

RE for All

As chair of NASACRE I would like to thank the independent Commission on Religious Education for a very thorough and thoughtful Interim Report, *RE for All*. I broadly welcome the report, with its many recommendations and areas which the Commissioners are keen to seek stakeholders' views and gather further evidence. I would strongly urge all SACREs to give these matters their full attention and respond to both NASACRE and the Commission.

The National Entitlement idea is one which I think many SACREs will welcome. The statement itself is very well written, I feel that it has potential to garner a great deal of consensus among the RE community. Whilst I am unsure about the suggestion of a national set of programmes of study, for many of the reasons outlined in the report, I feel that many SACREs will welcome the proposal that they can continue to develop syllabi and schemes of work within a market economy. I would urge the Commission to consider including independent schools within the remit of the National Entitlement to counter claims that some independent schools of a religious character fail to adequately prepare pupils for live in a religiously diverse Britain. It may be that recent legislation around SRE provides a format for this.

I strongly welcome the discussions in the report around a renewed and expanded role for SACREs. I particularly welcome the call for government to publicly reaffirm the importance of SACREs. Many SACREs are keen to have an expanded role which includes responsibility for all areas of religion in schools and a wider role within communities. I would strongly back the proposals for guaranteeing the funding of SACREs. This is key to ensuring that the proposals contained within the report are able to succeed. I would be open to looking at the composition of SACREs. It is important that a range of worldviews and other stakeholders are represented on SACREs. It is pleasing that the Commission is seeking views on this. Regarding making SACRE Annual Reports more publicly available, it may be that, given adequate resourcing, reports could be held on an open access section of the NASACRE website.

I would fully support the Commission's call for evidence regarding the right of withdrawal. I too would hope that RE can be "sufficiently 'objective, critical and pluralistic'" to mean that a right of withdrawal is not required.

There is therefore much to commend within *RE for All*, And I would urge SACREs and other stakeholders to fully engage with the Commission on RE in the coming year.

Paul Smalley, Chair of NASACRE, September 2017