

# SACRE

## National and Local Updates 2013

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### National

There has been a lot of activity nationally around Religious Education in recent months.

- In July, Michael Gove addressed the **Church of England Seminar** on education. When asked about the undermining of RE in schools, he admitted that Government policies had had a negative impact on RE. He said he had thought that, because schools had to provide RE lessons, the subject was 'protected'.

*"I think RE has suffered as a result of my belief that the protection that it had in the curriculum was sufficient, and I don't think that I've done enough".*

He assured attendees that he would address the issue and would work with faith groups and others.

- On 6 October, the **RE Ofsted long report** was published and received a lot of press coverage on TV, radio and newspapers. This report summarises findings from 185 school inspections which solely focused on RE provision (achievement, teaching, curriculum and leadership and management of RE). The report highlights several areas of weakness, including the role government has played in undermining RE, as well as poor subject knowledge and lack of understanding of purpose of RE amongst teachers. Alan Brine, HMI and Ofsted's National Adviser for RE, is the author of this report. He came to speak to teachers at the Durham RE Conference last March and will do so again on 21 March 2014.
- On 23 October, the Religious Education Council (REC) published the **National Framework for RE (non-statutory)** - this has replaced the 2004 NSNF. This has been signed by Michael Gove but no government funding has been provided in the review and publication of this document.

The Framework has been published in an attempt to bring RE in line with the new programmes of study for National Curriculum subjects.

The introduction does state that this Framework is designed to "provide a basis for developing locally agreed syllabuses and RE syllabuses in academies and free schools".

This National Framework for RE **DOES NOT** replace the statutory duty of Local Authorities to revise and provide a locally Agreed Syllabus for RE and for community schools to use this in the teaching of RE.

### Local

- Termly RE networks continue this year, with the addition of a RE network specifically for special schools. Isobel continues to run these.
- The Local Authority have received a lot of queries and telephone calls over the last few months connected with various issues around RE and Collective Worship, particularly in relation to parental withdrawal. This remains a very sensitive area and both schools and parents are keen to have clear advice.

Isobel has spoken to primary inspectors in relation to these matters, including the legal position of RE and the duty to ensure that RE is provided for all pupils in school.