

RE: Realising the potential

Alan Brine: National Lead for RE

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Key headlines

- Too much RE is not good enough and little improvement - 60% of provision less than good
- Significant curriculum thinking needed to address concerns
- Concerns about quality and provision at GCSE
- Raft of recent education policies placing additional strain on RE – although degree of damage still unclear
- Policy changes raise serious concerns about the capacity of existing structures to support RE

SACREs

- NASACRE surveys and Ofsted evidence indicate many SACREs under increasing pressure
- Increasing variability in capacity
- Issues with funding and access to expertise
- Academisation raises serious and immediate questions about future of SACREs
- Morale and purpose issues

Pharaoh had a dream in which seven fat cows were swallowed by seven lean ones. Pharaoh and his men were puzzled until Joseph offered his interpretation: The fat cows represented seven years of prosperity, which would then be swallowed by seven lean years of poverty and famine.

The 15+ fat years 1990s to 2010

- SACREs functioning well
- National support strong – DfE, QCDA, Model syllabuses
- Statutory requirement retains leverage - Ofsted
- Broad consensus about RE – NSNF
- GCSE booming
- ITE – bursaries, strong recruitment
- Wider priorities giving RE purchase – ECM, Co Co,

But the cracks were there

- Statutory v educational justification not resolved
- Convoluted legal 'oddness' not addressed
- Short GCSE – seeking 'relevance' not rigour
- SACREs – fragile and variable
- National support - similarly fragile
- On the ground – little improving – status too low
- Issues around the purpose of RE unresolved

And then the climate changed

- Collapse of national support structures
- LA/SACRE capacity undermined
- Academies and Free schools – increase fragmentation of RE
- Culture around 'statutoriness' shifts – Ofsted etc
- GCSE landscape shifts – status crisis in secondary
- NC – SofS imposing approach unfavourable to RE
- CoCo and ECM disappear as educational priorities narrow
- Religion – shift in public attitude? – militant atheism etc

Good news

- Innovative thinking of some new syllabuses
- Some new models of partnership between academies and SACREs
- Some academy chains exploring new models of RE
- Threats have generated debate and interest – APPG etc
- New networks to support RE – REQM, F2F, 3FF, Faith Ambassadors, Leading Teachers

Key questions – we are where we are

Do we:

- Try to align with the NC – using REC to provide national framework?
- Stay detached, build capacity and plan for better days ahead?
- Develop a concerted campaign demanding Govt action?
- Work behind the scenes at local level to nurture best practice?
- Seek new models of structures/purpose/curriculum?

Key Questions

Is the current wide distribution of responsibility in RE (152 LAs, faith/non-faith; academies/maintained etc):

- A strength in the face of government policy?

Or

- A serious barrier to improvement?

How do we address a government that simply refuses to engage?