

RE REVIEW NEWSLETTER



Quarterly

Asserting the value of RE as a subject on the curriculum

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Project manager's report

Welcome to the second quarterly RE Review Newsletter and an opportunity to share progress made on the RE Review over the winter.



Dr. Janet Orchard, RE Review Project Manager

I am pleased to confirm that Phase One of the RE Review has been completed on time and successfully. Using the results of the wider public consultation we carried out at the end of 2012, the Review's independent

external evaluator, Professor Lorraine Foreman Peck, has been able to confirm the following encouraging messages.

- 88% of those people who expressed a view agreed that the report presented the situation of RE accurately.
- 86% agreed that the report presented the current situation clearly.
- 83% of those people who expressed a view thought that the report was fair, balanced and credible
- 86% agreed that the report made a valid case for the actions proposed.
- 82% who expressed a view thought that the report's recommendations were the right ones.

From these links, you will find: the final report of the Phase One Expert Panel <http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org/content/blogcategory/66/100/> and the External Evaluator's report on the wider public consultation process for Phase One http://www.recouncil.org.uk/images/stories/pdf/RE_REVIEW_PHASE_ONE_REPORT.pdf.

We are pleased with these findings but not complacent. Only 68.3% of respondents who expressed a view agreed the report represented all stakeholders' views without bias. Some felt the interests of RE in schools with a religious designation had been under-represented in the review process so far, and the same was true for faith communities and young people. Others were concerned about balance between the interests of primary and secondary RE in future phases of the Review.

Our external evaluator drew attention to the big rise in those people in the population who do not claim any religion, according to the 2011 census, and pointed out that this group's responses were under represented in our survey. Their needs must be reflected in future deliberations about RE and its curriculum. On a similar note, the change in language from "religions" to the more inclusive "religions and beliefs" from the first to

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final draft of the Phase One Expert panel report was widely welcomed and supported. You welcomed the opportunity to be consulted but want us to write documents more accessibly, with a minimum of technical language and educational jargon. You agreed that a clearer set of aims for RE is needed and would welcome guidance on how best to teach the subject, but without anything too prescriptive. You weren't always clear why some locally agreed syllabuses were mentioned when other excellent examples weren't, so we won't be making reference to specific syllabuses at all in Phase Two documentation. Many of you asked us to draw on the new National Curriculum proposals in the next phase of the Review where they are appropriate and useful to RE.

"We are looking to people like you to respond to the Task Group 1's findings and recommendations."

I'd like to thank those people, whether individuals or groups, who took the time and trouble to participate in the wider consultation process. It hasn't been possible to respond to every insight, but each one has been read and considered several times by different people. A fuller analysis of these answers will be published on the REC website in April. I hope that the wider public consultation process planned for Phase Two will generate similarly thoughtful and constructive suggestions and ideas.

Looking forwards

Phase Two of the Review is now well under way. Task Group 1 began meeting in February to consider the aims and purposes of RE, as well as an outline of the curriculum that would follow from them and a means of assessment. Task Group 1 members are putting together a draft document which will propose the purpose and aims of high quality RE in schools and suggest in general terms the kind of curriculum that would match them. The chair of TG1 is Graham Falgate and its other members are Kate Christopher, Dilwyn Hunt and Lesley Prior. You can read pen portraits

of them here: <http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org/content/view/292/100/>

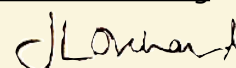
Task Group 2 had its first meeting in March. It will be building strategic links across the RE community and beyond, trying to increase further the impact of work others are already doing to influence the exam boards, for example, and policy makers. The chair of TG2 is Hazel Henson and its other members are James Holt, Jennifer Uzzell and Sue Wilson. For pen portraits of TG2 members please follow this link: <http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org/content/view/311/100/>

Further consultation

Plans are in place to extend the wider public consultation into Phase Two. The draft working paper from TG1 will be reviewed by the project's Steering Group towards the end of April. In early May it will be shared with the wider Reference Group (the member bodies of the RE Council), which represents the views of a very wide range of those people who care passionately about the future of RE, including faith community groups, educators working in schools, colleges, local areas and universities. http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org/component/option,com_contact/catid,36/Itemid,49/

We will publish the draft working paper very shortly after that meeting on the REC website. **We are looking to people like you to respond to the Task Group 1's findings and recommendations.** Our target is to provide a four week consultation period from the 13th May to the 7th June which enables as many people as possible to comment on the Task Group's proposals. Please look out for opportunities to get involved in that consultation process. Last time local group discussions were organised by SACREs and other groups and we will organise a second on-line survey.

For further, more detailed information on the RE Review and other important initiatives for the subject being led by the REC, please follow this link to our website <http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org>.

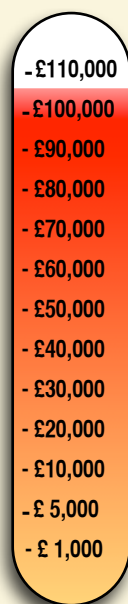


Appointment process for Phase Two of the RE Review

Appointing Task Group members for Phase Two of the RE Review through an open and competitive process of selection was difficult and demanding for everyone involved. Short listing and interview panels included members of the REC Board and the Chair of the RE Review Steering Group. However, it was good for RE to see so many excellent applications from people representing a range of backgrounds and perspectives on the subject as well as complementary skills and experiences. We are only sorry that there weren't more posts available. A priority in each case was to appoint a group of four who were both strong candidates individually and would also make up a well balanced group contributing a range of different perspectives and capable of working productively together.

Update on funding for the Review

Our provisional budget for the Review estimates that the final cost of the process will be just under £110,000. A number of generous organisations have contributed to the cost of the Review, with recent donations having been received from: the Pears Foundation, The Board of Deputies of British Jews, and NATRE (The National Association of Teachers of RE). In total, we have received approximately £105,000, a fantastic collective response.



Although we have almost met our initial target, this figure represents the bare minimum amount that we need. So we intend to carry on fund raising during the year and any extra funding will help us to improve the quality of the final document we produce and help us to disseminate it to local groups, including teachers and SACREs during the Autumn Term of 2013. Please help us by considering making a donation whether large, medium or small!

RE Review glossary

Task Group: four people appointed by a competitive application process to act on the recommendations identified in the Expert Panel report and widely accepted by many people who responded to the consultation process. Two groups working on two different sets of recommendations.

Steering Group: A group with representatives of key stakeholders across the whole RE Community which oversees the overall management of the RE Review, advises the project manager and the REC Board

REC Board: elected officers and co-opted Trustees of the REC ultimately responsible for the RE Review, who hold everyone employed on the RE Review, including the project manager, to account

Reference Group: includes representatives of a very wide range of people directly interested in the future of RE, including faith community groups as well as RE professionals who act as a sounding board for suggested actions on the RE Review.



The REC now has a Facebook Page which will to help you keep up to date with the RE Review and other REC matters in between newsletters.

<http://www.facebook.com/religiouseducationcouncil>

For those who use Twitter, follow the REC on Twitter: @RECouncil. For specific information about the RE Review, we will be using the hashtag #REReview.



Whatever your medium, you can keep in touch with and contribute to the Review.