

Why SACREs should pay careful attention to school workforce census

DfE has taken some small steps to improve accountability for provision for RE: In response to our State of the Nation report in September 2017, the DfE has taken some small steps to improve schools' accountability for their Religious Education. Last week, the detail of what schools including academies must publish online was slightly amended to ensure there was absolute clarity that Religious Education must be included in the published curriculum, even if schools claim that the statutory provision is included in another subject and that it must be possible for anyone, including a local SACRE to ask for further information.

Academies should publish:

- the content of the curriculum your school follows in each academic year for every subject, including for mandatory subjects such as Religious Education even if it's taught as part of another subject or subjects or is called something else
- your approach to the curriculum
- how parents or other members of the public can find out more about the curriculum your school is following

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-academies-free-schools-and-colleges-should-publish-online#curriculum>

The Department for Education and its ministers has repeatedly encouraged SACREs to be involved in holding all schools in their area to account for the level and quality of their provision for RE.

The Department for Education has been collecting data from schools about the school workforce for many years. It is a statutory data collection for secondary schools that takes place in November each year. The data provides information about the teachers in each school, such as which subjects they teach and their qualifications for doing so. It is used for many purposes but especially to help identify how well the supply of teachers is meeting demand.

NATRE makes the data available to SACREs: For the last three years, NATRE has used a freedom of information request to collect this data *and then make it available to any SACRE that requests it*. Some SACREs have used this data effectively to encourage schools making good levels of provision for RE and to challenge those that are not. Some have found that there are cases when the school reports zero hours of RE when, in fact, they are making provision. Often, this is because the subject is called something else, such as philosophy and ethics, but sometimes this is because the school claims its statutory provision for RE is included in a different subject area e.g. PSHEe, Citizenship, Life studies or similar.

The school workforce data collection is constructed on the basis that the total hours on each teacher's timetable are accurately distributed amongst the subjects taught in proportion to the curriculum subject content. This publication of data helps SACREs to assess the strength (or otherwise) of the provision. The DfE has stated its expectation that, "all schools provide pupils with a curriculum that is high quality and promotes progression through the key stages", so *SACREs need to check that the published curriculum demonstrates that this expectation is met*. If there is insufficient information to make this judgement, then there is a statutory right for SACREs to ask for further information above. (see textbox above).

Like any set of data, this information can only be used as part of a conversation with a school but when set alongside website analysis, GCSE entries and results and so on, it provides very helpful to help SACRE target its limited resources.

Ofsted is scrutinising school workforce data: Last year we received an invitation to meet with Ofsted in London to discuss the potential of school workforce data with senior officers. Predictably, professional data analysts were able to identify even more potential in the data. In view of this, it is probably unsurprising to read in [this](#) blog by Sean Harford that Ofsted is including the school workforce data in its new computer based risk assessment of good and outstanding schools.

*The new computer model uses progress and attainment data from the Department for Education, **enhanced with school workforce census data** and Parent View responses, to produce scores for each school, ranging from the lowest risk up to the highest risk*

Failure to take proper account of published data can have serious consequences for a school: With a renewed focus on the curriculum very much part of OFSTED's agenda, all schools need to take recording of data very seriously and that includes the school workforce census. A SACRE that challenges a school for not providing accurate data about their provision, either on the school website or through the school workforce data collection is therefore being supportive. Surely it is far better that the local SACRE asks these questions than an OFSTED team arrive briefed with inaccurate information or with clear evidence that the curriculum is too narrow. Here are two examples from recent OFSTED reports of the consequences of such negligence:

The school's curriculum is too narrow Key subject areas, for example Religious Education, are delivered mainly through 'drop-down' days which happen about five times a year. The narrow curriculum limits pupils' personal development, future learning opportunities and the way in which they are being prepared for life in modern Britain. (Final judgement -inadequate)

- The school's website does not meet guidelines for what schools should publish... Up-to-date information on the school's curriculum is too general to be helpful to parents. These deficiencies in the school's website reflect parents' concerns about communication.

Those schools not making appropriate provision for RE are becoming more likely to be held accountable by OFSTED. These include schools that have cut RE provision in favour of English, Mathematics and other EBacc subjects since the school workforce data will almost certainly expose a narrowing of the curriculum.

Teachers on SACREs can help improve provision for RE in their area by:

1. Continuing to use all available qualitative and quantitative data to monitor provision for RE in all schools in their area including academies -including public examination results, school workforce data, self-evaluation, school visits, analysis of school websites
2. Writing to schools where there is insufficient information available or when the information indicates inadequate provision, to check for accuracy. Exemplar letters are supplied on our website here: <https://www.natre.org.uk/about-re/being-on-your-local-sacre/>
3. Where necessary, following up communication with schools with advice to the LA about inadequate provision (maintained schools) or write to the Academy Trust (Academies, Free Schools etc.)
4. If all other means of securing provision fail, using the formal complaints process for a LA maintained school or academy to ensure that all children and young people in your area receive their entitlement to RE