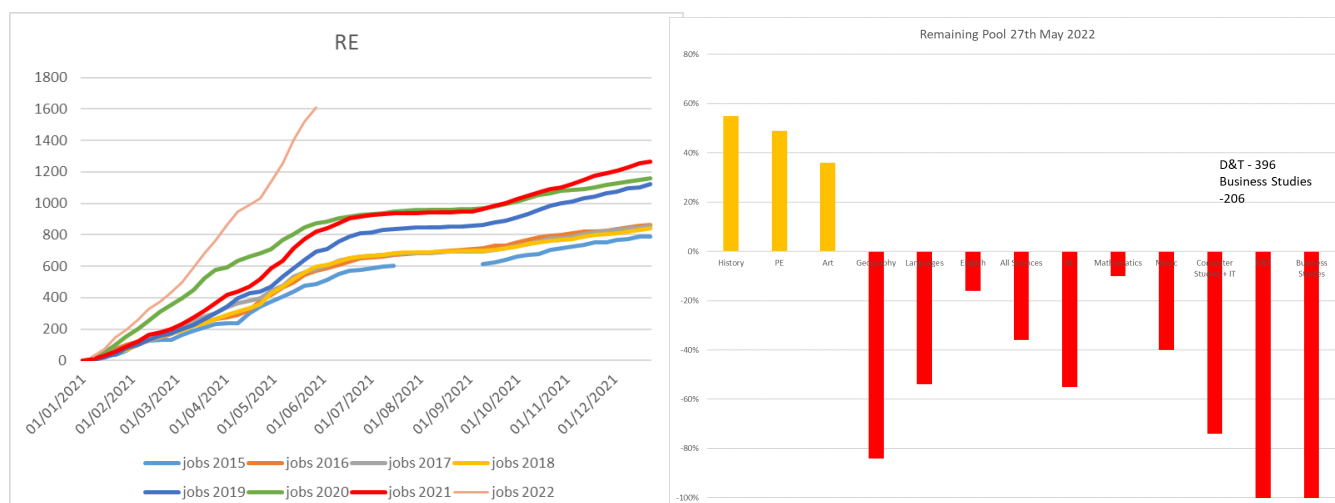


## How the Department for Education has managed to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory.

Last summer NATRE reported that since the revised Ofsted framework triggered a significant review of the curriculum in most schools, 23% of schools reported an increase in provision for RE<sup>1</sup>. After years of decline almost certainly caused by changes in performance measures and the subject being left out of the English Baccalaureate, this was a very welcome piece of good news. However, looking at the posts advertised in the Times Educational Supplement, on Friday, 27<sup>th</sup> May, just under 100 RE posts appeared, continuing the pattern of a buoyant recruitment season this year. (see TeachVac graph below left which does not include Teach First or other school-led trainees in the pool).



Sadly however, the government’s teacher supply model failed to recognise the increase in demand for RE specialists. This means that the opportunity to put more RE trained specialists in front of children, will be missed. Put simply, according to TeachVac (see graph above right), more than 50% more posts have been advertised than there are trainees to fill them. Even taking account of repeat advertisements, this can only be described as a disaster. RE is not alone in this situation, notice other non-EBacc subjects with no bursaries, like Design and Technology amongst the subjects in crisis.

So how did we get here? Firstly, no bursaries were offered to encourage graduates in Theology and Religious Studies to join the profession in 2021-22 – typically only about 100 of those graduates take up careers in education any way. In addition, insufficient graduates in other subjects such as philosophy, social sciences, and law, who have in the past made up the majority of the 500-600 trainees required to meet demand each year, decided to train in RE in the 2021-22 training year.

The DfE on the other hand was congratulating itself on recruiting to 99% of the target for 2021-2022, using it as a justification for failing to offer bursaries yet again in 2022-23. What they didn’t mention however, was that for some unfathomable reason, it had chosen to cut the target from **643** in 2017/8 and 2018/19 in steps to just **470** in 2021/2022. I guess cutting the target is one way to ensure you meet it in the following year!

The DfE School workforce data shows that a quarter of lessons of secondary RE are taught by those who have not been trained to do so. The equivalent figure for EBacc subjects is 12.2%. Schools Minister Robin Walker MP admitted this shameful fact in answer to a parliamentary question tabled by Luke Pollard MP [here](#). You’d be forgiven for thinking the Teachers’ Standards do not apply to RE (see below), especially given the NATRE evidence<sup>2</sup> showing how frequently RE is used to fill the timetable of teachers who spend most of their time teaching another subject.

<sup>1</sup> Point 11. <https://www.natre.org.uk/uploads/NATRE%20EBacc%20Survey%202021%20final.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Point 12 <https://www.natre.org.uk/uploads/NATRE%20EBacc%20Survey%202021%20final.pdf>

## Teachers' Standards excerpt - DfE



### 3. Demonstrate good subject and curriculum knowledge

- have a secure knowledge of the relevant subject(s) and curriculum areas, foster and maintain pupils' interest in the subject, and address misunderstandings
- demonstrate a critical understanding of developments in the subject and curriculum areas, and promote the value of scholarship

### What do the teachers say? Here is a sample of their comments .....

*We are re-advertising a post which saw no-one apply first time around! (West Sussex)*

*Yep, struggling to recruit for September*

*I think this isn't just RE related but a teaching issue across the board. I have been teaching 7 years, and have debated leaving twice - but now the third time is going to be for good sadly.*

*One of the schools I support in the north west is also struggling to recruit!*

*Yes, we advertised a post and had very few applicants of those that applied 2 pulled out as they got posts elsewhere first. Our SCITT is also struggling to recruit RS applicants for next year.*

*We advertised and did not appoint, we're having a hard time appointing for September and have already started looking at long term supply until December at least. We're a Greater Manchester school.*

*We advertised for an RE/PSHE teacher, no success. Readvertised and got a new head of PSHE but now need a full time RE teacher. We had no one apply at all, even for a highly successful school in ... Cambridgeshire with connections with training teachers at the Faculty of Education. Will be relying on supply to start with and hope to advertise again in the autumn term.*

*Yep. We're struggling to recruit. Noticed a massive decline in applicants since the local university stopped offering RE as a teacher training option*

*We advertised and only had one applicant. They were unsuitable so it's out to advert again.*

### What are the options available to school leaders who have completed their timetabling for 2022-23 and advertised two or even three times for a teacher of RE?

1. Use a supply teacher to fill the timetable temporarily and advertise again?
2. Fill the RE teacher gap with another member of the teaching staff who has another specialism and who has a little capacity on their timetable?
3. Amend the timetable to reduce the size of the teacher gap, i.e. cut the RE provision?
4. Re-advertise for a teacher of RE and perhaps History? The data above suggests there may still be History trainees looking for work.

NATRE calls upon the government to

1. initiate a National Plan for RE – complete with an element to address the barriers to the delivery of the White Paper commitment to an excellent teacher of RE for every child.
2. Review the teacher supply model to take account of the number of teacher specialisms in the workforce
3. RE-introduce bursaries for secondary trainee teachers of RE who will train from September 2022.

This article has been produced with the support of Professor John Howson of [TeachVac](https://www.teachvac.co.uk). He has asked us to pass on the following message: "TeachVac's new Premium Service is now available for the priority matching of teaching vacancies with jobseekers. The No match: No fee scheme puts vacancies from registered users at the top of TeachVac's daily match list sent to registered users for just £1 per match. Reach 1,000 matches and all further matches in that year are free, so no school will pay more than £1,000 plus VAT. And no match: no fee. Visit [www.teachvac.co.uk](https://www.teachvac.co.uk) and send us an email at [dataforeducation@gmail.com](mailto:dataforeducation@gmail.com)