





Would your SACRE favour a nationally agreed RE syllabus, in place of the current locally agreed syllabuses?

A pie chart showing the distribution of responses to the question 'Do you have a good idea of what you want to do?'. The chart is divided into three segments: 'Yes' (blue, 35.3%), 'No' (red, 41.2%), and 'Maybe/unsure/other' (orange, 23.5%). A legend to the right of the chart identifies the colors: blue for 'Yes', red for 'No', and orange for 'Maybe/unsure/other'.

Response	Percentage
Yes	35.3%
No	41.2%
Maybe/unsure/other	23.5%

- Of those who favoured a National Syllabus (and some made reference to Frameworks and guidance) all felt this Agreed National Syllabus should be mandatory in all schools, including academies and free schools, schools with a religious character and independent schools and almost all thought it must include a 'significant local component'.

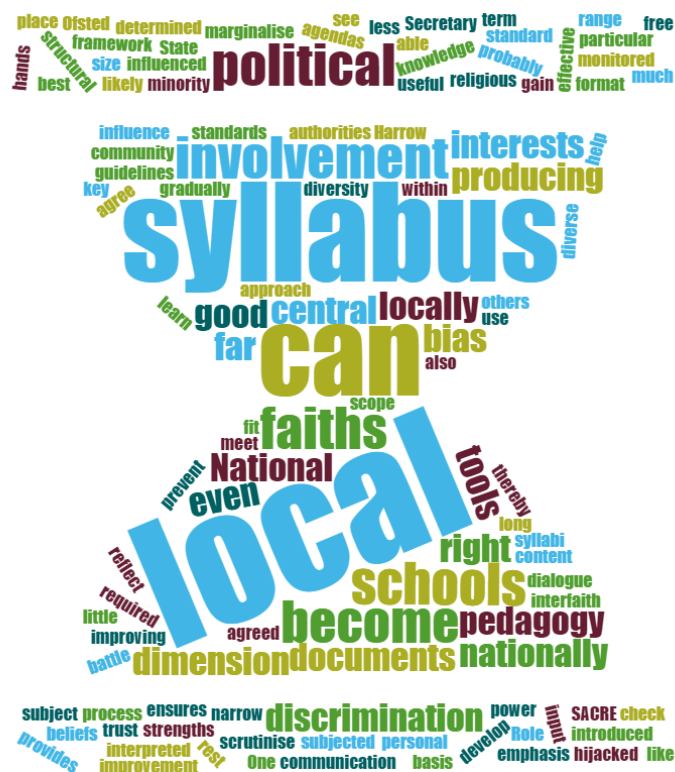


This idea of a 'common core', minimum standard, or 'Framework' allowing faith schools and local SACREs to add to was a common theme among those who were broadly in favour of a 'National' solution.

One SACRE commented:

A National Curriculum RE syllabus should be compulsory for all and properly inspected by OfSTED as a core subject, but would require local support, advice and advisers, with proper funding from the DfE to raise both the profile of and standards in RE and give adequate support to teachers. Having a comprehensive syllabus document is only part of the story: it's clear from many national reports that teachers need more training than they currently get. A Nationally Agreed Syllabus requires local relevance and learning experiences in order for pupils to explore the richness of local diversity.

Those against a national solution were worried about centralisation, political bias, the loss of control and the marginalisation of minority faiths. Again, the benefits of local collaboration were stressed.



Thoughts from those SACREs opposed to a National Agreed Syllabus

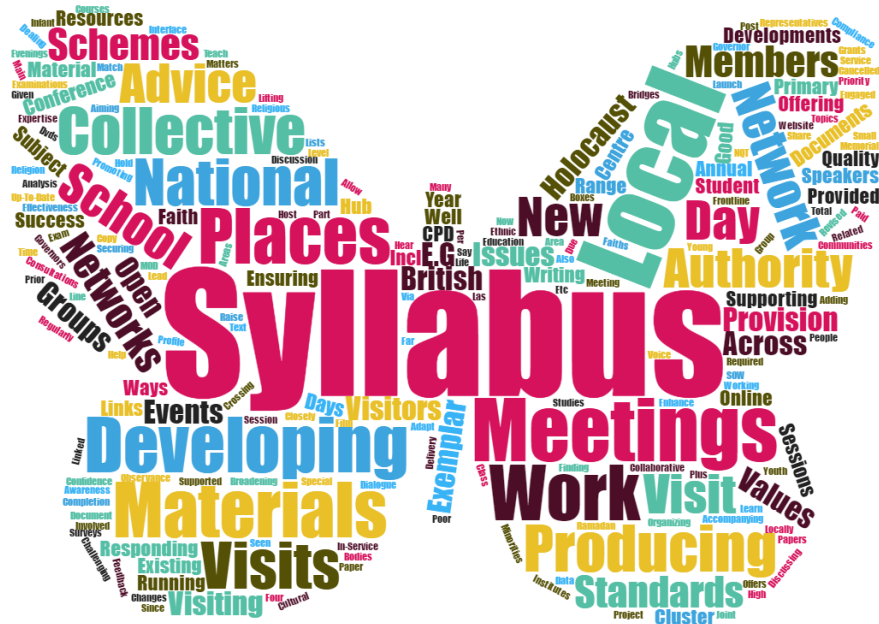
In many ways the two contrasting views can be seen from these responses from two SACREs:

We support a national curriculum with localised elements, influenced by genuinely nationally agreed models of best practice in RE.

A local curriculum gives local communities and faith groups a voice. A national curriculum would be dominated by big professional lobby groups

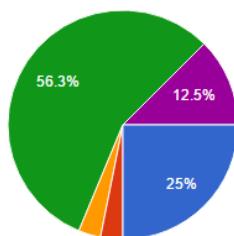
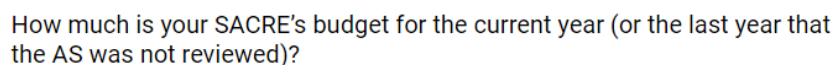


SACREs are primarily engaged with working with schools, to provide training and guidance, on both RE, according to the AS, and collective Worship. They support teachers, through facilitating networks, and producing guidance materials, resources, Schemes of Work and assessment policies. Due to their local knowledge they are often able to facilitate visits to places of worship, or of believers to schools.



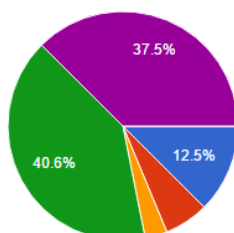
Only 2 SACREs state that they do not facilitate local RE teacher networks or school-to-school support. Often these are in partnership with the LA, independent advisors, NATRE, LTLRE or other neighbouring SACREs. SACREs frequently stated that they would like to, or plan to do more.

Over three quarters of SACREs monitor the compliance and quality of RE provision in their local area. Sometimes this is done through an examination of data – either exam results, workforce data or Ofsted data. Often the SACRE issues a questionnaire to schools and many engage in some form of visits to school, often by the RE adviser. A number of SACREs felt that their ability to monitor effectively was hampered by a number of factors, including the power to require schools to change bad, or non-compliant practice and a lack of resource to carry out as much monitoring activity as the SACRE would like to. Whilst approaching 9 out of 10 SACREs in the survey have access to specialist RE advisers, this seems to vary between as little as two days per year and as many as 65, with no SACRE now reporting a full time RE adviser. There does appear to be a correlation in that those SACREs with the smallest numbers of contracted days' worth of advice appear to be engaged in the least effective monitoring and support activity. Funding was clearly a major issue for many SACREs with budgets varying tremendously (although of course the number of schools within an LA varies too). What is included is also difficult to ascertain, making comparisons difficult; half of SACREs have advisory time funded additionally to the budget.



- no budget
- less than £1,000
- more than £1,000 but less than £2,000
- more than £2,000 but less than £10,000
- more than £10,000 but less than £50,000
- over £50,000

How much was your SACRE's budget during the year the Agreed Syllabus was last reviewed?



- no budget
- less than £1,000
- more than £1,000 but less than £2,000
- more than £2,000 but less than £10,000
- more than £10,000 but less than £50,000
- over £50,000

To identify what changes are needed to ensure the highest quality provision of RE.

SACREs all have a strong desire to do more in the future, and if capacity within the system was increased they would want to engage far more effectively with schools providing more support and training for teachers, increasing monitoring activity and providing more of a conduit between the schools and the faith communities.



The most important activities that SACREs would like to focus on in the future



Over 4/5 of SACREs would like to play a wider role in relation to community cohesion and inter-faith and faith/society relations more generally, with 7/8ths of SACREs already having a role beyond school religious education and collective worship. Most frequently this takes the form of individual members being involved in inter-faith work, but there are examples of SACREs working on community cohesion initiatives.

5. Are there changes to primary and secondary teacher education that could improve the delivery of high quality RE?

I would like to address this point from a personal viewpoint, as someone employed in Initial Teacher Education at Edge Hill University, although I believe my thoughts are broadly in line with the NASACRE Executive and have been broadly welcomed at the NASACRE AGM in York recently. There are a variety of routes to entry into a teaching career, and the providers (universities, SCITTs and others) simply respond to the needs of the market, regulated as it is by the TDA in terms of training numbers and the DfE in terms of the Teachers' Standards. The only effective way to change that supply is not to impose rules or recommendations on the providers, but to alter the form of regulation. If we are serious about a duty to promote religious literacy being incumbent on all teachers then we need to include this as part of the Teachers' Standards. I have proposed that in part 2 of the Teachers' Standards, the current "showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others" should become "promoting religious literacy, showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others"

To ensure that recommendations focus on realistic and specific proposals aimed at both immediate and long-term implementation in the context of continuing educational reform.

The SACRE system is not 'broken'. In many areas it provides much needed support and guidance, enabling teachers to develop and provide challenging RE. In some areas the SACRE's ability to do all it would like are challenged by capacity constraints.

- Many SACREs are not opposed to a National 'Framework' or some definition of core entitlement – for all schools, but any solution needs a significant locally agreed element.
- All SACREs would like to do more to support, guide and advise schools.
- SACREs need fair and proper funding, and reasonable provision of specialist help and advice to enable this to happen.
- The creation of a Locally Agreed Syllabus is enabling for teachers and others involved and leads to high quality RE
- There needs to be consequences for schools who are not providing good RE. Either SACREs need to be given power to hold schools to account or Ofsted need to rigorously examine RE provision in all schools.

Paul Smalley, Chair of NASACRE, 13 June 2017
