

An analysis of the provision for RE in Primary Schools – Autumn Term 2018

Introduction

This is an analysis of the data gathered from a questionnaire on primary religious education conducted by the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE). The survey was publicised using the NATRE and RE Today websites and mailing lists, via local groups of teachers of RE and the member organisations of the Religious Education Council of England and Wales, including AREIAC, AULRE, and NASACRE, NAHT and social media. Replies were received from 523 primary teachers in approximately half of the local authority areas in the country.

Methodology

An on-line data gathering tool (Survey Monkey) was used to set a series of questions on the provision of RE in primary schools. This method replicated similar surveys conducted for secondary school teachers of RE [here](#), the State of the Nation Survey [here](#) and an earlier survey of primary teachers conducted in 2016 [here](#):

Questions were asked to collect key information about the provision and support for RE in primary schools and about the training and support for primary teachers and others who deliver Religious Education. This was self-reporting data from teachers in schools and all efforts have been made to remove duplication from multiple school entries to allow an accurate picture of impact as perceived by the responding institutions. It should be noticed that due to the nature of the survey, it is highly probable that respondents are in schools where teachers support RE since those who are not committed to RE would be less likely to take the time to complete the survey.

Legal Requirement for RE in schools

Although RE is not designated as a National Curriculum subject, all maintained schools must follow the National Curriculum requirements to teach a broad and balanced curriculum, which includes RE. All maintained schools therefore have a statutory duty to teach RE. Academies and free schools are contractually required through the terms of their funding agreement to make provision for the teaching of RE.

Religious Education contributes dynamically to children and young people's education in schools by provoking challenging questions about meaning and purpose in life, beliefs about God, ultimate reality, issues of right and wrong and what it means to be human. The Curriculum Framework for Religious Education in England 2013 by the Religious Education Council of England and Wales states that teaching therefore should equip pupils with systematic knowledge and understanding of a range of religions and of non-religious worldviews, enabling them to develop their ideas, values and identities.

Key Findings

1. How suitable is primary teachers' training and preparation to teach RE?

- a. More than 45% of those teaching RE in primary schools do not have a GCSE or O level in RS and 75% of those are subject leaders. Even amongst those who trained in the last 5 years, more than 1 in 3 has no qualification in RE at all.
- b. During the last year almost 30% of respondents and their colleagues received no training in RE (not even a staff meeting) and 80% received less than 1 day. Two-thirds of respondents have received one day or fewer.
- c. Too much RE is being delivered by adults other than teachers. In more than 50% of schools some RE is being delivered by a higher-level teaching assistant. In 1 in 10 schools between 25% and 50% of RE is delivered in this way. Unless the HLTA teaching RE has an appropriately related qualification and/or receives regular CPD in RE and enough planning time to secure subject knowledge and confidence then pupil learning and progress may be negatively impacted.
- d. There is a significant rise in the percentage of teachers who are receiving only 0-3 hours initial teacher education in RE, particularly if they have trained within the last year. In 2016, 31% of teachers reported having received between 0 and 3 hours initial teacher education in RE. In 2018, this figure had risen to 44%
- e. More than 90% of the primary teachers who responded to this survey describe themselves as 'reasonably confident' or better about how to teach RE and what to teach. In contrast, they report that their colleagues do not share this confidence judging that only 60.9% feel either reasonably confident or very confident about how, and 66.2% about what, to teach in RE.

2. How well supported are subject leaders of RE?

- a. Most RE subject leaders hold the post for more than 5 years but 38.4% have only held the role for 2 years or fewer. This would suggest that in order to improve leadership in the subject, new subject leaders would be well advised to draw upon the resource of experienced local colleagues. They can do this by being in touch with the 250+ NATRE affiliated local groups (see: www.natre.org.uk/about-natre/local-groups/)

3. What issues are causing teachers of RE concern?

- a. Funding is an issue for all schools in the current climate of austerity. However, questions should be asked about why the teaching of RE is less well funded than foundation subjects in almost 30% of schools. The most common budget is less than 50p per pupil per year, this is insufficient to ensure resources are up to date and appropriate to modern teaching methods.
- b. It is pleasing that the right of withdrawal is not used frequently; 84% of respondents had no children withdrawn at all. However, there is a worrying trend in the use of the right of a parent to withdraw a child from all or part of RE. In the past, a limited number of specific groups of parents have withdrawn their children from RE for religious reasons. This survey shows that the right is now being used to withdraw children from lessons on Islam or visits to the Mosque calling into question their preparation for life in modern Britain.

4. What issues help or hinder the effective delivery of RE?

- a. Most Agreed Syllabuses recommend the equivalent of approximately 60 minutes per week be spent on RE at Key Stage 1 and about 75 minutes at Key Stage 2. This data suggests that in just under 25% of schools, pupils receive the equivalent of less than 45 minutes per week teaching of RE.
- b. The level of teaching reported in 4a varies by school type. In more than 40% of schools that are required to follow an Agreed Syllabus and in Academies without a religious character, RE is taught for less than an hour per week on average. Only in schools with a religious character is RE taught for more than an hour per week. This represents 43.8% of schools of this type.
- c. In total almost 93% of schools reported that timetable time had either remained the same or increased. Two reasons were the most commonly given (1) changes to the senior management (29%) and the (2) British Values/Prevent Agenda (15%). Where there had been a decrease in time (10%), the reasons most commonly given were other subjects taking priority (40%) and New National Curriculum (12%).

Detailed breakdown of NATRE survey questions

1. Types of school

School Type

34% of responses came from schools without a religious character, 10% from academies without a religious character, 52% from schools and academies with a religious character and 3% from other types of school. At the start of 2017, 37% of primary schools including academies had a religious character so our respondents are more likely to have come from that sector than not. This means that our data is likely to present a more favourable picture of religious education in primary schools than is generally the case.

Table 1 – Phase of education

Type of school	2016	2018
Primary	69.4%	82.1%
Middle School	2.4%	1.0%
First or lower school	2.0%	0.7%
Infant School	7.8%	4.9%
Junior School	9.8%	7.5%
Other: included all-through, PRU, special primary	8.6%	3.9%

2. How long is it since you achieved qualified teacher status?

Table 2 – Time since QTS

2016: Almost two-thirds of respondents had taught for 11 or more years

2018: Almost two-thirds of respondents had taught for 11 or more years

Time	2016	2018
Currently in training	1.6%	1.3%
Less than 1 year	3.0%	2.7%
1-4 years	14.5%	12.8%
5-10 years	18.5%	20.2%
11 or more years	62.4%	63.0%

3. Are you the subject leader for RE?

Table 3 – Subject Leader

As with 2016, most respondents in 2018 were current RE subject Leaders

Note: the 2018 survey did not ask about previous subject leader role, or subject leader for more than one school

Are you the subject leader?	2016	2018
Yes	74.5%	51.6%
Yes and I am the subject leader for more than one school	4.0%	-
No	14.8%	48.4%
No – but I have been in the past	6.7%	-

4. The main role of respondents

Table 4 – Role

Similarly to 2016 around 50% of respondents were class teachers and 20% were senior leaders

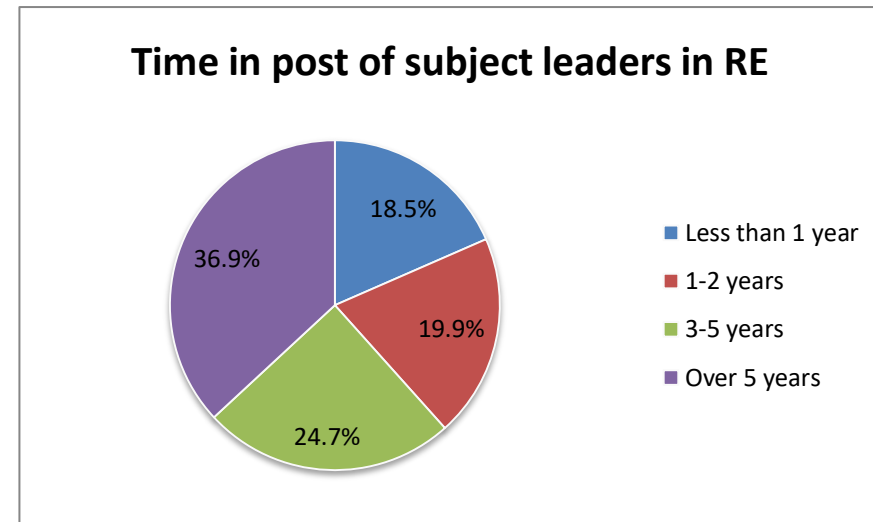
Role	2016	2018
Class Teachers	59.1%	53.7%
Senior Leaders	21.0%	19.8%
Teaching Assistant or High Level Teaching Assistant	5.4%	5.6%
PPA Cover Teacher	10.8%	9.2%
Other	0.7%	11.5%

5. How long do subject leaders for RE hold this post on average?

Table 5 – Time in Post

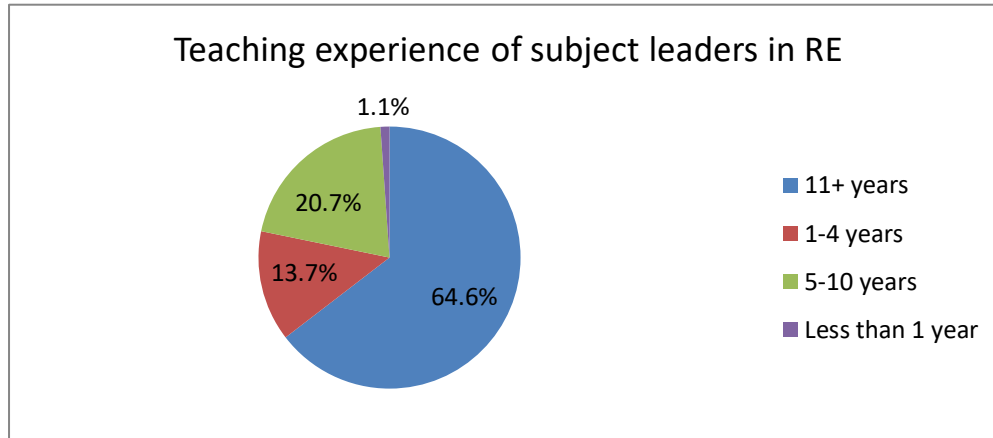
The most commonly reported period was over 5 years representing 36.8% (30.4 in 2016) of those who responded to the question. However, 38.4% of subject leaders hold/have held the post for less than two years.

Time in Post	2016	2018
<1 year	23.7%	18.5%
1 -2 years	17.5%	19.9%
3 – 5 years	28.5%	24.7%
Over 5 years	30.4%	36.8%



6. How much teaching experience do subject leaders have on average?

The overwhelming majority of subject leaders in RE have 11 or more teaching experience. This data may be distorted by the fact that more than 16% of subject leaders in schools with a religious character are either Headteachers, Deputy Headteachers or Assistant Headteachers, by contrast, 4% of subject leaders were deputy headteachers or assistant headteachers and 0% of subject leaders in Academies without a religious character.



7 What is the budget allocation for RE in your school?

Table 7

The money available for supporting the teaching of RE is minimal. This data supports the findings of the large scale research project: "Does RE Work"¹ which found that many schools spend less than £1 per pupil per year on resources for RE. Department for Education statistics² show that given the average primary school size this data suggests that the most common budget is less than 50p per pupil per year and almost 23.5% have no set budget at all. It may be indicative of the sensitivity of this issue that almost 30% of respondents preferred not to disclose their budget.

¹ <http://impact.ref.ac.uk/CaseStudies/CaseStudy.aspx?Id=28230>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2015>

Budget	2016	2018
£0	5.1%	5.5%
£1 - £50	3.1%	5.5%
£51 - £200	18.1%	14.8%
£201 - £300	7.4%	6.6%
£301 - £500	9.4%	4.9%
£501 - £1000	4.8%	4.5%
£1001 - £2000	1.7%	2.0%
£2000+	1.4%	0.4%
No set budget	29.0%	23.5%
Prefer not to say	1.4%	29.5%
Don't Know	18.1%	2.2%

8 How would you compare the allocation of resources for RE in your school with those for Foundation subjects?

Table 8 – Resource Comparison

As in 2016, 30% of respondents say Religious Education receives a less favourable budget allocation than other foundation subjects

Resource Comparison	2016	2018
More favourable than foundation subjects	11.4%	13.6%
The same as foundation subjects	58.9%	57.2%
Less favourable than foundation subjects	29.6%	29.1%

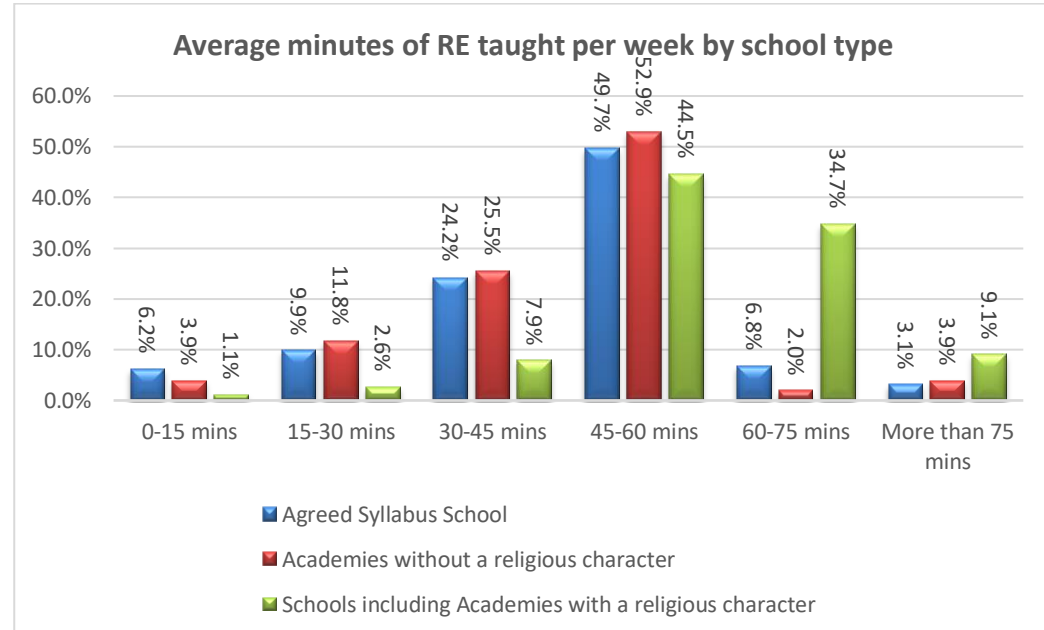
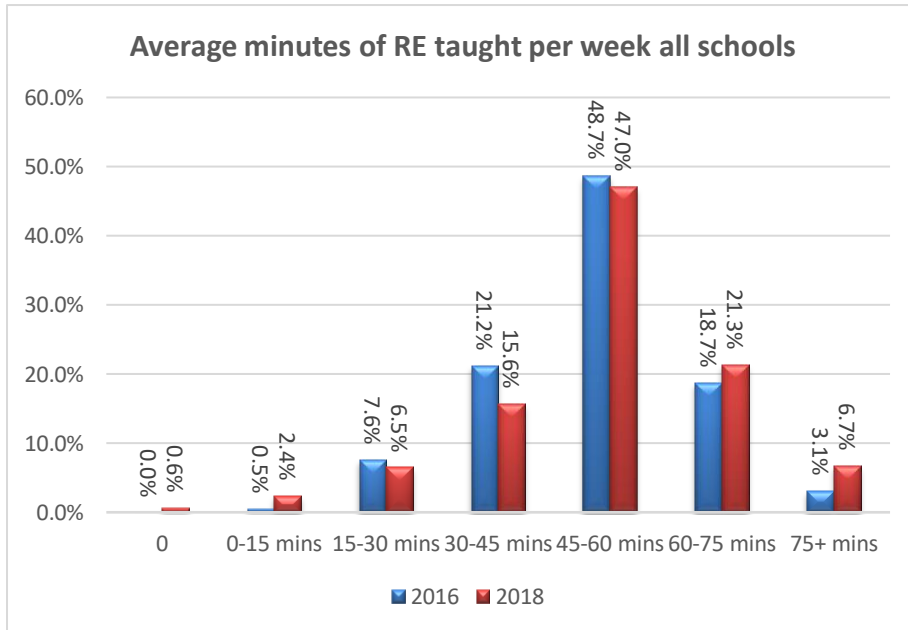
9 Time for Religious Education

(a) Time allocated to the teaching of RE

Table 9 – Teaching Time

Most Agreed Syllabuses recommend the equivalent of approximately 60 minutes per week be spent on RE at Key Stage 1 and about 75 minutes at Key Stage 2. This data suggests that in just under 25% of schools, insufficient time is being spent on the teaching of RE to ensure that pupils make good progress.

These figures are misleading however, since the time dedicated to teaching RE varies considerably by type of school. Schools with a religious character such as Church of England, Roman Catholic or Jewish Schools are far more likely to teach RE for an hour per week or more. More than 40% of schools that are required to follow a locally Agreed Syllabus and Academies, teach RE for less than an hour per week. In schools with religious character, including academies with a religious character, only 11.6% teach RE for that amount of time. In contrast, just under 10% of schools that are required to follow a locally Agreed Syllabus and Academies without religious character teach RE for 60 minutes or more per week whereas 43.8% of schools and academies with religious character do so.



(b) Changes to time allocated to the teaching of RE

Whilst around 75% of respondents stated that there had been no change in timetable time for RE in the last academic year, almost 18% said that time had been increased. The most significant reasons given for the increase were:

- Change in senior management/subject leader 29%
- The British Values/SMSC/Prevent Agenda 15%

Where there had been a decrease in timetable time for RE (6.7% of schools), the most significant reasons given were:

- Other subjects taking priority 40%
- The New National Curriculum 12%
- Change in senior management/subject leader 10%

Change	2016	2018
Increase	18%	17%
No Change	70%	75%
Decrease	12%	7%

10 Withdrawal from Religious Education

Table 10 – Withdrawal

84% of schools reported that there had been no withdrawal from RE in the last academic year but around 16% reported some withdrawal.

Common reasons cited were:

- membership of a particular religious or non-religious tradition e.g. Jehovah's Witness, Muslim, Humanist, Plymouth Brethren, Christian = 60%
- A wish that the child should not be taught Islam = 6.7%
- A wish that the child only be taught about Christianity = 5.6%

The most often reported reasons/types of withdrawal included:

11 The proportion of the RE provision in your school delivered by non-teaching staff e.g. HLTAs

Over recent years NATRE has become increasingly concerned that the practice of delegating the teaching of RE in primary schools to teaching assistants has become more widespread. Ofsted reported that pupils' achievement in RE was very inconsistent in 2013³ Shortly after an All-Party Parliamentary Group on RE enquiry found that one of the contributing factors to this was the excessive use of teaching assistants to deliver RE. ⁴ The 2013 report found that in 24% of schools RE was taught to some children by higher level teaching assistants. This survey found that this figure has risen to almost 50% of schools. In 1 in 10 schools between 25 and 50% of RE is delivered in this way.

- 47% of schools say this does not happen in their school
- 53% allow some RE to be taught by non-teaching staff.
- In almost 1 in 10 schools between 25% and 50% of RE is delivered in this way.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/religious-education-realising-the-potential>

⁴ http://religioueducationcouncil.org.uk/media/file/APPG_RE_-_The_Truth_Unmasked.pdf

12 Religions, beliefs and worldviews taught in primary schools

Table 11: It was unsurprising to find that Christianity is taught in almost all schools that responded to the survey and that Judaism and Islam are also almost always taught in primary schools (the largest group of respondents). Hinduism features clearly and Sikhism too in almost three-quarters of primaries. It is pleasing to see that non-religious world views are now specifically taught in more than half of primaries but more needs to be done to raise teachers' subject knowledge and confidence in this area and in the teaching of Buddhism.

	2016	2018		2016	2018
Christianity			Buddhism		
Infant	100%	80%	Infant	37%	13%
Junior	100%	95%	Junior	40%	65%
Primary	100%	99%	Primary	59%	64%
Judaism					
Infant	74%	66%	Infant	37%	33%
Junior	76%	82%	Junior	40%	73%
Primary	96%	93%	Primary	72%	78%
Islam					
Infant	79%	66%	Infant	21%	13%
Junior	100%	95%	Junior	52%	52%
Primary	98%	95%	Primary	36%	51%
Hinduism					
Infant	84%	46%			
Junior	88%	82%			
Primary	89%	89%			
Non-Religious World Views					
Infant					
Junior					
Primary					

13 Training for RE in initial teacher education

Predictably, those who trained to teach through a three or four year teaching degree programme received more training in RE than those who followed post-graduate routes. These represent 47.1% of respondents.

Table 12

How did you train as a teacher?	2016	2018
Degree	30%	47.1%
GTP	14%	4.9%
HLTA	3%	1.6%
PGCE	42%	40.4%
SCITT	3%	3.0%
Teach First	1%	0.2%
Other	7%	2.8%
- Includes Schools Direct	-	1.2%

Overall, there has been a significant decline over the past decade in the amount of training primary teachers receive to teach RE. Table 13 shows that the most common preparation for teaching RE around 44% of teachers was between 0 and 3 hours but almost 70% of teachers only received between 0 and 6 hours.

Table 13

Hours of RE training received in ITT	2016	2018
0 – 3 hours	31%	44%
3 – 6 hours	31%	24%
6 – 12 hours	19%	21%
> 12 hours	19%	10%

14 Levels of confidence in teaching RE

Table 14

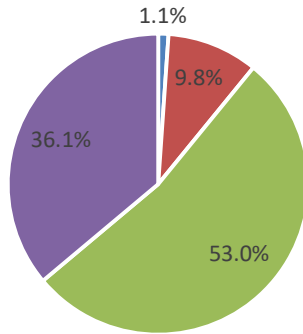
Similar to 2016, the overwhelming majority of those responding to our survey reported feeling either reasonably confident or very confident about how (92.5%) and what (90.6%) to teach RE. In contrast, they report that their colleagues do not share this confidence judging that only 60.9% feel either reasonably confident or very confident about how and 66.2% about what to teach in RE.

Only just over a third of respondents claim to feel very confident about either of these areas which is disappointing given that more than a half of our respondents were subject leaders for RE, responsible to leading others in Religious Education.

	2016	2018	2016	2018	2016	2018	2016	2018	2016	2018
	A variety of levels amongst my colleagues	A variety of levels amongst my colleagues	Not confident at all	Not confident at all	Slightly less confident than I would like	Slightly less confident than I would like	Reasonably confident	Reasonably confident	Very confident	Very confident
My level of confidence about how to teach RE	-	-	0.8%	1.5%	7.9%	6.0%	54.3%	56.0%	37.0%	36.5%
My level of confidence about what to teach in RE	-	-	1.1%	1.5%	9.8%	7.9%	53.0%	56.2%	36.1%	34.4%
My colleague's level of confidence about how to teach RE	13.40%	11.20%	4.1%	3.7%	21.9%	24.2%	55.7%	54.4%	4.9%	6.5%
My colleague's level of confidence about what to teach in RE	12.30%	8.70%	3.6%	3.5%	21.3%	21.7%	54.4%	58.3%	8.5%	7.9%

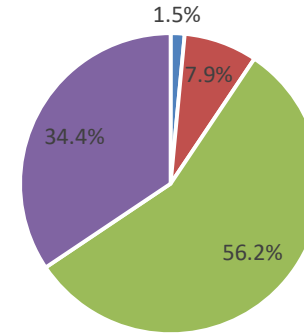
Respondents' confidence

My level of confidence about what to teach in RE 2016



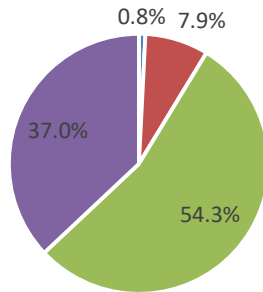
■ Not confident at all ■ Slightly less confident than I would like
 ■ Reasonably confident ■ Very confident

My level of confidence about what to teach in RE 2018



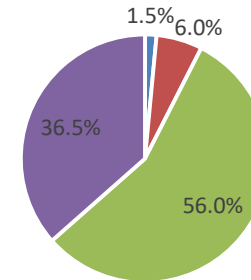
■ Not confident at all ■ Slightly less confident than I would like
 ■ Reasonably confident ■ Very confident

My level of confidence about how to teach RE 2016



■ Not confident at all ■ Slightly less confident than I would like
 ■ Reasonably confident ■ Very confident

My level of confidence about how to teach RE 2018



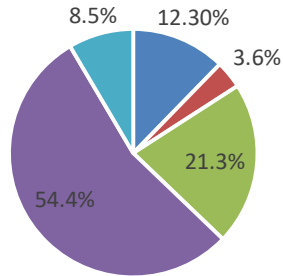
■ Not confident at all ■ Slightly less confident than I would like

Here are some examples of why respondents said they felt less confident about teaching RE:

It terrifies me that, as a spiritually curious but not religiously educated teaching professional I will say something wrong and inspire complaints from parents of the children I teach.
I wouldn't know specifically which areas to focus on without being told.
I am confident to teach Christianity but not other faiths
I find the locally agreed syllabus confusing at times. I teach mixed year groups which change e.g. last year years 2 and 3, this year years 1 and 2 and that is an extra level of challenge.
I am under confident regarding assessment and evidence collection
I am OK with Christianity but do not feel as confident with other faiths.
I find the curriculum material dull and uninteresting.
I do still worry about getting facts / details of beliefs in other world religions confused /wrong when teaching children
My subject knowledge could be better. I also feel that my understanding of how to teach/assess AT2 could be improved. Questioning is an area for development and knowing what constitutes greater depth.
I am currently an NQT and during my teacher training I had very little support, training or instruction in planning and delivering RE.
Sometimes I am unsure of what I can and cannot say when teaching certain religions e.g. Islam so that I don't offend anyone or have parents complaining.

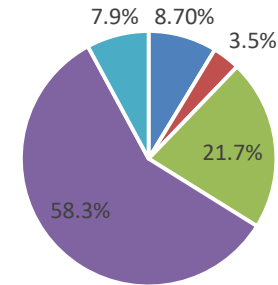
Colleagues' confidence

My colleagues' level of confidence about what to teach in RE 2016



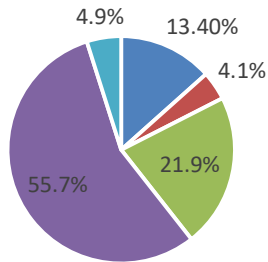
- A variety of levels amongst my colleagues
- Not confident at all
- Slightly less confident than I would like
- Reasonably confident
- Very confident

My colleagues' level of confidence about what to teach in RE 2018



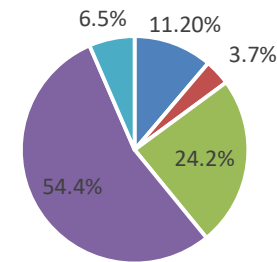
- A variety of levels amongst my colleagues
- Not confident at all
- Slightly less confident than I would like
- Reasonably confident
- Very confident

My colleagues' level of confidence about how to teach RE 2016



- A variety of levels amongst my colleagues
- Not confident at all
- Slightly less confident than I would like
- Reasonably confident
- Very confident

My colleagues' level of confidence about how to teach RE 2018

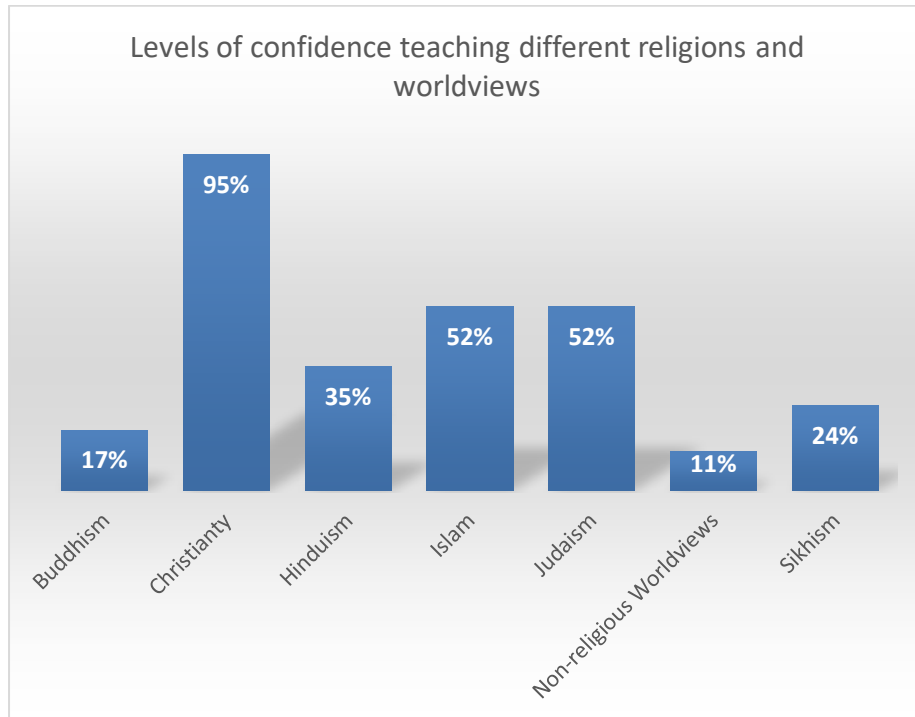


- A variety of levels amongst my colleagues
- Not confident at all
- Slightly less confident than I would like
- Reasonably confident
- Very confident

2018: Here are some typical comments about why colleagues may feel less confident about teaching RE

Colleagues without a faith background worry that their knowledge and understanding is not accurate or in depth enough. They are often unable to make appropriate links.
They don't regularly teach RE so aren't as confident.
RE is taught during PPA. For some, it is their first time of teaching RE.
I think that my colleagues fear saying the wrong thing about a particular religion. I think that they lack the subject knowledge of every religion taught, also knocking their confidence. I also think that they worry that they will be asked a question that they do not know the answer to.
It is difficult to provide them with the subject knowledge they need to teach the subject well
R.E is a subject in our school which can be over seen. Lessons can be quite boring
Because their own beliefs hinder their practice
No training given for teachers and no RE professional development.
They don't teach RE.
In monitoring I am concerned by some of the things that I saw taught - inaccurate
Teachers often feel that they need to "be religious" themselves to teach RE and many have a lack of basic general knowledge about world religions.
PPA cover teacher usually takes most RE lessons for school so class teachers' subject knowledge may be lower than we would like.
Lack of CPD in recent years, particularly evident in teaching about faiths other than Christianity
Some of the teachers have never taught RE - it is often one of the subjects given for PPA cover so our HLTAs do a lot of the teaching in RE
Because they have not had much training on how what you teach in RE. Even in teacher training the focus on RE has been limited. Most staff have purely had a few staff meeting sessions led by myself.
Non-specialists feel weak in their subject knowledge
There have been quite a few occasions recently where parents have complained about their children being taught RE or complained about teachers' answers to questions during RE lessons. As a result, colleagues have been become more cautious and concerned about offending groups / parents.
Lack of subject knowledge and the ability to teach various religions in an inspiring way... Afraid of being inaccurate.
Lots of new young teachers with limited training of RE on PGCE
Unfortunately, because it is a very small school and a new academy the emphasis has been on core curriculum subjects of Maths and English to raise standards this year. We hope to expand into wider curriculum next year.
Because no time is given to teachers to receive any CPD in RE. It is not supported by senior leaders as a subject and no teacher has had training in RE for the past 4 years.

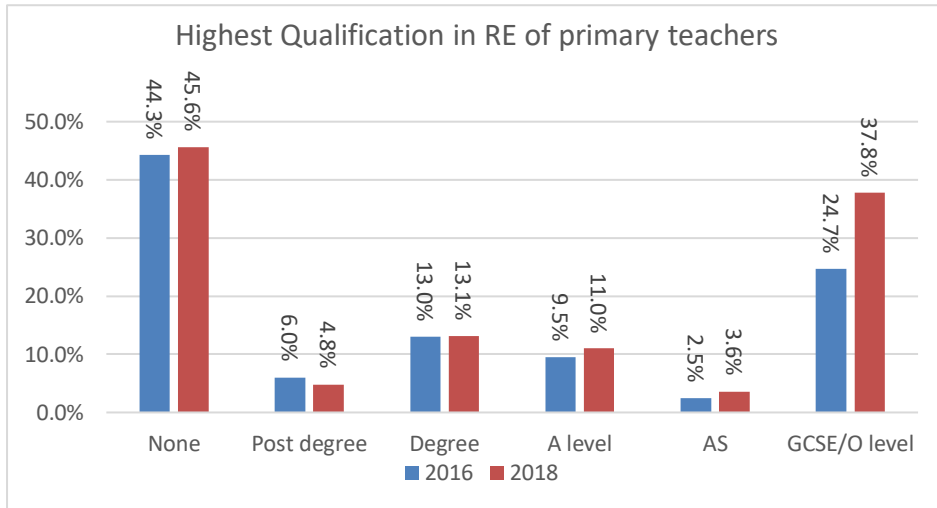
Levels of confidence varied according to the religion or worldview taught. This would suggest that more professional development to increase subject knowledge is a priority. Buddhism and Non-Religious Worldviews appear to be the traditions that command the least confidence in teaching.



15 Teacher qualifications in Religious Education

Table 15 –Highest RE Qualification

More than 45% of those teaching RE in primary schools do not even have a GCSE or O level in RS although since 2016 there has been a significant increase in the number of teachers reporting that they do have a GCSE or O level. It is likely that new teachers are now coming into the profession who were 14-16 years old during the period that the short course was introduced and almost 40% of pupils were leaving school with a qualification in RS. With short course on the decline, mainly due to it not counting in performance measures, this will eventually have an impact on the level of subject knowledge of teachers coming into the profession.



16 Compliance with legal requirements with regard to RE provision

Responses to this question were similar to 2016, almost 93% of respondents answered 'Yes' to this question, however that means that in just 7% of schools, pupils are not all receiving their proper entitlement to RE.

17 Training

(a) Days of subject specific training the respondent received during the past 12 months

Table 16 – RE training in the past 12 months

2016: More than 26% received no training in the past year and 60% less than 1 day in the past year

2018: Almost 30% received no training in the past year, and almost 62% received 1 day or less

RE specific training days in previous 12 months	2016	2018
0	26.57%	29.4%
0.25	3.71%	8.6%
0.5	6.00%	6.1%
1	24.57%	18.4%
1.5	8.00%	4.1%
2	14.29%	14.9%
3	8.86%	8.4%
More than 3	8.00%	10.0%

(b) Days of subject specific training others who teach RE in your school received during the past 12 months?

Table 17:

In 2016, 40% of respondents reported no training (not even staff meeting) for staff on RE; 87% one day or less. In 2018 however, the situation improved because less than 28% of them reported no training (not even staff meeting) for staff on RE. Given the number of Church of England Schools that responded to this survey, it is possible that this improvement is due to the number of primary teachers receiving training in the Understanding Christianity Project. Overall however, 80% of primary teachers reported receiving one day or less of training in the year.

RE specific training days in previous 12 months	2016	2018
0	39.7%	28.6%
0.25	20.8%	21.7%
0.5	14.0%	14.9%
1	13.1%	17.8%
1.5	2.3%	2.5%
2	6.3%	7.4%
3	1.4%	3.9%
More than 3	2.3%	3.3%