

## **An analysis of the provision for RE in Primary Schools – Autumn Term 2022**

### **Introduction**

This is an analysis of the data gathered from a questionnaire on primary Religious Education (RE) in the summer term of 2022 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, the NAHT and social media. Replies were received from **500** primary teachers in **more than 60%** of the local authority areas in England and Wales.

### **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](#), an earlier survey of primary teachers conducted in 2016 [here](#), 2018 [here](#) and 2020 [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 RE. 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. Both Ofsted and the Department of Education have stated that the RE curriculum in Academies must be ‘similar in breadth and ambition’ to that required in LA maintained schools. 96% of respondents reported that statutory duties to provide RE for all pupils were met.

The final report of the [Commission on RE \(2018\)](#) states, “The subject should explore the important role that religious and non-religious worldviews play in all human life. This is an essential area of study if pupils are to be well prepared for life in a world where controversy over such matters is pervasive and where many people lack the knowledge to make their own informed decisions. It is a subject for all pupils, whatever their own family background and personal beliefs and practices.”

## Key findings for 2022

### **TIME: Good news and bad news about the amount of time devoted to RE in the primary phase**

- a. Most Agreed Syllabuses recommend that the equivalent of approximately 60 minutes per week be spent on RE at Key Stage 1 and about 75 minutes at Key Stage 2. The survey data suggests that in just under a third of schools (31.5%) insufficient time is being spent on the teaching of RE to ensure that pupils make good progress. This is a rise from just over a quarter of schools in 2020. On the other hand, in around one in three Agreed Syllabus schools and Academies without a religious character, timetable time has increased (Table 8)
- b. **The amount of time made available for RE also varies by type of school.** The level of teaching reported in table 7 varies by school type (see Table 8). In 42% of schools that are required to follow an Agreed Syllabus and 34% Academies without a religious character, RE is taught for less than an hour per week on average. In 28% of schools with a religious character<sup>1</sup> RE is taught for more than one hour per week. Only just over 3% of Agreed Syllabus schools<sup>1</sup> devote more than an hour per week .

### **FUNDING:**

- c. Funding is an issue for all schools in a climate of austerity. However, school leaders should be asked about **why the teaching of RE continues to be less well funded than foundation subjects** in around 30% of schools. If resources are up to date and appropriate to modern teaching methods, it is vital that subject leaders have appropriate funds at their disposal. (tables 6-7). School funding is expected to rise this year and RE subject leaders will need to make the case for appropriate resourcing for RE. The most common budget is less than 50p per pupil per year and 28% of primary schools in the survey have no budget or no set budget at all

### **TEACHING**

- d. **Too much RE is being delivered by adults other than teachers.** In 63% of school ( 53% in 2020) some RE is being delivered by this group of adults other than teachers. This was raised as a matter of concern by [Ofsted in 2013](#) when in 24% of schools RE was delivered by teaching assistants. In 1 in 4 schools more than 25% of RE teaching is delivered in this way an increase from 1 in 4 schools in 2020. 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. (see section 9 page 9)
- e. **Too many teachers are not adequately prepared to teach RE by their training:** More than 40% of the teachers in primary schools report that they received between 0 and 3 hours of training to teach RE in their initial teacher training (ITE). *20% of these received no hours at all.* This serious issue was the focus of Recommendation 6 of the Commission on RE (2018) Report. It links with question 12 of our survey which asked about teachers' confidence. There has been a decline in confidence in teachers from 60.9% in 2018 to 51.7 in 2022 reporting feeling reasonably or very confident in how to teach RE and from 66.2% in 2018 to 63%% about what to teach in RE (Q12a) table 14.

### **LEADERSHIP**

- f. We were pleased to note that **70% of respondents (58% in 2020) reported that RE was featured on their school development/improvement plan (Question 15).** However, it is unclear how these improvements will have been secured given that 76% of respondents said that their colleagues received either one day or fewer RE-specific training days in the last 12 months. 27% received no days at all (Table 17).

### **CAUSES FOR CONCERN:**

- g. The right of withdrawal is being used more frequently but numbers are small. 77% of schools reported that there had been no withdrawal from RE in the last academic year This still means 23% reported some withdrawal from RE. There is a continuing worrying trend in the use of the right of a parent to withdraw a child from teaching one named religion although withdrawals specifically from the teaching of Christianity have declined. We note the organisational challenges presented to schools when parents request that they scrutinise the content of each lesson or visit and then decide whether or not to use the right of withdrawal. Around 49% of withdrawals cite membership or affiliation to a specific religion as the reason for withdrawal – most commonly Jehovah's Witnesses. See question 8

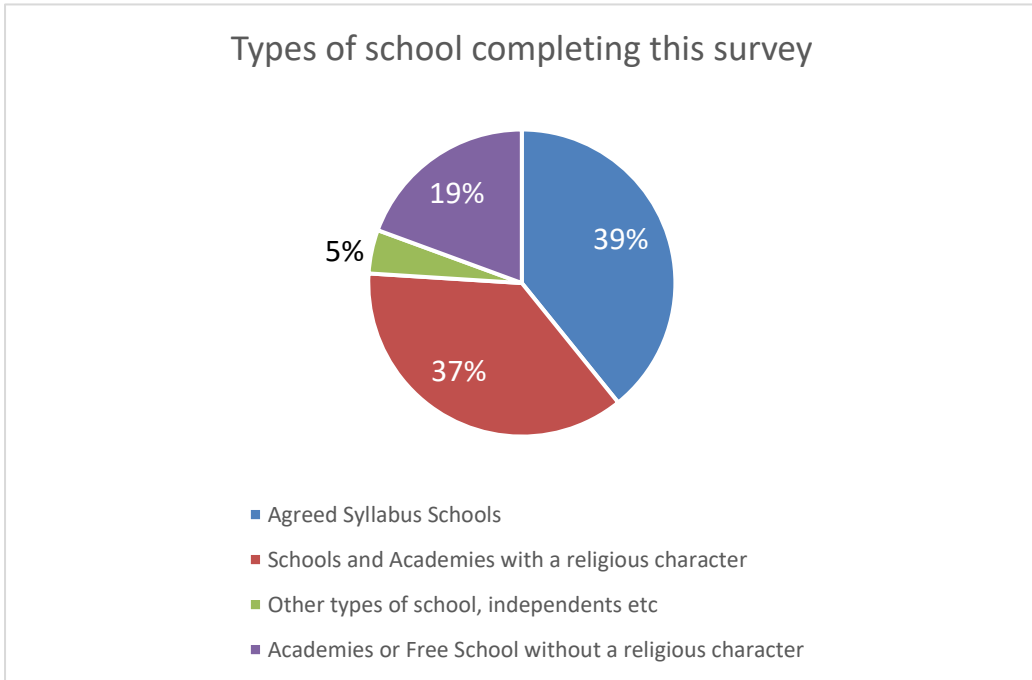
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<sup>1</sup> Note: AS Voluntary Controlled Schools including those with a religious character are required to follow the local Agreed Syllabus, they are included in the category "Agreed Syllabus Schools"

## Detailed breakdown of NATRE survey questions

### 1. Types of school

#### School Type

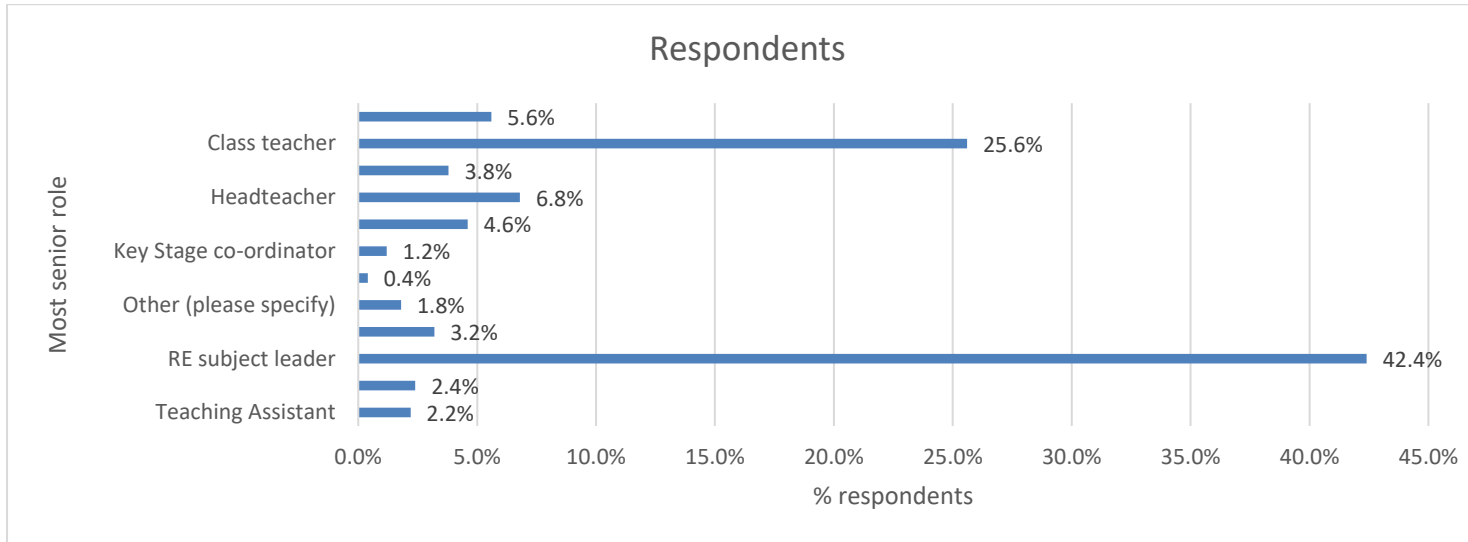


39% of responses came from schools where the Agreed Syllabus applies, 19% from Academies and Free Schools without a religious character, 37% from schools and academies with a religious character and 5% from other types of school including independent schools. According to government data [here](#), in January 2019, 37% of primary schools including academies had a religious character so our respondents schools are typical of the national picture in that respect.

**Table 1 – Types of school**

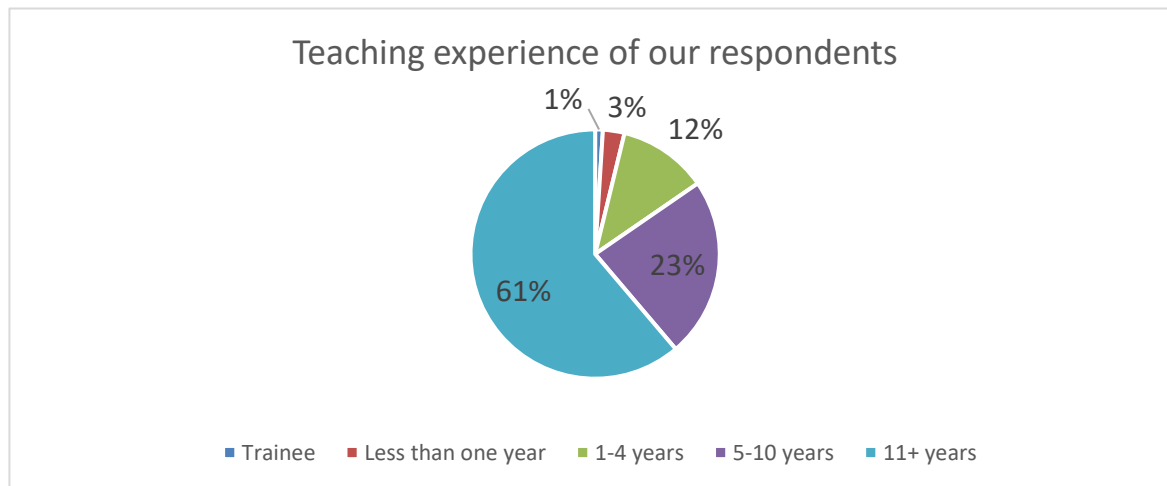
## 2. What is your main role in school?

**Table 2 – Subject Leader:** As with 2018 and 2020, most respondents in 2022 were current RE subject Leaders



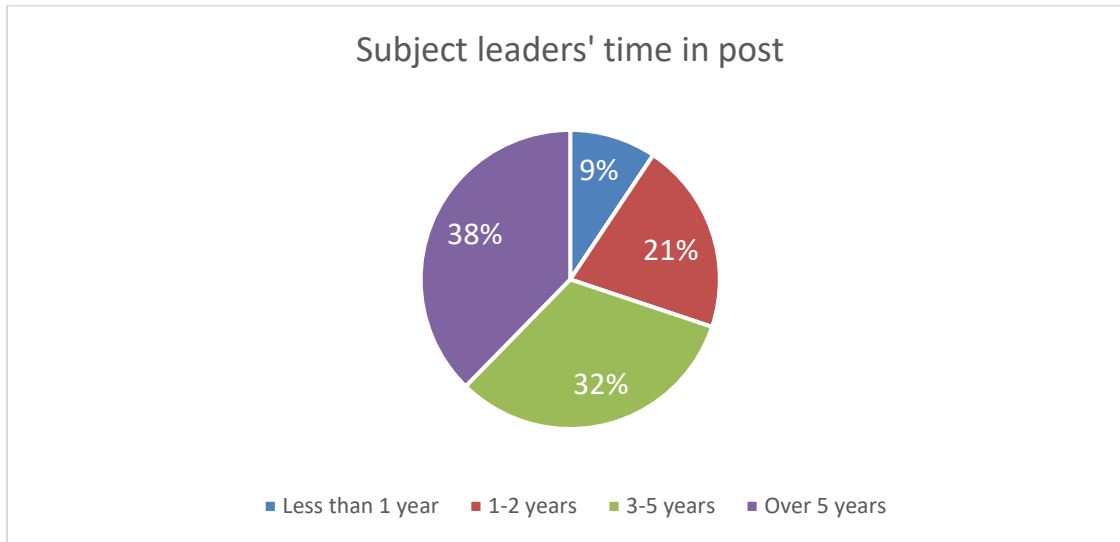
## 3. How long have our respondents been teaching?

**Table 3 – Teaching experience:** The most reported period was 'over 11 years' representing 61% of the total of those who responded to the question.



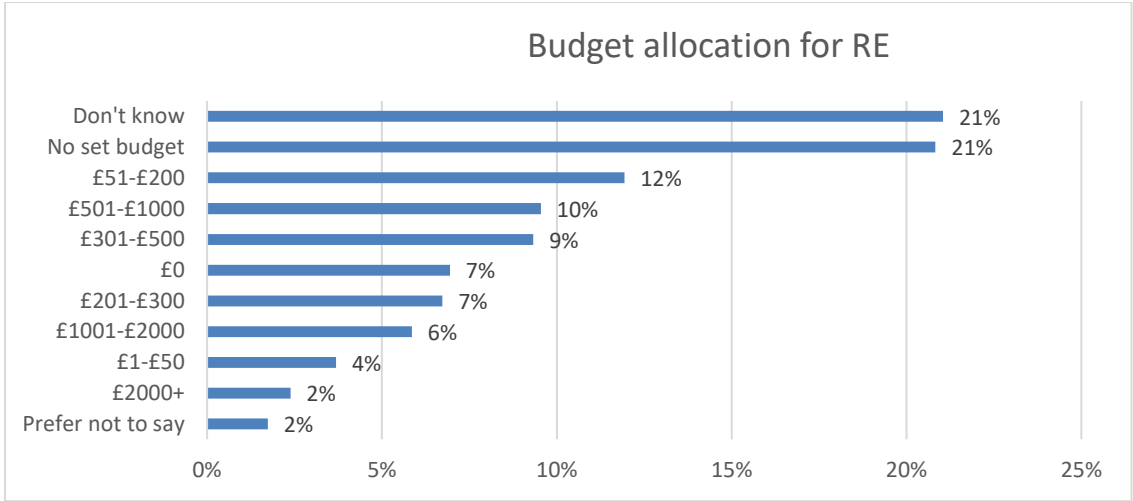
#### 4. How long have subject leaders led RE in their school?

**Table 4 – Experience of leading RE:** A similar number of subject leaders (32%) reported leading RE for 3-5 years as for more than 5 years (38%).



**5. What is the budget allocation for RE in your school?**

**Table 5**



In many schools, 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?”<sup>1</sup> which found that many schools spend less than £1 per pupil per year on resources for RE. Department for Education statistics<sup>1</sup> 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 28% of primary schools in the survey have no budget or no set budget at all.

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

**Table 6 – Resource Comparison:** As in 2018 and 2020, around 30% of respondents say Religious Education receives a less favourable budget allocation than foundation subjects

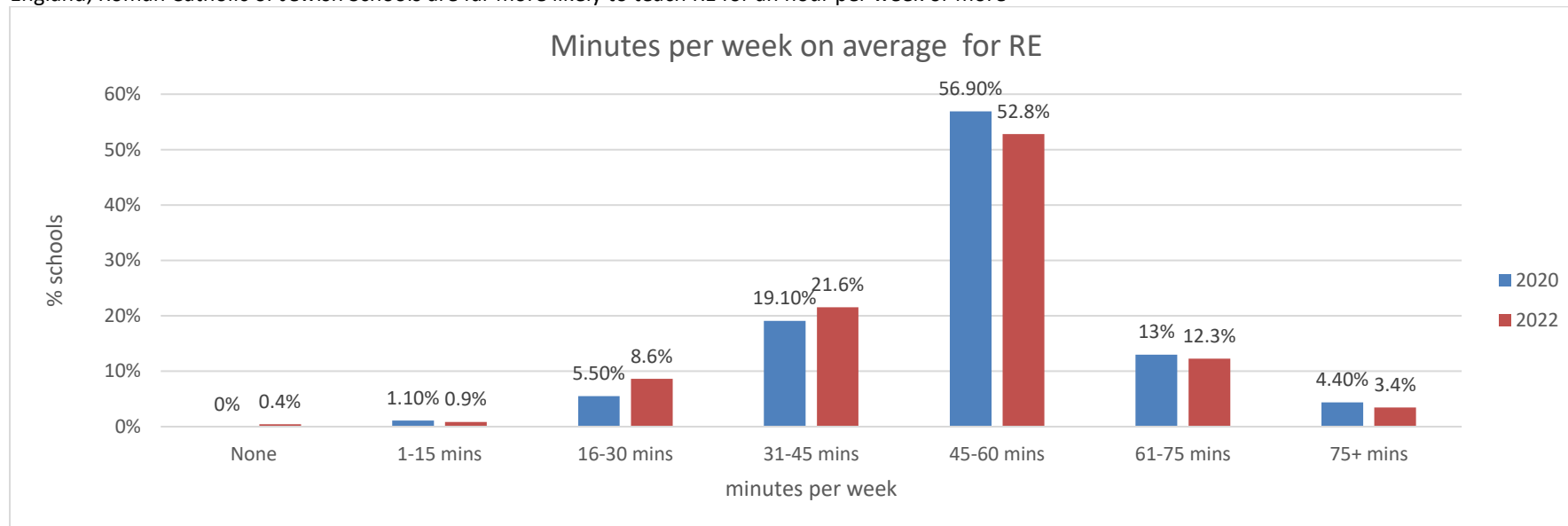
Resource Comparison	2018	2020	2022
More favourable than foundation subjects	13.6%	14.9%	15.2%
The same as foundation subjects	57.2%	54.6%	55.3%
Less favourable than foundation subjects	29.1%	30.5%	29.5%

## 7. Time for Religious Education

### (a) Time allocated to the teaching of RE

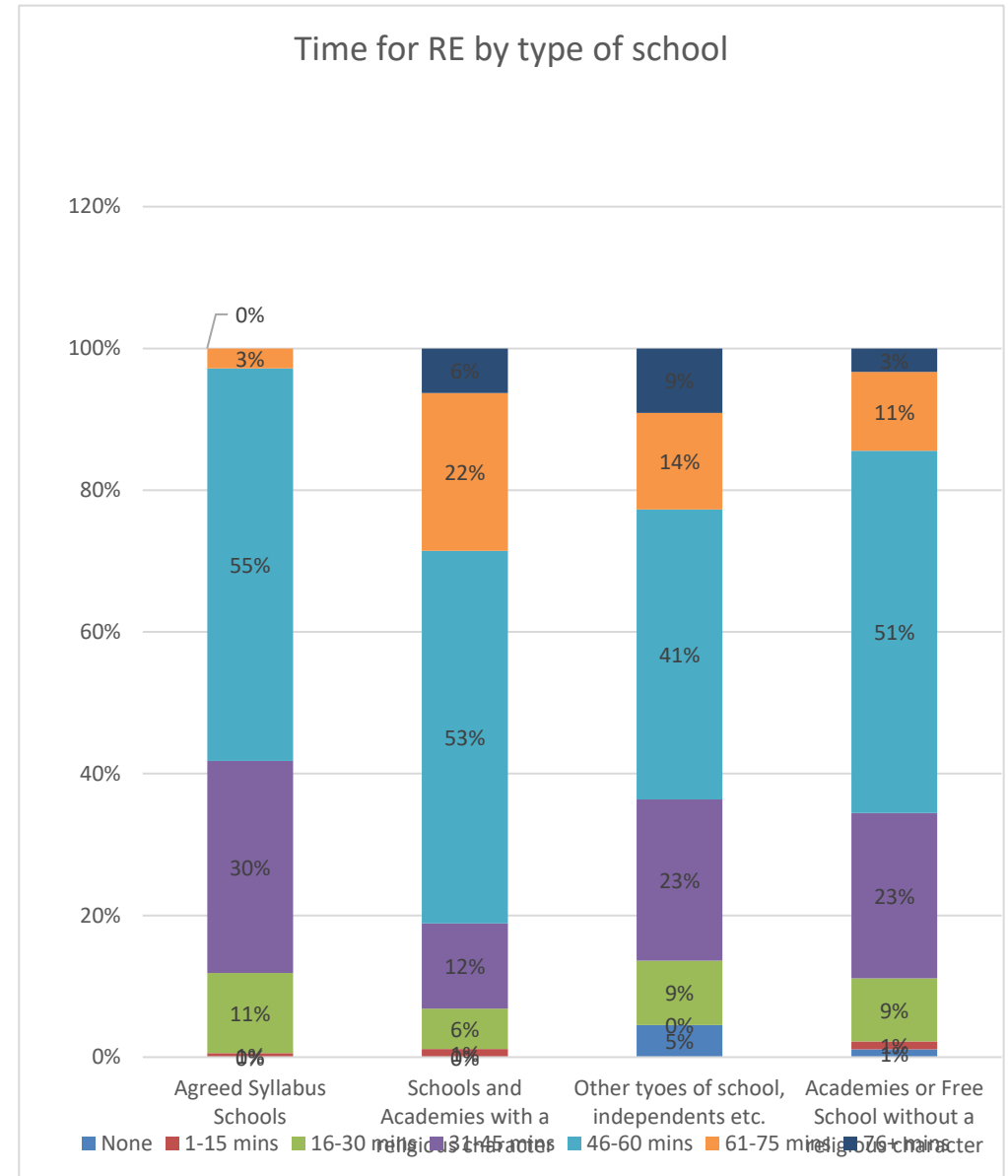
**Table 7 – Teaching Time:** Most Agreed Syllabuses recommend that the equivalent of approximately 60 minutes per week be spent on RE at Key Stage 1 and about 75 minutes at Key Stage 2. This data suggests that in almost a third of schools (a quarter in 2020), insufficient time is being spent on the teaching of RE to ensure that pupils make good progress.

These figures might be slightly 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



**Table 8: The amount of time made available for RE also varies by type of school.** The level of teaching reported in Table 7 varies by school type. In schools that are required to follow an Agreed Syllabus RE is taught for 45 minutes or less in 42% of schools and 46 minutes or more in 58% of schools. In Academies without a religious character, RE is taught for 45 minutes or less per week in 32% of schools and for 46 minutes or more in 65% of schools. In schools and academies with a religious character, RE is taught for 45 minutes or less in just 19% of schools and for 46 minutes or more in 81% of schools

	Agreed Syllabus Schools	Schools and Academies with a religious character	Other types of school, independents etc.	Academies or Free School without a religious character
None	0%	0%	5%	1%
1-15 mins	1%	1%	0%	1%
16-30 mins	11%	6%	9%	9%
31-45 mins	30%	12%	23%	23%
46-60 mins	55%	53%	41%	51%
61-75 mins	3%	22%	14%	11%
76+ mins	0%	6%	9%	3%





## 8. Changes to time allocated to the teaching of RE

Whilst around 57% of respondents stated that there had been no change in timetable time for RE in the last academic year, however, almost 31% (18% in 2018) said that time had been increased which is good news. **The most significant reasons given for the increase were:**

- Ofsted either comments in their inspection report, the Ofsted Framework, or the Ofsted research Review in RE 30%
- Change in senior management/subject leader 14%
- The introduction of a new Agreed Syllabus 16%
- Change to whole school curriculum design 36%

**Where there had been a decrease in timetable time for RE (only 4% of schools, 7% in 2018), the most significant reasons given were:**

- Other subjects taking priority 44%
- Change to the senior leadership team 29%

Change to time allocated to the teaching of RE	2018	2020	2022
Increase	17%	28%	31%
No Change	75%	68%	57%
Decrease	7%	4%	12%

Further good news is that this survey shows over a third (35%) of Academies without a religious character and almost a third (32%) of Agreed Syllabus Schools report increasing their time for RE in the last year. Fewer schools and academies with a religious character reported an increase in timetable time almost certainly because as the table above shows, they already typically offer more time for the teaching of RE.

	Decrease	Increase	No change
Academies without a religious character	9%	35%	48%
Agreed Syllabus Schools	8%	32%	50%
Schools including academies with a religious character	13%	23%	60%

## **9. Withdrawal from Religious Education**

### **Table 10 – Withdrawal**

23% of schools reported that there was some withdrawal from RE in the last academic year. This represents an increase from 16% in 2018.

Reasons cited were:

- membership of a particular religious or non-religious tradition e.g. Jehovah’s Witness, Muslim, Humanist, Plymouth Brethren, Christian = 49% of withdrawals
- A wish that the child should not be taught about one named tradition: e.g. Islam, Christianity or Hinduism
- A wish that the child only be taught about Christianity 8% (a decrease from 14% in 2020)
- A wish that the child only be taught about the home religion = 4%
- Withdrawal from trips and visits to non-Christian places of worship 1%
- Withdrawal but no reason given 20%

## **10. 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. The 2013 an All Party Parliamentary 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 more than 50% of schools.

- 37% of schools in 2022 (47% in 2020) say this does not happen in their school
- 63% in 2022 (53% in 2020) allow some RE to be taught by non-teaching staff.
- In more than 1 in 4 schools between more than 25% of RE is delivered in this way.

## 11. Religious and non-religious 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 in 2022 and that Judaism and Islam are also almost always taught in primary schools. Hinduism features clearly in 75% of primaries and Sikhism in just over half of them. Non-religious worldviews are now specifically taught in 65% of schools.

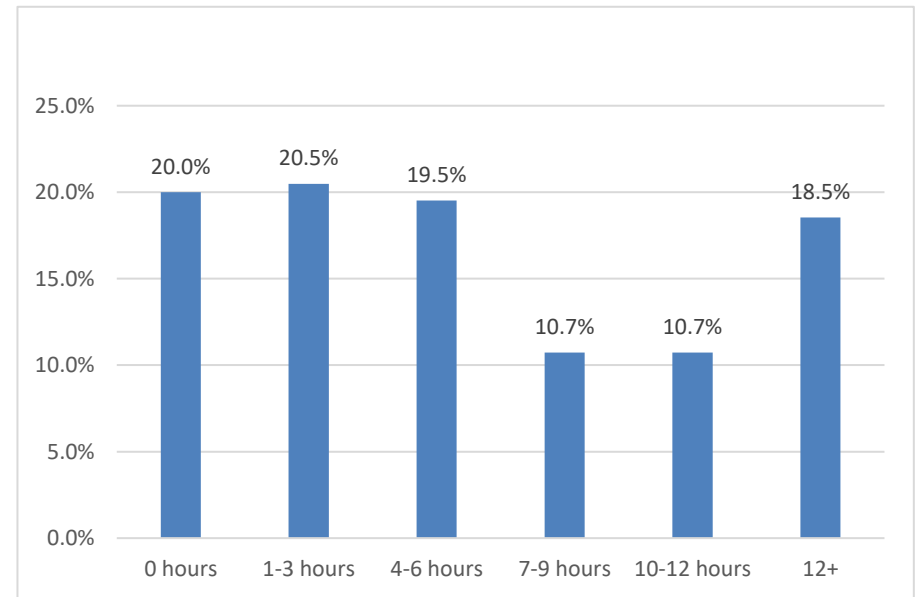
	2018	2020	2022		2018	2020	2022
Christianity	99%	92%	91%	Buddhism	64%	65%	44%
Judaism	93%	88%	82%	Sikhi	78%	65%	52%
Islam	95%	91%	85%	Non-Religious World Views	51%	70%	65%
Hindu Dharma	89%	83%	76%	Other religious worldviews e.g. Bahá'í	n/a	8%	6%

## 12. Training for RE in Initial Teacher Education

The data below shows that Initial Teacher Education is not adequately preparing newly qualified primary teachers to deliver Religious Education. We asked those who had qualified in the last five years to answer this question. Table 13 shows that the average primary teacher has received fewer and fewer hours training in RE since our first survey in 2016. More than half received between 0 and 3 hours of training in the subject and more than one in five received no training at all.

**Table 13**

Hours of RE training received in ITT	2018	2020	2022
0		22%	20.0%
1 – 3 hours (0-3 in 2018)	44%	55%	20.5%
4 – 6 hours	24%	21%	19.5%
7 – 12 hours	21%	16%	21.5%
> 12 hours	10%	8%	18.5%



### 13.(a) Levels of confidence in teaching RE

**Table 14**

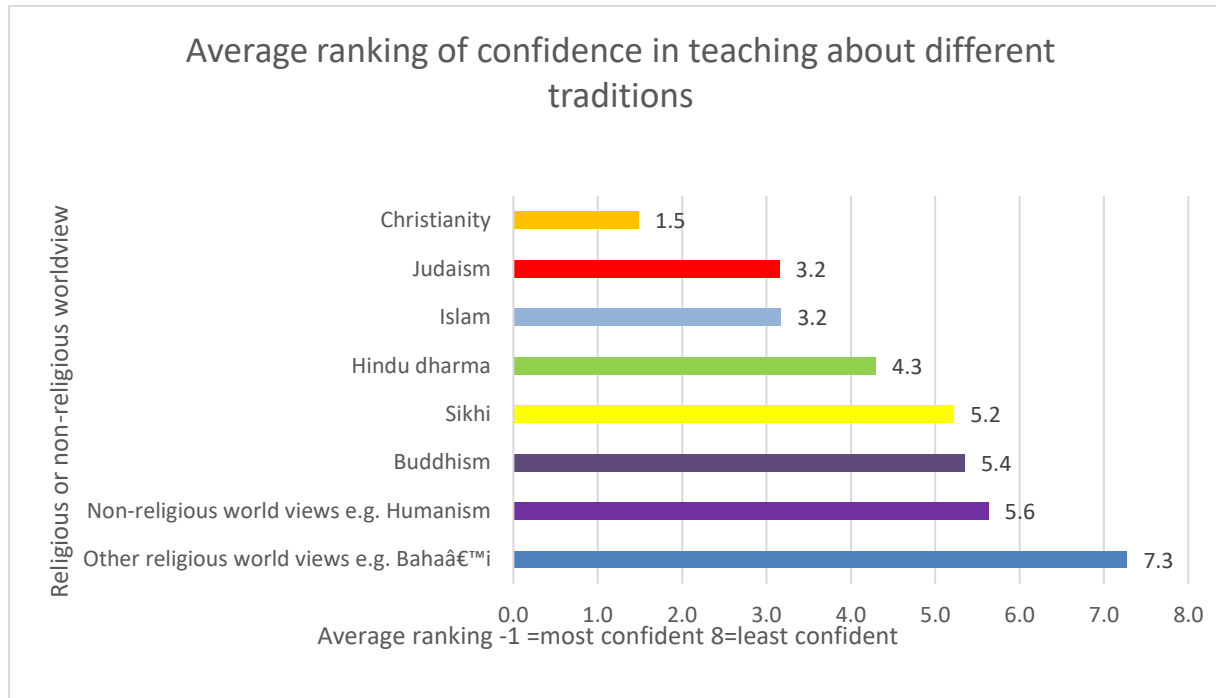
Similar to 2018 and 2020, the overwhelming majority of those responding to our survey in 2022 reported feeling either reasonably confident or very confident about how (93%) and what (93%) to teach RE. However, only just over 40% (34.4% in 2020) of respondents claim to feel very confident about either of these areas which is disappointing given that the majority of our respondents were subject leaders for RE, responsible for leading others in Religious Education.

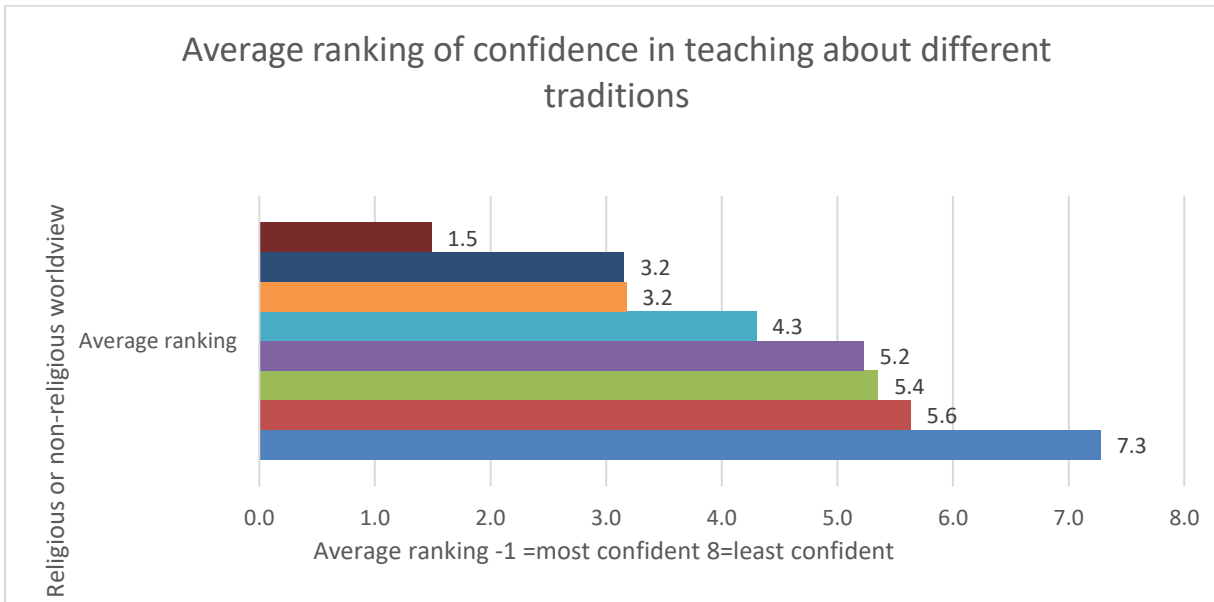
In contrast, they report that their colleagues do not share this confidence judging that only 55% feel either reasonably confident or very confident about how and 63% about what to teach in RE. The most likely explanation for this difference can be seen in the figures for CPD. Whereas subject leaders report that they have received training in RE during the year, far less of their colleagues receive RE training.

	2022	2020	2022	2020	2022	2020	2022	2020	2022	2020
	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		-	1%	0.4%	6%	9.2%	51%	56.1%	42%	34.3%
My level of confidence about what to teach in RE		-	1%	1.1%	8%	10.1%	52%	54.5%	39%	33.9%
My colleague's level of confidence about how to teach RE		13.9%	4%	3.9%	41%	30.5%	48%	47.6%	7%	4.1%
My colleague's level of confidence about what to teach in RE		11.3%	4%	3.4%	33%	24.1%	49%	49.6%	14%	11.6%

#### **14 (b) Confidence in teaching religious and non-religious worldviews**

We asked primary teachers to rank the religions and beliefs they taught in order of their confidence in teaching them (1 being the most confident and 8 the least). Buddhism, non-religious and other religious worldviews were the traditions that commanded the least confidence, Christianity the most.





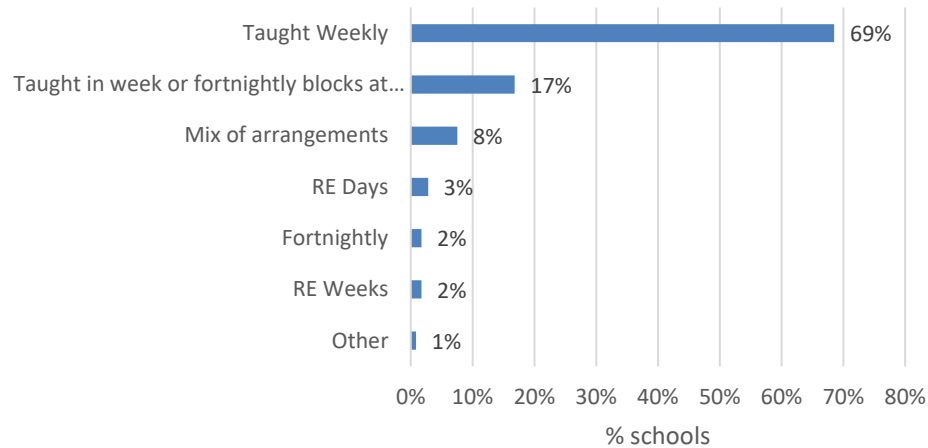
**14(c) How is RE delivered on the school timetable in 2022?**

The majority of schools 69% (80% in 2020) included weekly lessons as a means of delivering their RE provision

Just over 17% (12% in 2020) provided weekly or fortnightly blocks of time for the subject at certain times of the year

2% used RE weeks and 3% RE Days

### How is RE organised on the timetable?

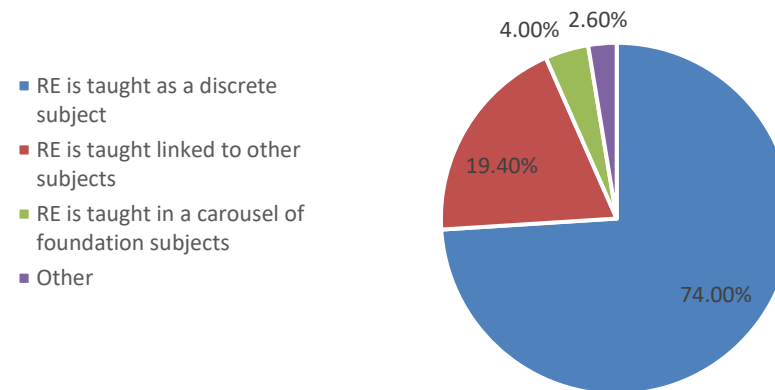


#### 14(d)

#### What is the relationship between the teaching of RE and that of other subjects?

RE is taught as a discrete subject in almost three-quarters of the respondent schools. Where RE is taught in a carousel of foundation subjects or is linked to the teaching of other subjects, it is unclear as to whether the aims of RE are fully met. This issue requires further investigation.

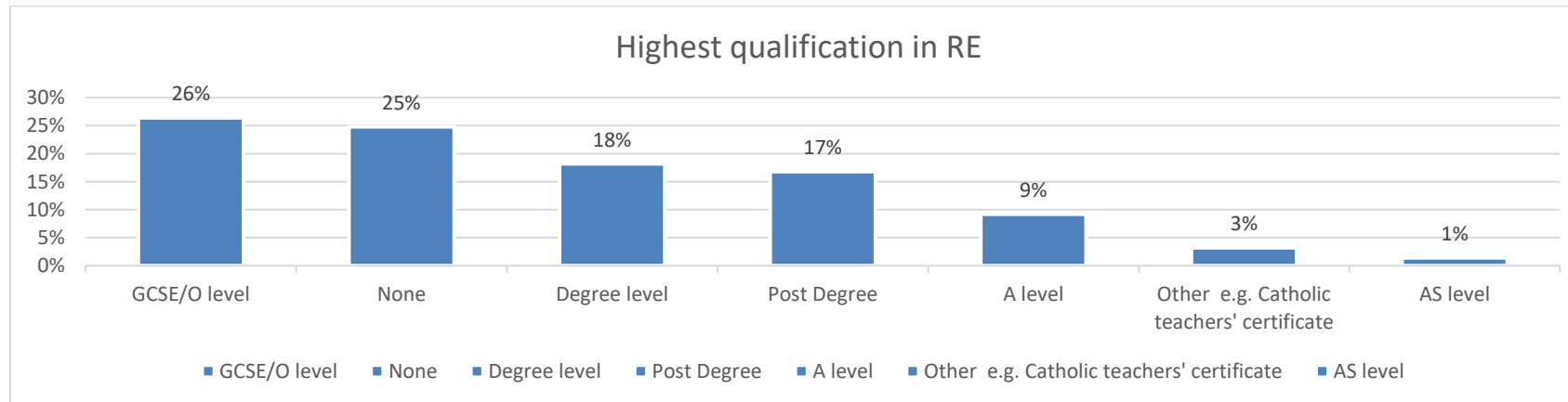
#### What is the relationship between the timetabling of RE and other subjects?



## Teacher qualifications in Religious Education 2022

**Table 15 –Highest RE Qualification**

The level of qualification in RE of primary teachers has continued to increase. This is likely not to be a finding unique to RE since those teachers who joined the profession before a degree was the expectation, are now reaching retirement age. Likewise, the number of teachers with post-graduate qualifications is increasing. However, it is likely that new teachers are now coming into the profession who were 16-18 years old during the period that the short course was introduced and almost 40% of pupils were leaving school with a qualification in Religious Studies (RS). With short course entries in rapid 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.



### **14. Compliance with legal requirements on RE provision**

The same proportion of respondents reported that legal requirements are met in their school as in previous years. 96% responded in the affirmative in both 2020 and 2022



## 15. Training

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

Table 16 – RE training in the past 12 months

- (i) Just under one in 5 (20.5%) primary teachers received **no** RE training in the past year. This is a slight improvement from 2018 when the figure was almost 30%
- (ii) 70% of primary teachers received one day of RE training or more in the past year. It should be noted that this group are largely those responsible for leading RE in their school so the fact that just under a third of them had so little training is a concern.

RE specific training days in previous 12 months	2018	2020	2022
0	29.4%	20.5%	20%
0.25	8.6%		
0.5	6.1%	8.8%	10%
1	18.4%	21.8%	19%
1.5	4.1%	8.6%	8%
2	14.9%	16.3%	19%
2.5		1.5%	3%
3	8.4%	11.5%	7%
More than 3	10.0%	11.0%	14%

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

**Table 17:**

Just over a quarter of teachers in our respondents' schools received no training (not even staff meeting) in RE at all. The number in this position decreased slightly from almost 32% in 2020. Around 73% primary teachers reported receiving one day or less of training in the year in 2022 but this an improvement on 2020 when around 80% . Note the response of 0.25 was not asked in 2020 and 2.5 days was not an option in 2016 and 2018.

RE specific training days in previous 12 months	2018	2020	2022
0	28.6%	31.9%	27%
0.25	21.7%		
0.5	14.9%	29.1%	34%
1	17.8%	20.3%	15%
1.5	2.5%	4.6%	8%
2	7.4%	7.5%	8%
2.5		0.4%	1%
3	3.9%	3.1%	3%
More than 3	3.3%	3.1%	3%

**15. Does RE appear in your school SEF/SDP/SIP 2022?**

70% of those that knew the answer to this question that RE does appear in the school development plan, 30% said it did not.