

## **The new Ofsted Education Framework (EIF)- implications for the teaching of RE and Collective Worship**

This report is to be read alongside the letter from Neil Lawson from the DfE dated 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2019 regarding compliance with the duty to teach RE to Paul Smalley Chair of NASACRE. See Appendix.

There is hope that the teaching of religious education (RE) in schools will improve thanks to changes made in the way regulator Ofsted inspects. Campaigners for better RE say the new school inspection framework will put more pressure on schools to prioritise the subject. It's understood two-day long inspections will now put greater emphasis on the broad curriculum while a small number of subjects will also be chosen as a focus for examination. These subjects could include religious education.

Ben Wood from the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE) in a recent interview stated that this is a good change of direction.

*He said: 'Ofsted are really pushing the sense that they want a curriculum to be broad. I think there is a sense for people, both in education and the wider public of what's gone on in schools has been narrowed recently and there's a number of reasons for that. But what Ofsted are doing here is a saying that school curriculum has to be broad. And that means that while English, maths and science are important so is RE, and history, and geography, and art, and music, and PE, they're all important, they all have a role to play. It's very heartening to hear Ofsted saying that within that curriculum, RE has a crucial role to play.'*

He added, *"This is an important step in the right direction. The new Ofsted framework will mean that both provision for, and, quality of RE has a much higher profile during Ofsted inspections and, crucially, that it may be one of the subjects chosen for a deep dive review. We look forward to seeing how Ofsted enact this new framework and NATRE will continue to work closely with Ofsted on these matters*

[REC Chief Executive](#), Rudolf Elliott Lockhart, said:

*'Maintained schools and academies are already legally required to provide religious education for all pupils in every year. This new inspection framework should make it easier for inspections to be used to hold schools to account for failing to give pupils the RE to which they are entitled. Greater accountability through inspection was one of the key recommendations of the Commission on RE report last year, so we are encouraged to see that Ofsted is taking measures to address this gap'*

### **Summary**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-the-curriculum>

The above referenced document from May 2019 shows how inspectors will be inspecting across a range of subjects in schools. They will be operating a three-stage model when evaluating the *quality of education* (this is at the heart of the inspection framework), which includes a scrutiny of the broad and balanced curriculum. The three-stage model includes:-

**Top level view-** this is where inspectors explore what subjects are on offer, and why and to whom.

**Deep dive-** this is where inspectors immerse them-selves completely in inspecting 3-5 subjects, gathering evidence on the intent, implantation and impact over this sample of subjects.

**Bringing it together-**this is where inspectors will bring together all the evidence and check whether subjects are delivered in a systematic manner, where inspectors gather additional evidence.

RE could be one of the 3-5 chosen subjects to be inspected.

Guidelines for inspections from September 2019 require schools to ensure pupils can reflect their own religious beliefs as well as having knowledge and respect for others. Schools will also have to prove that teachers have expert knowledge of the subjects that they teach.

## **Introduction**

The current framework, which is operation until September 2019, has offered a degree of accountability to schools, for example with references in Ofsted reports to schools achieving the RE Quality Mark. A small number of schools have been criticised for failure to provide RE at all. The current framework however does not lend itself to a thorough examination of the curriculum, especially because inspections can last only one day. One of the effects of this is that schools that are non-compliant with their Agreed Syllabus or in the case of academies, their funding agreements, appear to be inspected and not challenged about these failings at all.

The new framework- the Education Inspection Framework (EIF) reverses this trend.  
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework>)

Inspections will last two days and there will be a much greater emphasis on the curriculum, and this could just as easily be RE as any other subject.

A bonus from this approach is that over time, the information collected about each individual subject could (and should) be collated to create subject reports that identify national trends.

Schools will be inspected using 4 key judgement areas

- Quality of Education
- Behaviour and attitudes
- Personal development
- Leadership and management

And either Early Years education or 6<sup>th</sup> Form provision depending on the school phase.

They will use a four-point grading scale in all inspections to make the principal judgements: grade 1 – outstanding, grade 2 – good, grade 3 – requires improvement, grade 4 – inadequate.

## **Commentary in Detail**

Here are some sections of the school inspection handbook which you may find interesting:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/805369/School\\_inspection\\_handbook\\_S5\\_updated](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/805369/School_inspection_handbook_S5_updated)

1.Paragraph 14

*'in a risk assessment, we analyse: school workforce census data'*

This contains each secondary school's report on the number of hours of teaching provided in each school year for each subject. The National Association for the Teaching of RE (NATRE) are very interested in this report and will be encouraging Ofsted to flag any school reporting minimal or no hours of Religious Education using its algorithm so that this can be followed up during an inspection.

## 2. Paragraph 22

In addition, exempt schools may be inspected between risk assessments if:

*'We have received a qualifying complaint that, taken alongside other available evidence, suggests that we should inspect the school- concerns are identified about the curriculum (including if the statutory requirement to publish information to parents is not met)'*

SACREs, parents and others are beginning to use the formal complaints process when schools fail to provide the appropriate level of provision for RE. We will be seeking clarification from Ofsted about how complaints, especially those that reach the Secretary of State, can be made available to Ofsted inspectors.

## 3. Paragraph 44

OFSTED will:

*'report on any failure to comply with statutory requirements when they form part of the inspection framework and evaluation schedule, including those relating to the workforce'*

It is not clear if or how this might identify schools failing to meet statutory requirements in relation to RE and CW, but it's a start.

## 4. Paragraph 166

*'Before making a final judgement on overall effectiveness, inspectors will always consider the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school, ...'*

Attention to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the current framework for inspection has often led to mention of good practice in relation to RE in inspection reports. The new framework specifically mentions religious education in this section which should clarify expectations. (paragraph 216 and 219)

## 5. Paragraph 172

*'All pupils in maintained schools are expected to study the basic curriculum, which includes national curriculum, religious education and age-appropriate relationship and sex education. Academies are expected to offer all pupils a broad curriculum that should be similar in breadth and ambition.'*

*Footnote 68 "... academies must include English, mathematics, science and religious education in their curriculum.'*

This paragraph has the potential to have the greatest impact on the issue of accountability in RE. The expectation is that even given academy freedoms, (see 173 below), the curriculum should be similar in breadth and ambition as the curriculum offered in maintained schools. The implication is that just as the national curriculum is to be used as a benchmark for breadth and ambition for the core and foundation subjects, so the curriculum for RE must be as broad and ambitious as that required of LA maintained schools.

## 6. Paragraph 173

*'We will judge schools taking radically different approaches to the curriculum fairly. We recognise the importance of schools' autonomy to choose their own curriculum approaches. If leaders are able to show that they have thought carefully, that they have built a curriculum with appropriate coverage, content, structure and sequencing, and that it has been implemented effectively, then inspectors will assess a school's curriculum favourably'*

Some teachers have expressed concern about this paragraph because they believe it might provide a means of explaining away the lack of a rigorous and comprehensive RE curriculum. Time will tell if this concern is justified. It is difficult to see however, how a curriculum could be said to have 'appropriate coverage and content' if a subject which is so unequivocally listed as a requirement for inclusion were missing or covered in a tokenistic manner. We also note that the recent letter to NASACRE from the DFE clearly states that RE must be taught in all year groups. This is further emphasised in paragraph 177 below

## 7. Paragraph 177

*'Sources of evidence specific to curriculum intent. Inspectors will draw evidence about leaders' curriculum intent principally from discussion with senior and subject leaders. Inspectors will explore: whether leaders are following the national curriculum and basic curriculum or, in academies, a curriculum of similar breath and ambition'*

## 8. Paragraph 180 -181

### Implementation

Paragraph 180. *'In evaluating the implementation of the curriculum, inspectors will primarily evaluate how the curriculum is taught at subject and classroom level'*

Paragraph 181. *Research and inspection evidence suggest that the most important factors in how, and how effectively, the curriculum is taught and assessed are that: Teachers have expert knowledge of the subjects that they teach. If they do not, they are supported to address gaps in their knowledge so that pupils are not disadvantaged by ineffective teaching'*

Inspection reports based on the current Ofsted Framework frequently mention the detrimental impact of teachers' poor subject knowledge on the quality of RE. This is more frequently mentioned in reports on primary schools. The text in this paragraph of the new handbook is much clearer about expectations on schools.

## 9. Paragraph 216 and 219

Paragraph 216. Provision for the spiritual development of pupils includes developing their:

*'ability to be reflective about their own beliefs (religious or otherwise) and perspective on life knowledge of, and respect for, different people's faiths, feelings and values'*

Paragraph 219. Provision for the cultural development of pupils includes developing their:

*'ability to recognise, and value, the things we share in common across cultural, religious, ethnic and socio-economic communities interest in exploring, improving understanding of and showing respect for different faiths and cultural diversity and the extent to which they understand, accept, respect and celebrate diversity. This is shown by their respect and attitudes towards different religious, ethnic and socio-economic groups in the local, national and global communities'.*

The descriptors of spiritual and cultural development here include a recognition that knowledge and understanding underpins tolerance and respect.

#### 10. Paragraph 222

Sources of evidence specific to personal development

*'Inspectors will use a range of evidence to evaluate personal development, including how curriculum subjects such as citizenship, **RE**, and other areas such as personal, social, health and economic education, and relationship and sex education, contribute to pupils' personal development'*

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