

Dear MP Nigel Huddleston

Worcestershire SACRE calls for support for the provision of high-quality Religious Education in modern Britain

As you know, SACREs have a responsibility to support Religious Education in the local area. At Worcestershire SACRE we are writing to you to show our support for Religious Education as a crucial part of the school curriculum in a modern UK, and of great importance to the children and young people of Worcestershire. A broad and inclusive education in Religion and Worldviews should be a vital part of our young people's schooling, to ensure that they can engage well with the multitude of religious beliefs in the world around them.

The Department for Education has missed its recruitment targets for secondary teachers of Religious Education in 9 out of the last 10 years which has led to 25% of RE lessons in secondary schools being taught by non-specialist teachers and 23% of secondary schools reporting zero hours of RE teaching for year 11 pupils. The Schools Minister admitted in a recent written answer (6 Jan 2023) that 51% of teachers of RE mainly teach another subject. This compares unfavourably with teachers of Geography (28%), History (27%) and English (13%). RE teacher numbers have fallen by 1800 since 2011 – a fall of -10.9%.

The Government regularly restates its support for the subject and the need for schools to fulfil their legal requirement. However, in reality, there has been no concrete support. We note that for 2016-2021 the Government spent £154 million on curricular projects on Maths and £387 million on Music – but nothing on RE.

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Despite this, recent surveys have shown that equal access to quality Religious Education is highly valued by the British public. Nearly two thirds (64%) of the UK adult population think that an education in religion and worldviews (or RE) is an important part of the school curriculum today and 65% agree that the subject has an impact on people's ability to understand each other in wider society.

With the above in mind, we would be grateful if you could urge the Department for Education to outline what steps are being taken to improve the provision of Religious Education across the UK through ensuring that high quality teaching and resources in Religious Education is available to all children going forward. The provision of a bursary for PGCE RE teachers would be an essential starting point.

We would be delighted if you would be able to meet with Worcestershire SACRE to discuss this matter further.

Kind regards,
Cllr Mel Allcott