

## Some good news at last: Is the tide beginning to turn? Source: DfE school census Nov 2020 published June 2021

**Background:** In the late summer of 2018, NATRE published a report based on the school workforce data collection in 2016<sup>1</sup> and this was subsequently reported by the Commission on RE in the autumn of that year. The data demonstrated that *provision for RE had reached an all-time low. Not only were significant numbers of schools offering no RE but also there were wide variations between different types of school.* This report provides an update based on 2020 data published in June 2021. The good news is that the number of schools reporting no hours of Religious Education has decreased significantly in all types of school.

**The Commission on Religious Education, *Religion and Worldviews: the way forward* reported as follows:**

*“There is an increasing disparity of provision and support for RE in schools of a religious character and schools without a religious character. Over a third of schools and over 40% of academies without a religious character offered no RE in Year 11 in 2016, compared to 11% of schools with a religious character. Across Key Stage 4, 27% of schools and 35% of academies without a religious character offered no RE, compared to 7% of schools with a religious character.”<sup>2</sup>*

### Specific findings

1. The number of state-funded secondary schools reporting that they make zero hours of provision in year 11 has fallen from more than 40% to just under 23%. We believe that the most likely explanation for this change is the implementation of the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (May 2019). This framework introduced a clearer focus on the curriculum during inspection. When the 2019 workforce data was collected (November 2019), curricular decisions for 2019-2020 will already have been made. A year later however, in November 2020, there was a much greater understanding of the expectation set out in the framework, and it appears that in the curriculum reviews that took place, many schools that had previously cut time for RE or removed it entirely, revised their decisions.
2. On the other hand, there are still around 500 secondary schools reporting zero hours and in many of these schools, pupils will not be receiving their entitlement to RE.
3. Just under a third (29.7%) of Academies without a religious character reported providing zero hours for Religious Education in year 11. This represents a decrease in non-compliance by around 20% .
4. The number of schools that report offering no provision in year 11 has decreased in schools required to follow a locally Agreed Syllabus too. In 2019, the number of schools reporting offering zero hours in year 11 was 38.5% and this has decreased to 20.5%.
5. It should be noted that the average percentage of curriculum time in year 11 is inflated by those schools where GCSE RS is offered. Pupils studying this course, typically spend approximately 10% of curriculum time (120-140 guided learning hours) on a GCSE as recommended by Ofqual. The increase in the number of all schools offering less than 3% of curriculum time in year 11 (around 45 minutes on average) remains a concern. However, this figure has reduced from 65.3% of schools to 54.6%; a decrease of more than 10% in just one year.

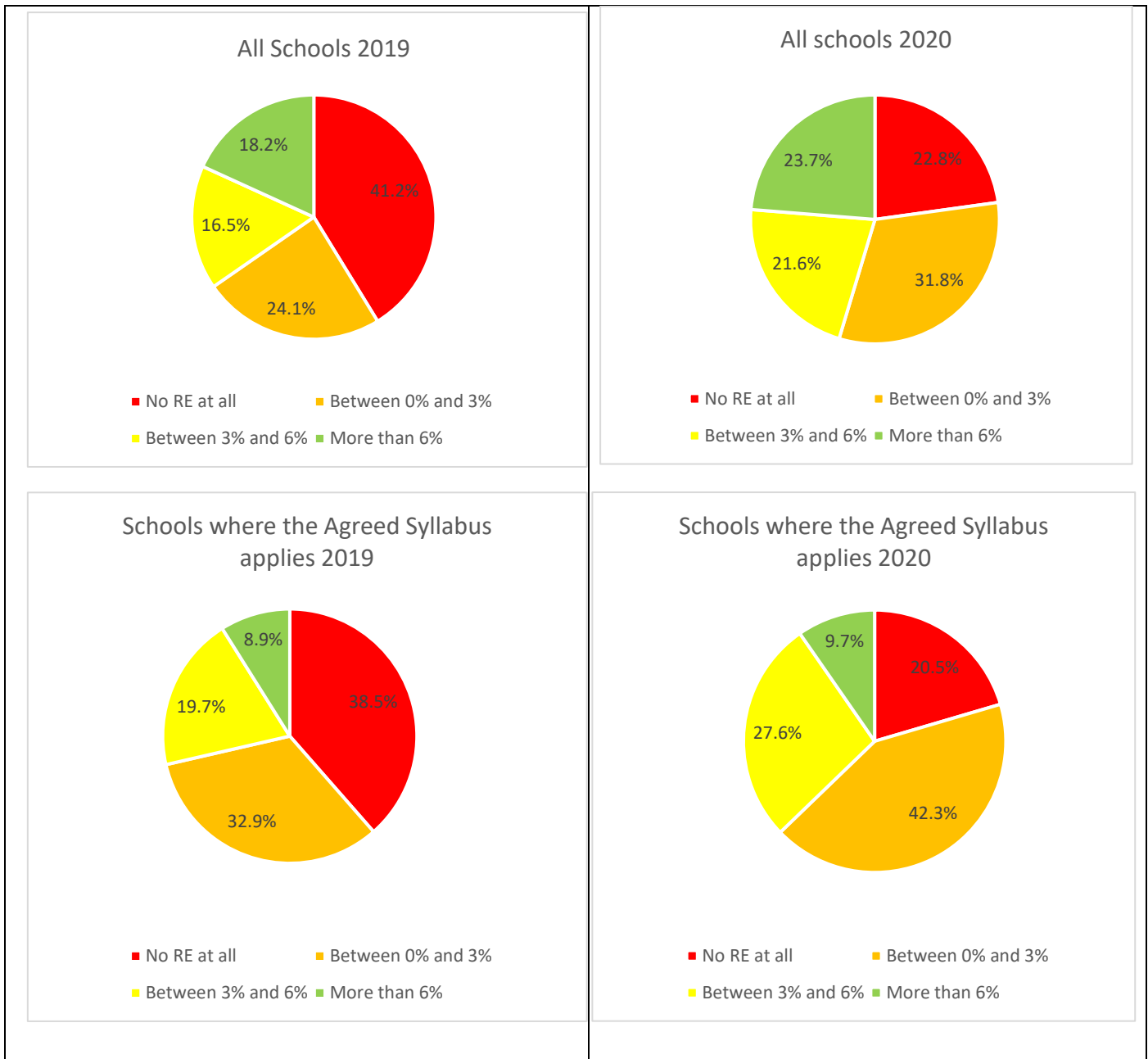
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<sup>1</sup>

<https://www.natre.org.uk/uploads/Free%20Resources/NATRE%20Report%20on%20the%20provision%20for%20RE%202018.pdf>

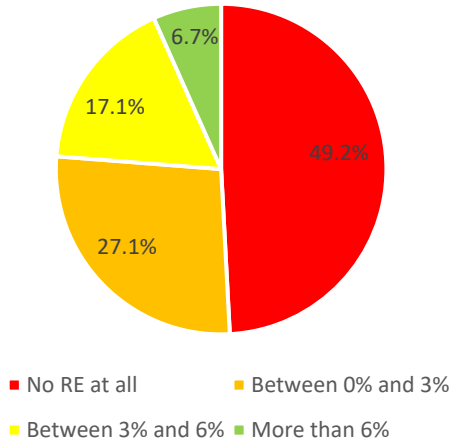
<sup>2</sup> Page 23. Final Report of the Commission on Religious Education (September 2018) <https://www.commissiononre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Final-Report-of-the-Commission-on-RE.pdf>

School Workforce data: Percentage of timetable time spent on RE as reported by schools

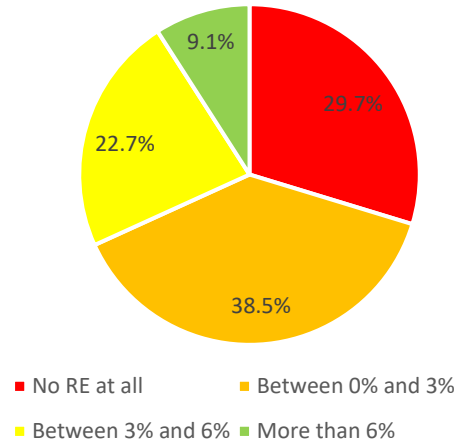


### Hours for RE in year 11 by type of school

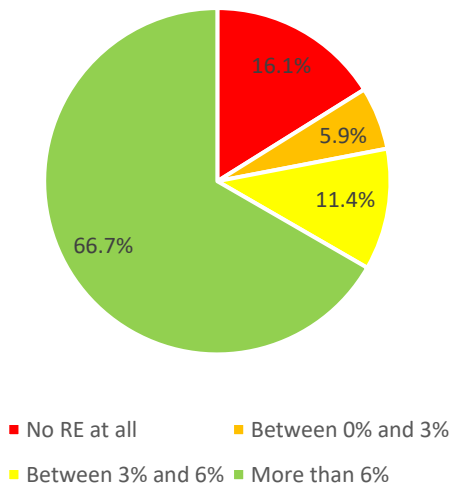
1. Academies without a religious character 2019



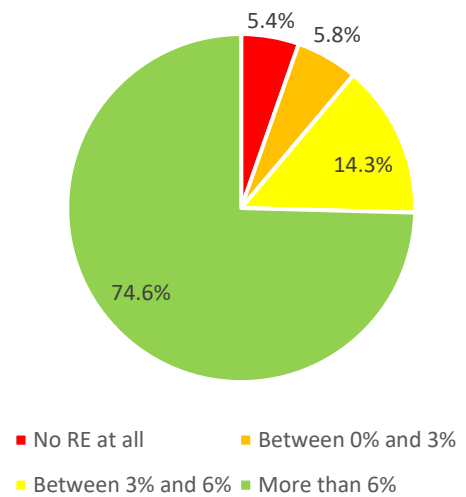
2. Academies without a religious character 2020



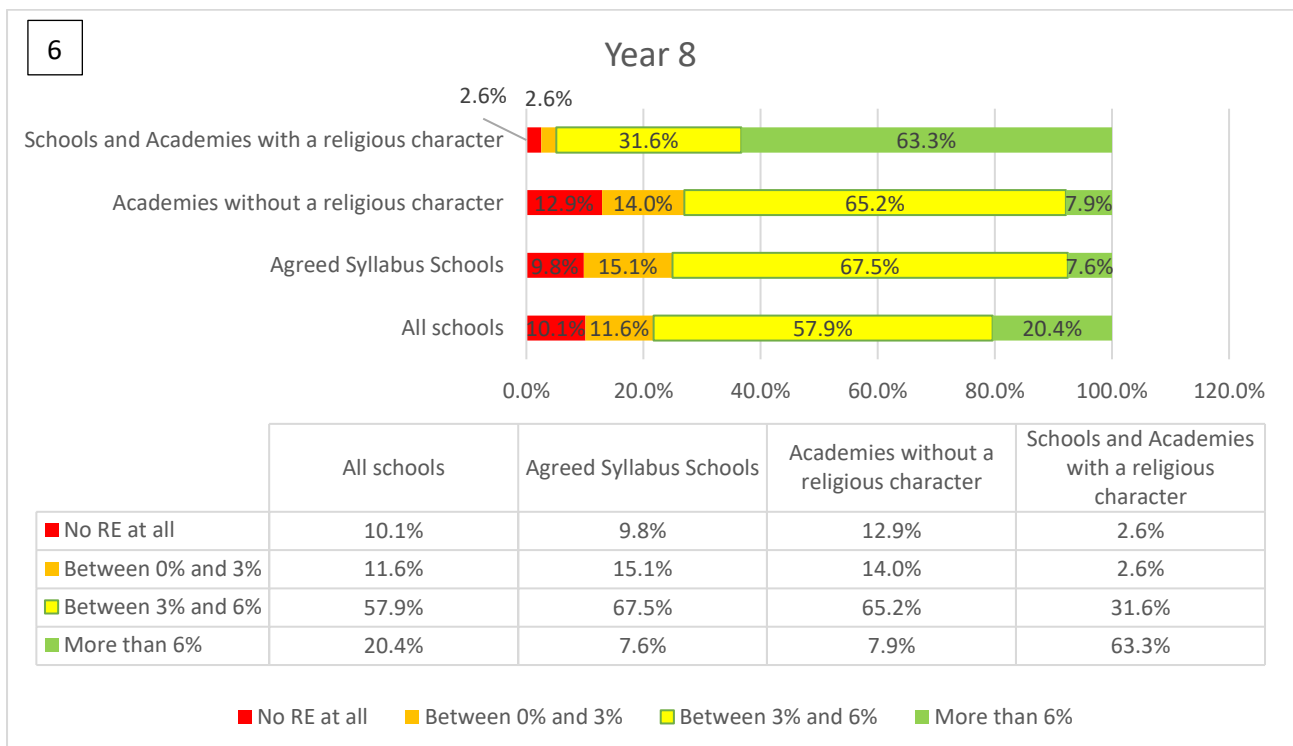
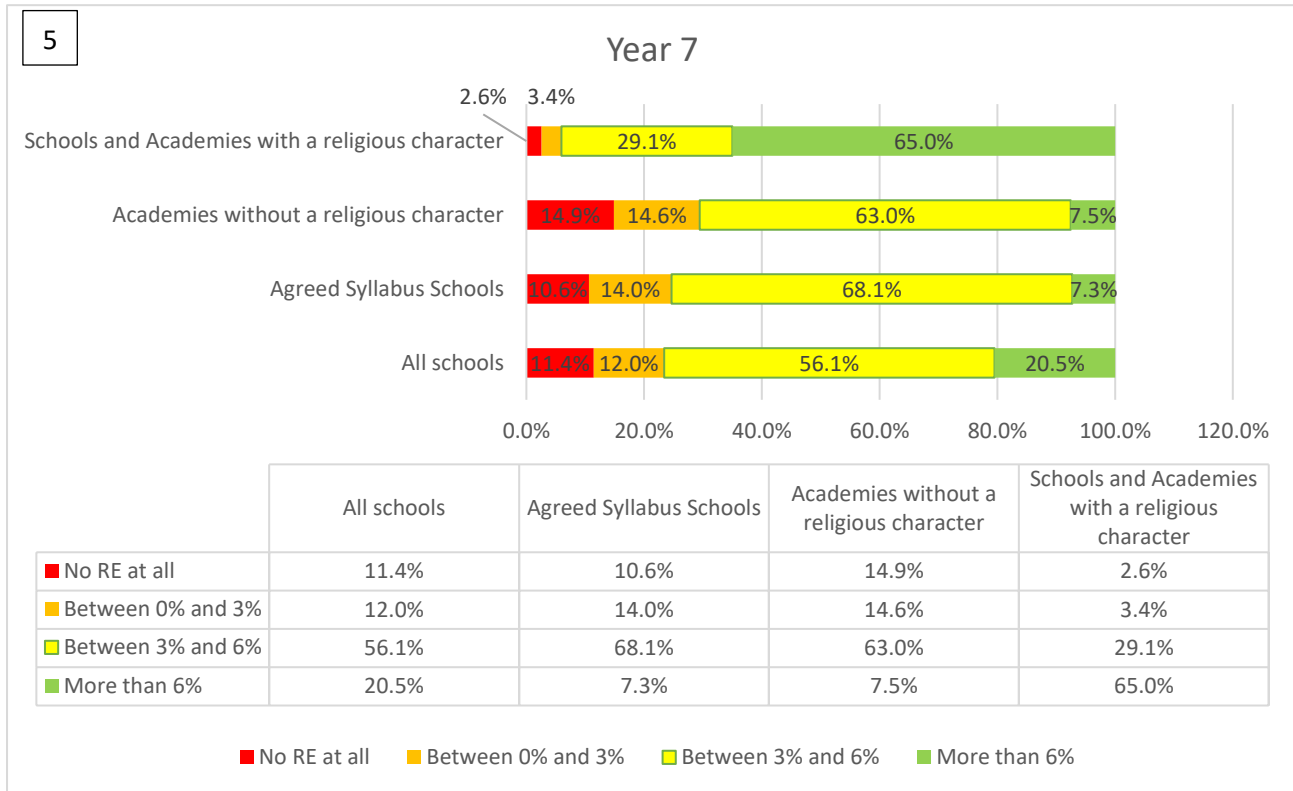
3. Schools and academies with a religious character 2019



4. Schools and academies with a religious character 2020

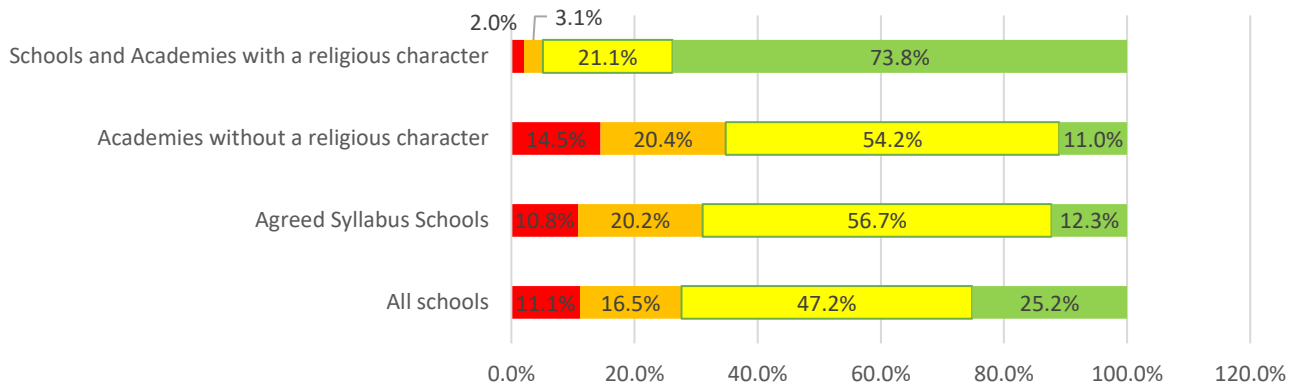


### Hours for RE in different types of school by year group



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### Year 9

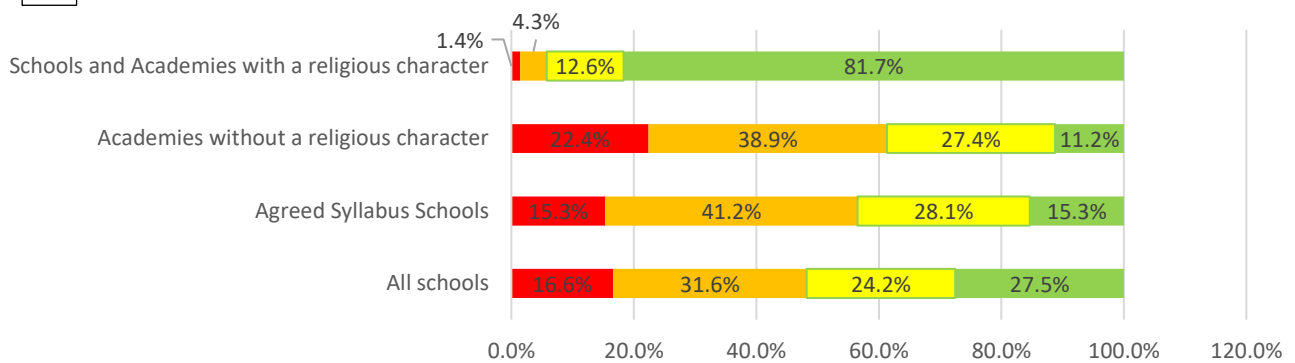


	All schools	Agreed Syllabus Schools	Academies without a religious character	Schools and Academies with a religious character
<span style="color: red;">■</span> No RE at all	11.1%	10.8%	14.5%	2.0%
<span style="color: orange;">■</span> Between 0% and 3%	16.5%	20.2%	20.4%	3.1%
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> Between 3% and 6%	47.2%	56.7%	54.2%	21.1%
<span style="color: green;">■</span> More than 6%	25.2%	12.3%	11.0%	73.8%

■ No RE at all  
 ■ Between 0% and 3%  
 ■ Between 3% and 6%  
 ■ More than 6%

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### Year 10

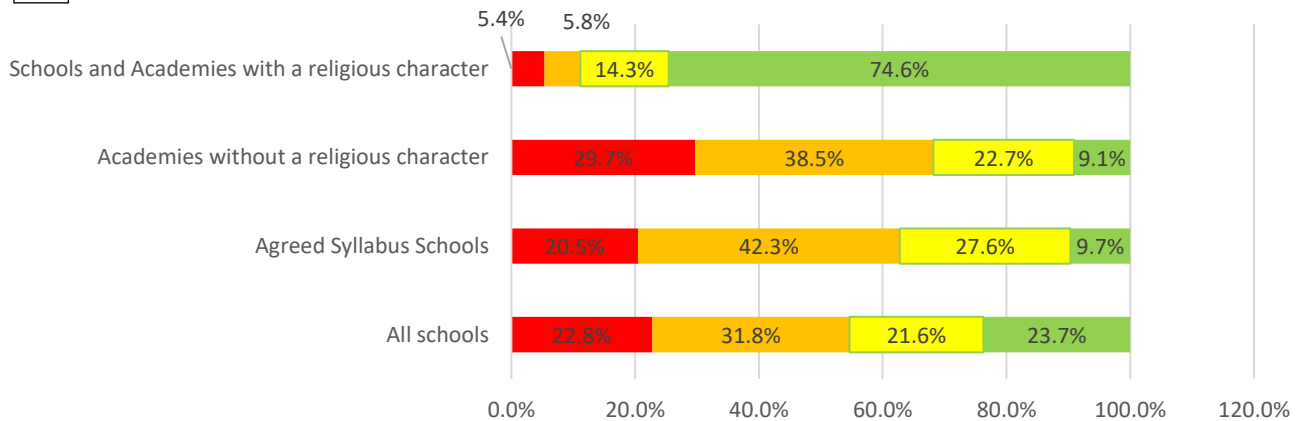


	All schools	Agreed Syllabus Schools	Academies without a religious character	Schools and Academies with a religious character
<span style="color: red;">■</span> No RE at all	16.6%	15.3%	22.4%	1.4%
<span style="color: orange;">■</span> Between 0% and 3%	31.6%	41.2%	38.9%	4.3%
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> Between 3% and 6%	24.2%	28.1%	27.4%	12.6%
<span style="color: green;">■</span> More than 6%	27.5%	15.3%	11.2%	81.7%

■ No RE at all  
 ■ Between 0% and 3%  
 ■ Between 3% and 6%  
 ■ More than 6%

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### Year 11



	All schools	Agreed Syllabus Schools	Academies without a religious character	Schools and Academies with a religious character
■ No RE at all	22.8%	20.5%	29.7%	5.4%
■ Between 0% and 3%	31.8%	42.3%	38.5%	5.8%
■ Between 3% and 6%	21.6%	27.6%	22.7%	14.3%
■ More than 6%	23.7%	9.7%	9.1%	74.6%

■ No RE at all   ■ Between 0% and 3%   ■ Between 3% and 6%   ■ More than 6%

The tables above demonstrate that the challenges of finding curriculum time for RE are more acute in key stage 4 than 3. However, if pupils in one in ten schools are not receiving their entitlement to a high-quality religious education in key stage 3 (see tables 5-7), urgent action should be taken to address this issue. The unintended consequences for provision of RE of the current set of performance measures is well documented. However, school leaders are not above the law. If most schools with a religious character (see tables 3 and 4) are able to find time for RE and still perform well in performance tables, it is difficult for leaders in other types of school to use this as a justification for neglecting their responsibilities regarding RE.

**NATRE calls on the government to act urgently to ensure all pupils in all schools receive a rigorous religious education. Specifically, they must implement the National Plan for RE recommended by the Commission for RE.**

**Note on School workforce Data based on information from DfE:** The School Workforce Census collects curriculum information from a large sample of secondary schools. Curriculum information is requested from all secondary, middle deemed secondary and all-through schools, including relevant academy schools, with timetabling software that interfaces with their Management Information System. The information collected relates to teaching in one selected week in autumn each year. If a school operates a timetable cycle covering two or more weeks the DfE request an average figure, representative of one week’s teaching. If the school cannot provide that average, then a figure to represent a typical week should have been provided. As such, figures should be treated with caution.

Around 3,000 secondary schools – more than 80% of all secondary schools make a School Workforce Census return in any one year. However, not all schools provide complete curriculum information -where returned information on curriculum is mostly incomplete, the data for these schools has been removed from the analysis.

