

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION & SACREs IN PROTECTING WHAT MATTERS

Key points from the MHCLG publication



1 COHESION & PURPOSE OF RE

1. RE is explicitly linked to social cohesion.

The paper situates RE within a wider education offer that supports cohesion, stating that education reforms will

“strengthen citizenship, British history, and religious education.”

This places RE alongside subjects seen as central to building shared understanding and social cohesion.

2. Faith and belief literacy is positioned as a public good.

The paper emphasises that improving understanding of religion and belief can promote

“inclusivity, understanding and respect.”

RE is implicitly part of this wider aim to strengthen religious literacy.

3. RE sits within a broader values and cohesion agenda.

The positioning of RE alongside aims such as promoting tolerance and tackling division reflects the paper’s wider concern with

“a more confident, cohesive and resilient United Kingdom.”

RE is therefore embedded in a cross-government cohesion strategy.

2 STANDARDS & CURRICULUM DIRECTION

4. Government commits to raising standards in RE.

The document includes a clear commitment to

“drive up standards in the teaching of Religious Education.”

This is one of the most direct policy statements on RE in the paper.

5. Possible inclusion of RE in the National Curriculum is signalled.

The paper states:

“We will carefully consider including Religious Education in the national curriculum, subject to the sector reaching consensus on the content and approach to delivery.”

This frames inclusion as conditional on sector agreement rather than a confirmed reform.

6. Supportive direction, but limited operational detail.

While the language is positive—e.g. “drive up standards” and “carefully consider including” RE in the national curriculum—the paper does not set out implementation mechanisms, funding, or timelines. The commitment remains high-level and contingent, particularly on

“the sector reaching consensus.”

3 SACREs – ROLE & RECOGNITION

7. SACREs are explicitly recognised at national level.

The executive summary commits to

“promote the role of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs)”

This is a notable acknowledgement of SACREs within a cross-government policy document.

8. Focus on SACRE annual reports as a national evidence base.

The paper adds that this will be done by

“supporting improved analysis of their annual reports to better understand the role they play in communities.”

This elevates SACRE reporting as a tool for national insight, not just local accountability.

9. SACREs are framed as contributors to community cohesion.

Through the emphasis on understanding their

“role... in communities”

the paper implies SACREs are valued not only for syllabus and standards work, but also for their contribution to cohesion and inter-faith understanding.

4 POLICY POSITIONING

10. RE gains cross-government (not just DfE) visibility.

Because the commitments sit within an Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government publication rather than a DfE-only document, RE is being recognised as relevant to community policy, integration and resilience, not solely curriculum policy.

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

OVERALL POLICY SHAPE

RE is positioned as a cohesion tool

SACREs are positioned as community actors

National Curriculum inclusion is possible but conditional

Direction is positive but not yet operational

Commitment remains high-level and contingent, particularly on “the sector reaching consensus.”