

'Quality RE'

an introduction to the RE Quality Mark for SACRE members

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Aims of the session

This workshop aims to:

- ❖ inform SACRE members of recent updates,
- ❖ explore the impact of REQM on schools,
- ❖ enable participants to discuss how the QM can help with their own monitoring and support of RE in their area.

SACREs and REQM

SACRE's functions related to REQM are to:

- ❖ advise the local authority on such matters connected with RE (religious education);
- ❖ these matters include methods of teaching, the choice of materials and the provision of training for teachers, and the recommendation of an agreed (or other) syllabus.

REQM's functions (non-statutory) related to SACREs are to:

- ❖ celebrate great RE (in all settings - some outside SACREs' remit)
- ❖ provide criteria to do this effectively
- ❖ establish a framework for thinking about curriculum design, methods of teaching, professional development, subject leadership and appropriate ways and means of learning

First Discussion

How does your SACRE or LA celebrate great Religious Education?

What is the RE Quality Mark?

- ❖ The RE Quality Mark (REQM) is an accreditation *scheme ‘celebrating outstanding practice in the study of religion and worldviews’ (REC/REQM 2020 criteria)*
- ❖ <https://www.reqm.org/>
- ❖ It is designed to be a mechanism for whole school improvement beyond religious education since its principal focus is enhanced pedagogy - teaching (and learning) based on theoretical understanding

What does the REQM aim to achieve?

TO

- ❖ raise the profile of religious education in schools
- ❖ celebrate a commitment to excellence in religious education
- ❖ provide a framework for measuring, planning and developing the quality of RE teaching and learning
- ❖ encourage schools to increase the range and quality of teaching and learning in religious education to improve standards
- ❖ develop pedagogies which have impact on whole school improvement
- ❖ enable the dissemination of quality RE through networking
- ❖ enable schools to maintain RE's position in the curriculum

AND.....

....and....

provide a structure and framework for SACRES (and others) to map high quality religious education

Second discussion

Does your SACRE make use of the REQM, or its materials, to celebrate great RE?

Who does it belong to - what is its 'authority'?

- The REQM was developed by a team led by Jane Brooke and Mary Myatt, and the first version was launched in 2011-12
- The REQM award is now, since 2015, provided and administered by the RE Council of England and Wales
- It is run as a 'not for profit' project within the Council
- Current criteria were approved by the REC Board in 2019, were published in 2020 and became the new REQM standards in January 2021
- REQM remains online in response to the ongoing pandemic and it might stay that way

How many criteria are there?

The areas of evidence that schools gather for the award process from January 2021 are covered by four strands:

- Learning
- Teaching
- Curriculum
- Leadership

What do the criteria ask for?

- ❖ Awareness of the RE Commission's (2018) language of religious and non-religious worldviews, or religion and worldviews
- ❖ Evidence that shows continuity and progression, sustainability and future planning
- ❖ Rigour and creativity - Bronze is hard to achieve - Gold should be exceptional...
- ❖ Engagement of senior leadership and wider school community in the REQM journey - this is a team effort

What are the criteria?

<https://reqm.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/2020/06/English-REQM-Criteria-April-2020.pdf>

- ❖ There are 7 (or in one case 8) criteria to be evidenced for each of the three levels in each strand
- ❖ REQM is a ‘best fit’ award - assessors make a professional judgement about the award level for each school
- ❖ Schools write a summary statement (profile) against each strand to show where they are in the journey - *and will soon write a summative statement covering all four*

Who is all this for?

- ❖ The award is available to all schools (state and independent sectors) in England and Wales
- ❖ The criteria are applicable in a wide range of contexts and settings
- ❖ The online version of the award is available in also some other settings e.g. Channel Isles and Northern Ireland by agreement with the REC
- ❖ The criteria and other materials are still freely available (with copyright restrictions) to anyone visiting the website

How does it work?

- ❖ Schools apply for the award, and it can be validated at one of three levels
- ❖ The award is valid for three years
- ❖ A school can reapply at any time for the next level within that period - some are now in their third award cycle
- ❖ The cost is £475 - occasional grants support this cost in specific locations



How long is it valid for?

- ❖ Each award is valid for three years i.e. from date of issue
- ❖ The next formal review of the criteria and the award process will begin in 2022 with a view to changes by the end of 2023 but we already continue to evaluate the award through assessor and school feedback
- ❖ 2023 - by August all assessors will need to be accredited again, and new criteria published or existing ones revalidated

What are the steps to an award?

1. Schools apply for the REQM through the website and trained assessors visit their school (**online**) to validate the Quality Mark at the appropriate level - *most schools self evaluate at the correct level - many underestimate their achievements*
2. Schools provide evidence for the award through the REQM evidence form (REF) and pupil questionnaires
3. The REF is sent to the assessor at least two weeks before the visit - the assessor then requests access to additional evidence if required
4. An online visit takes place to discuss the evidence staff and with pupils (where possible)
5. Assessors complete a record form to confirm the award with the REC office and this is copied (by the office) to the school
6. Schools provide feedback to REQM on the quality of their experience and this is copied (by the office) to the assessor
7. Certificates are sent to the school and announcements are made on social media and the website

How is the award assured?

- ❖ Standards of awards are moderated at assessor training sessions during the year - and through sampling of inline evidence
- ❖ Assessors operate under contracts to the REC governed by a professional code of practice
- ❖ The project manager moderates two or three visits with colleagues through 'shadow assessments' using the Code of Practice as the criteria for moderation of assessor standards - (deferred this year)
- ❖ The manager's role is reviewed by the REC's CEO
- ❖ A project advisory group supports the assessors and the manager
- ❖ The REC's Board is kept informed of REQM progress and the Council provides administrative support and website management

Who are the assessors?

- Assessors are usually award holders themselves (in schools)
- Most are teachers, some are headteachers
- Many have been supporting REQM since it began
- Some are advisers, inspectors or examiners
- Some are SACRE members
- All have to hold Qualified Teacher Status
- They are really friendly!

How do they stay up to date?

- Regular online update sessions for assessors take place during the year
- E-mail updates for assessors are provided around 6-8 week intervals from January 2021
- The project manager samples (at random) a cross-section of evidence provided by schools at Gold, Silver and Bronze levels
- Schools are advised that this might be requested (after the award is made) by the REC office - it does not affect any outcome for the school concerned
- Moderation materials are shared with assessors in email updates and in online meetings

Third discussion

Who/what has the authority to describe 'good RE'?

The impact of REQM on schools and teachers

(You can see testimonials on the website - we also use school evaluations to inform any reviews or assessor training.)

- ❖ Pupil and teacher voices are central to the process
- ❖ Conversation is at the heart of REQM - not documentation
- ❖ Curriculum and professional development emerging from REQM preparation is more important than the award
- ❖ Involvement of senior leadership in the award journey is key to success
- ❖ Criteria emphasise local networks and appropriate syllabus implementation - this helps schools to speak with each, and with SACREs where appropriate

What might we do next?

- ❖ <http://www.reqm.org> is a good place to find out more
- ❖ the award holders' MAP is a helpful tool to identify schools in your local hub area - but this is currently under reconstruction
- ❖ the new criteria will remain freely available - please have a look to see if they support your agreed syllabus?

‘Going for Gold’ - some ideas for local networks or SACRE meetings

1. Using the NEW REQM criteria, look at key features delineating the different awards at **the borderline**.

- ❖ What constitutes good evidence of the SILVER REQM (key points)?
- ❖ What constitutes good evidence of GOLD REQM (key points)?

2. Invite a local Gold Award school to a local meeting to share their REQM story or to make a presentation at SACRE.
3. Ask school colleagues to support each other in identifying where their school is currently placed against the criteria.
4. See if you can persuade teacher representatives on SACRE to apply for the award, or to say why they do not need to....
5. Find a budget (or grant) to support schools in their applications or in their preparation
6. Enter national RE competitions based on REQM activity
7. Help SACRE members contribute to school professional development sessions.

How can SACREs help the REQM team - and vice versa?

Please let us know what we might do to enable even better partnerships between the REC and SACREs through REQM, and better RE for all - thank you!