by the Association of RE Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants (AREIAC) aimed at helping to provide the answers to these issues. In partnership with the Culham Institute this is available on the REOnline website. The Toolkit was developed to help RE subject leaders to make a realistic assessment of the state of RE in their schools and illustrate with evidence to demonstrate success to others. It also aimed to help them to find out what was needed to do next to improve the contribution of RE to learners' overall educational experience.

However use of the Toolkit will only provide a subject leader with a method of producing internal assessment and collating a range of evidence bases on which their judgements are based. The Toolkit alone does not enable subject leaders to compare the provision or standards in their school with that of others. When the Toolkit was developed it was proposed that it be established as an online facility that would collate responses from schools in a range of ways that would enable schools, SACREs and other interested groups to access reports filtered to be local or national and related to schools of different types e.g. different phases or types of school.

SACREs were asked two years ago if they could together subsidise the development of this online facility and pay annually for the production of a range of useful reports. However with no evidence that the reports would prove useful and with little funding provided to individual SACREs from which they could draw funds to contribute, the project remained dormant. There was also concern that as changes were made to the Ofsted inspection criteria or the online school self evaluation process the Toolkit would become out of date.

NASACRE were interested in testing the use of the Toolkit because of concerns raised by individual SACREs around the country that they do not have evidence of standards in RE in their schools because the latest Ofsted Framework does not inspect or report on this any more. These concerns have been raised with NASACRE at national conferences and by individual correspondence from a range of SACREs.

On behalf of the REC and NASACRE this project piloted use of the existing RE Self Evaluation Framework with a group of 10 schools in each of 2 London Local Authorities (Haringey and Hounslow).

Purpose of Project

The project aimed to:

- evaluate the process of using the existing tool
- produce a report of outcomes for each LA
- produce a composite report of outcomes as a small scale model of a national report
- consider how this process, used nationally might benefit schools, LAs and SACREs as well as providing a national picture of use to the QCA, the DfES and the RE Community as a whole.
- Evaluate the existing tool and indicate areas that need to be revised
- Provide evidence to LAs and their SACREs as to the potential benefits of using this model.

Process


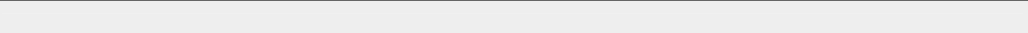




Ten schools were invited to participate in each LA. These included infant, junior, primary, secondary and special schools. They were chosen as they were likely to be inspected within the next year or more and it was proposed that involvement in the project will help them to make a positive contribution to their school SEF.

In each LA the subject leaders of the 10 schools were invited to an afternoon meeting. Funding from the REC enabled each LA to pay a half day release for supply cover to each school and to hire a meeting room and some basic refreshments for each group. In each LA it also paid for someone to manage the meeting - in Hounslow the RE Adviser and in Haringey the Chair of SACRE, the latter being supported by an AST. Prior to each meeting teachers were encouraged to engage in a review of the subject in their schools using the Toolkit as a guide. The meetings enabled professional dialogue both in phase specific groups and cross phase and with RE professionals and a guidance session on how to use the online facility.



Outcomes

In each LA only 9 of those involved in the pilot completed the online form. However the high response rate of 90% has given some useful results.

For example in one LA the following responses raise questions for the SACRE about why their local assessment guidance, incorporating the QCA 8-level scale is only being used in 33% of school:

8. How are achievement and standards measured in your school?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
in relation to an agreed syllabus eight level scale		37.5%	3
in relation to another agreed syllabus scale		0%	0
in relation to school's own system of standards		12.5%	1
in relation to department or co-ordinator's own system		12.5%	1
not measured		12.5%	1
Other (please specify)		25%	2
Total Respondents			8
(filtered out)			7
(skipped this question)			3

These results can be compared with the overall pilot figures where over 50% are using an Agreed Syllabus 8-level scale as a method of assessment:

8. How are achievement and standards measured in your school?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
in relation to an agreed syllabus eight level scale		53.3%	8
in relation to another agreed syllabus scale		0%	0
in relation to school's own system of standards		13.3%	2
in relation to department or co-ordinator's own system		13.3%	2
not measured		6.7%	1
Other (please specify)		13.3%	2
Total Respondents			15
(skipped this question)			3

A SACRE might be asking serious questions of the LA regarding responses to the following question in one LA, including what impact this might be having on examination results and pupils' life chances.

14. Please indicate the average time per week allocated for religious education lessons:									
Average time per week									
	nil	30 minutes per week or less	between 31 and 40 minutes	between 41 and 50 minutes	between 51 and 60 minutes	between 61 and 70 minutes	between 71 and 80 minutes	more than 80 minutes per week	Response Total
Reception (FS2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	67% (2)	33% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	3
Key Stage 1	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	33% (1)	67% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	3
Key Stage 2	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	100% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	3
Key Stage 3	0% (0)	0% (0)	50% (2)	25% (1)	25% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	4

Key Stage 4 (core RE for all pupils)	0% (0)	33% (1)	0% (0)	33% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	33% (1)	0% (0)	3
Post 16 (for all students)	100% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	1

And particularly when the response from both LAs was:

14. Please indicate the average time per week allocated for religious education lessons:									
Average time per week									
	nil	30 minutes per week or less	between 31 and 40 minutes	between 41 and 50 minutes	between 51 and 60 minutes	between 61 and 70 minutes	between 71 and 80 minutes	more than 80 minutes per week	Response Total
Reception (FS2)	0% (0)	25% (2)	50% (4)	12% (1)	12% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	8
Key Stage 1	0% (0)	0% (0)	12% (1)	25% (2)	62% (5)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	8
Key Stage 2	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	22% (2)	78% (7)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	9
Key Stage 3	0% (0)	0% (0)	29% (2)	43% (3)	29% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	7
Key Stage 4 (core RE for all pupils)	17% (1)	17% (1)	0% (0)	17% (1)	17% (1)	17% (1)	17% (1)	0% (0)	6
Post 16 (for all students)	67% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	33% (1)	3
Total Respondents									16

Findings:

Teachers reported (further comments from the form at Appendix A):

- the collegiate meeting approach is supportive, although without supply cover offered release from school would not happen;
- the opportunity to engage in professional dialogue with colleagues of the same phase and of other phases was very valuable;
- the process is helpful and manageable;
- provides an opportunity to ask for support;
- local and a national reports will give something against which to measure your own school's position and standards.

SACRE / LA professional response:

- The LA level report provides useful information on schools that point the LA to investigate trends further and to provide targeted support;
- The 'national' level report enables you to measure your LA against others and raises expectations and sets challenges;
- This provides SACREs with feedback on Agreed Syllabus issues, compliance and standards and gives them data to inform professional conversations with their LAs;
- Filters for schools in particular groups will provide useful evidence for Dioceses
- Fills the gap created with the change of the Ofsted framework.

Recommendations

- Establishment of an online facility that can be used by individual schools nationally;
- SACREs ensured adequate funding from their LAs and professional support to enable them to replicate the process above with a proportion of schools annually;
- Minor adjustments to the 'Toolkit' to make it easier for schools and completely aligned to the online school SEF;
- SACREs furnished with local and national reports from the online toolkit annually to enable them to fulfil their monitoring function and inform advice to their LAs.

Appendix A

Haringey & Hounslow Pilot - Online Comments from teachers

Please make any additional BRIEF (!) comments or concerns you have relating to this survey or the work of your SACRE in the space below:

- 1.** We are fortunate in our school to have four specialist teachers and curriculum time. We have had considerable support from senior management. Every student does a full course GCSE RS and this has helped to raise the profile of the subject. Also we now have a large A Level group, about fifty students study AS and 15 study A2. It has helped that we are one of the subjects involved in Specialist Schools; this has given us greater funding and a focus that has helped us develop as a department. The multi-faith nature of the school is a great bonus also because it means that RS is relevant and immediate to most students.
- 2.** The reduction of curriculum time is having a large impact upon delivering our short course in RE in Key Stage 4. This has been a valuable and worthwhile experience for students and a motivating factor for students continuing their studies in RE. From next September with only 1 hour every two weeks it is going to be too difficult to deliver the short course.
- 3.** With constant domination from Numeracy and literacy, i feel that this approach has threatened the quality of teaching RE at primary level. A thematic approach allows teachers to spend perhaps more time on RE. What is worrying is also some teachers seem to be reluctant to teach RE and some are assigning RE to TA's who cover PPA time. Our SMT/ leadership have also pressure to raise standards in Literacy and Numeracy so many staff meeting slots are taken quickly. It would be lovely to have SMT who see in this current climate recognise the value of RE and how it can positively impact social and religious cohesion to see the subject pivotal to meeting the ECM Outcomes.
- 4.** Need to share good practice between SACREs, especially in relation to locally agreed syllabii. Enforcement of the law - if your school is not meeting the legal requirements for RE, what can be done to ensure that Leadership Group take this seriously when allocating curriculum time and staffing?
- 5.** re being taught by various supply teachers when class teachers are on ppa time, also re being side lined by other curriculum areas that are deemed more important
- 6.** I think RE should be given full recognition as a core and foundation subject at Pupil Referral Units and Special Schools, or be taught within the whole school curriculum frame work. At the moment it is only taught as part of ASDAN.
- 7.** This survey has enabled me to have an overview of the subject and where I need to move on.
- 8.** We work with FS and KS1 pupils who learn best when engaged in an active curriculum. Humanities and RE are included (where possible) in topic work, Literacy and Numeracy. Some aspects have to be taught in isolated blocks of time in order to meet the requirements of the curriculum.
- 9.** A comprehensive survey with good multiple choices. The length of the survey was manageable to complete.
- 10.** 1. RE teachers are under more pressure and workload than other teachers. We teach in most school between 300 - 400 students per year. 2. Therefore we have more reports to write and marking to do. 3. No more time is given to RE teachers to complete these tasks. 4. The only reason why RE results are as good as they are in our schools is the dedication of the RE teacher to her/his job. 5. The shortage of RE teachers is not recognised by the authority and government, otherwise there would be money set aside for RE teachers to recruit and for retention like there is for other subjects in the same boat. 6. Too many non-specialist or teachers with little interest in the subject teaching RE. This then under values the work we are doing and students and parents then loose their respect for the subject. Sometimes in Sept a colleague is asked to take one RE lesson to fill up their timetable rather than cover. 7. When a teacher has little or no interest they do not prepare for the lesson well and the outcome is disaffected students.