

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Wednesday 7 February 2024

14:00

Oak Room, County Buildings, Stafford

The meeting will be webcast live and archived for 12 months. It can be viewed at the following link: <https://staffordshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

John Tradewell
Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Corporate Services
30 January 2024

Agenda

1. **Welcome to New Members**
2. **Apologies**
3. **Update on membership**
4. **Declaration of Any other Business**
5. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting 15th November 2023** (Pages 5 - 12)
6. **An Update on Key Issues - Report of the Director for Children and Families** (Pages 13 - 70)
7. **NASACRE Update - Report of the Director for Children and Families** (Pages 71 - 72)
8. **Culham St Gabriel Grant - Report of the Director for Children and Families** (Pages 73 - 76)
9. **Interactive session** (Pages 77 - 78)
10. **Standards Report of the Director for Children and Families** (Pages 79 - 86)
11. **The SACRE Budget 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 -** (Pages 87 - 88)

Report of the Director for Children and Families

12. **Development Plan 2024-25 - Report of the Director for Children and Families** (Pages 89 - 92)
13. **Applications for variation of practice - Report of the Director for Children and Families** (Pages 93 - 94)
14. **Dates of next meetings**

26th June 2024 and 13th November 2024

Membership	
Mohamed Sedky	Harold Gurden
Linda Goodwin	Zoe Cahalan
Tajinder Singh	Vicky Priestley
G Devadason	Philip Atkins, OBE
Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf (Chair)	Paul Northcott
Sam Kirwan	Mike Wilcox
Dr Laow Panyasiri	Ian Horsewell
Sam Phillips	Kath Perry, MBE
Lauren Nicholson Ward (Vice-Chair)	Paul Snape
Judy Wyman	Lynsay Jennings
Gabi Oldfield	Hifsa Haroon-Iqbal
Shaun Miles	Lisa Gretton
Maddy Belle	Vicki Wayman

Notes for Members of the Press and Public

Filming of Meetings

Staffordshire County Council is defined as a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act 2018. The County Council has agreed that public meetings should be the subject of live web transmission 'webcasting'. Fixed cameras are located within meeting room for this purpose.

The webcast will be live on the County Council's website and recorded for subsequent play-back for 12 months. The recording will also be uploaded to YouTube. By entering the meeting room and using the seats around the meeting tables you are deemed to be consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for the purpose of webcasting.

If you have privacy concerns about the webcast or do not wish to have your image captured, then please contact the Member and Democratic Services officer named at the top right of the agenda.

Recording by Press and Public

Recording (including by the use of social media) by the Press and Public is permitted from the public seating area provided it does not, in the opinion of the chairman, disrupt the meeting.



**Minutes of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
Meeting held on 15 November 2023**

Present: Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf (Chair)

Attendance	
Julie Thompson	Philip Atkins, OBE
Sam Kirwan	Paul Northcott
Lauren Nicholson Ward	Kath Perry, MBE
Gabi Oldfield	Paul Snape

1. Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair

Resolved:

- a. That Rev. Preb. Michael Metcalf be appointed as Chair of the SACRE until November 2024.
- b. That Lauren Nicholson-Ward be appointed as Vice-Chair of the SACRE until November 2024.

2. Apologies

Linda Goodwin, Dr Laow Panyasiri, Sam Phillips, Judy Wyman, Shaun Miles, Maddy Belle, Zoe Cahalan, Vicky Priestley, Cllr Mike Wilcox

These were received and accepted.

3. Welcome to New Members

The Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) was informed that Lynsay Jennings was joining Committee B as a representative of the Church of England.

The current Baha'i representative Julie Thompson introduced Jacqueline Bhandra to the SACRE. Jacqueline will be taking over Julie's place on Committee A as the Baha'i representative, as Julie had moved out of the Staffordshire district.

Joanna Piech was also introduced to the committee as the new SACRE clerk.

4. Declaration of Any other Business

There were no declarations of any other business on this occasion.

5. Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 28 June 2023

Minute 5 – 28 June 23 - Update on St Chad’s, Pattingham application for the Religious Education Quality Mark

The Chair made reference to the update on St Chad’s Religious Education Quality Mark (REQM). St Chad’s had been successful in attaining the Gold quality mark, and the school had been invited to join the SACRE meeting to discuss this achievement.

Sarah Yeoman’s – Head Teacher of St Chad’s Primary School, Pattingham and Jen Scarrott – the RE lead, were introduced to the SACRE and gave details of the processes the school had gone through to successfully attain the Gold mark.

The hard work of the school was noted, and the SACRE congratulated all those involved on their achievement.

Resolved:

- a. That the information included within the presentation be noted.
- b. That Sarah Yeomans and Jen Scarrott, be thanked for her presentation.
- c. That the minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 06 June 2023 be approved and signed by the Chair.

6. Information session from Taryn Sargeant (RE Lead) from Flash Ley Primary Stafford

Following on from the SACRE meeting held in June 2023, where the allocation of £200.00 to support Flash Ley Primary School to access RE resources had been approved, Taryn Sargeant, the RE Lead for the school gave a brief summary of the performance and positive improvements of Religious Education at the school. This included detail on the range of resources that had been purchased and accessed as a result of the funding.

Taryn concluded that the support and funding provided by SACRE had been invaluable and had helped to raise the profile of R.E at the school. It had also allowed the school to move from an Ofsted rating of ‘Requires Improvement’ 6 months ago to a rating of ‘Good’ now with three Outstanding features.

The hard work of the school was noted and the SACRE congratulated all those involved on their achievement.

The presentation led into a discussion about religious diversity and how RE engaged with this. Taryn explained that despite having no affiliation to any particular faith herself, she felt able to support pupils in their learning

as per the revised Staffordshire RE 2023 Agreed Syllabus. One member stated that in his opinion teachers of RE needed to have a faith in order to support pupils with their RE learning. Other members of SACRE did not endorse this view.

Resolved:

- a. That the information included within the presentation be noted.
- b. That Taryn Sargeant, be thanked for her presentation.

The guests from Flash Ley and St Chad's left the meeting.

7. Update on membership

The advisor shared that there were a number of current vacancies on the SACRE membership. The Chair advised that the committee looked forward to a development on the Muslim vacancy in committee A, as this had often fallen short of representation in the past. The Clerk raised the fact that a number of nominating bodies had been contacted and whilst interest was there, availability and capacity was often the reason for representatives being unable to join the committee. The Chair pointed out that any new member joining or replacing others would also be subject to county council approval.

8. An Update on Key Issues

The SACRE were informed that R.E hubs were becoming more established and took the Committee through the items included within the report.

RE Hubs

The advisor informed SACRE members of RE Hub meetings taking place. Details were provided for any members wishing to attend.

Interactive Session

On Thursday 16th November, the advisor would be attending a West Midlands Regional RE Hub webinar. At this webinar 4 questions would be discussed. The advisor shared the questions with the committee and opened up the meeting for a discussion in small groups, to gather this information.

The committee came back together and shared their views on the questions in hand. SACRE members were asked to provide any additional feedback they felt appropriate after the meeting which could be submitted to the advisor.

SACRE Webpage

The advisor also raised a question as to whether a SACRE website/webpage could be developed that was dedicated to its work. This would be used to share knowledge, advice, and information to a wider audience. The advisor highlighted that they were also in discussion with Entrust to see if they would also be willing to develop a webpage. If Entrust were able to do this it was suggested that there may be a way of merging the two webpages to avoid duplication. It was agreed that the Clerk would investigate whether this was something Staffordshire County Council could offer and report back.

GCSE and A level update on results from 2022

The Advisor shared the GCSE & A-Level statistics on R.E results from 2022. It was explained that Staffordshire Schools for Religious Education studies, compared to the National schools, were 3-4% lower than the national averages. This was considered a normal trait but was a still reported as a commendable result.

Work Force Data

A Workforce Data report was shared with SACRE members for 2022 relating to hours of teaching RE/RS. The members discussed the 0 hours allocation and the schools where no hours were recorded. It was concluded that it was pleasing that 98% of schools were teaching RE/RS in year 7 and 8 which was an improvement on earlier figures. The advisor would be carrying out further investigations where 0 hours were recorded in the data base by scrutinising the school web pages.

The West Hill Legacy project on Explore, Engage, Reflect

The advisor updated the members on the halted workshops for the West Hill Legacy project, due to long term sickness of the workshop lead. Sadly the workshop lead had passed away very recently. The advisor reassured members that a list of schools had been compiled in the hope that these workshops would recommence with a new trainer.

The Development Plan 2023-2024

The advisor stated that the Development Plan for 23-24 was not yet completed but would be ready for February 24 and would include all the areas discussed in today's meeting.

Resolved: That the update on key issues be noted.

9. NASACRE Update

The advisor gave a brief update on NASACRE. It was summarised that the Regional Hub Network were working closely with NASACRE. The Chair shared an update with the members of the leadership of NASACRE, specifically in terms of it going through a transition at senior member level, due to the original Chair giving notice to resign, and the next Chairperson since advising that they would no longer be standing as Chair. This situation will be monitored, and more information will be shared at the next meeting.

Resolved: That the NASACRE update be noted.

10. Application for Culham St Gabriel charity grant including a Safeguarding Policy

It was shared that the advisor to SACRE had recently applied for a grant to support this project, which involved the ongoing developments in schools. This application process involved the completion of an "Expression of Interest" form alongside a first interview with the CEO at Culham St Gabriel (CSTG), followed by a second interview to further explore the project brief. The application was presented to the Charity of Trustees of CSTG, with each stage being supported by paperwork and references.

The SACRE were asked to vote to confirm that it was willing to support the application for CSTG grant funding. All four committees were unanimous in their decision to support the application. It was explained that the SACRE committee would monitor the CSTG budget of £6500 including any carry forward into the new financial year and that purchase order numbers would be used to access the funds as per the summary budget.

The project would commence in January 2024 and run until January 2025.

The advisor also shared that it was necessary to develop a new Safeguarding Policy, which was one of the conditions of applying for the grant. The new policy was shared with members, and the advisor explained that the Policy had been modified in a way to meet SACRE needs. No objections were raised by the committee, who approved the use of the amended Policy.

Resolved:

- a. That the vote to approve the application for CSTG grant funding be noted.
- b. That it be noted that the SACRE committee would monitor the CSTG budget.
- c. That the amended Safeguarding Policy be noted and approved

11. The Religious Education Council publication

Members received a copy of the RE Council publication The National Standard Entitlement. The Chair gave a brief summary of the publication, stating that, although it was issued and adopted by the RE Council, it wasn't a statutory document, but it was being commended to schools for their consideration.

The advisor shared that some of the publication echoed our agreed syllabus, and it had a big emphasis on world views. There were good factors and good practices to be noted and followed and it was requested that members take note of the information.

The Chair commented on the reference in the Agenda papers to the RE Network and its critique of the publication. The RE Network was a Christian-based organisation that held a traditional view of RE. It was arguing that the proposed emphasis on children developing their own worldview cut across faith transmission within families and faith communities.

Resolved: That the publication and information be noted.

12. SACRE annual Report for 2022-2023

The SACRE annual Report for 22-23 was presented to SACRE. The Chair explained the report was developed to make schools accountable for Religious Education to the Local Authority.

SACRE members were asked to provide feedback on the report with any additional comments being passed onto the committee Clerk within 10 days of the meeting.

After this period the report would be amended if appropriate and sent to appropriate bodies such as SCC, Unions, NASACRE and the DfE

Resolved: That the report and updates be noted.

13. The SACRE Budget 2023-2024

Members were provided with account a monitoring report of the 2023/24 budget. They were also informed that Entrust would not be taking money from this budget for their workshops moving forwards, and a Purchase Order payment process would be implemented.

The Advisor asked members for their approval of the implementation of this process for the provision of any grants made in the future. Members unanimously approved this request.

Resolved:

- a. That the final SACRE Budget for 2023/24, be noted.
- b. That the implementation of the Purchase Order process to support the provision of any grants made in the future, be approved.

14. Applications for variation of practice

There were no applications made on this occasion.

15. Dates of next meetings

Dates of the next meetings were confirmed as:

- 7th February 2024
- 26th June 2024
- 13th November 2024

All meetings commence at 2:00pm unless otherwise stated

Chair

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
7th February 2024
Report of the Director for Children and Families
An Update on Key Issues

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 To present members of SACRE with a brief update on key issues that have developed or arisen since the last meeting of SACRE.

2 Summary

2.1 Members of SACRE will receive a brief report on a number of key issues. These are matters which have either been raised at previous SACRE meetings and which have moved forward or matters on which it is appropriate to brief members of SACRE.

3 Recommendation

3.1 That members of SACRE receive the report and note the contents

4 Background

4.1 Since the summer term meeting of the SACRE there have been developments in a number of areas which had previously been agenda items for SACRE or which have local or national importance for RE.

4.2 Members will be briefed on these key developments.

5 Equal Opportunities

5.1 This report has been prepared in accordance with the County Council's policies on equal opportunities.

6 Financial implications

6.1 Financial implications may be raised; These have been dealt with elsewhere or will be raised at future meetings of SACRE.

Contact Officer

Mary Gale 07816374873

Key Issues Report

i) Annual report

This was discussed at the previous meeting and some minor tweaks were made.

This was then sent to SCC- Tim Moss, the Assistant Director for Education Strategy and Improvement Children and Families. He made a few minor tweaks too so now this report will be sent onto NASACRE and various education organisations locally as well as being available through the school E Bag and added to the SACRE website.

ii) Websites

There is now an Entrust website for RE/RS in schools which can be accessed by following this link:-

<https://www.entrust.education/Page/35474>

Support for planning and resources is also available following the above link.

This information has been shared with over 300 schools through the Governor Information Packs and through face-to-face meetings x2 and webinars x5.

There is also a SACRE website, which can be accessed by following this link:-

<https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Education/SACRE/Home.aspx>

The SACRE website information will be shared with schools in April through the Governor Information

pack, webinars =, face to face meetings and the electronic bag (e bag) for headteachers

iii) Westhill Legacy project- Engage Explore Reflect (EER)

SACRE have continued to fund this project from the 2023-2024 budget through commissioning a dedicated trainer and not through the Entrust Minority Ethnic Achievement Service- MEAS- to deliver workshops to support the Agreed Syllabus. Mary Gale held a meeting with Entrust to verify that SACRE could directly commission the workshops, and this was agreed as Entrust do not currently have the capacity to support the workshops.

As a consequence, planning meetings were organised with a new trainer- Hifsa Haroon Iqbal. (Hifsa has just been appointed onto our SACRE)

In addition, Mary Gale visited eight of the schools to evaluate the need.

The following workshops were delivered in **Autumn 2023**

Perton First school 28th November

St Luke's Cannock 29th November

Penkridge Middle 1st December

Chancel Primary Rugeley 4th December

Walton Priory Middle 11th December

Spring 2024

Sir John Offley Madely 15th January 2024

Reginald Mitchell Primary Newcastle 5th February 2024

Stafford Manor High 6th February-

Flash Ley Primary 7th February Stafford

The Croft Primary at Armitage 20th February 2024 (To be completed)

Summer 2024

Oldfields Middle School Uttoxeter TBA

St Michael's CE Penkridge TBA

The feedback from the workshops has been very overwhelmingly positive.

Schools were asked to rate the workshops on a scale of 1-5 and we have 99% scoring the workshops at 4 or 5.

Here is a flavour of some of the comments.

What did the pupils learn?

Children and staff thoroughly enjoyed the Islam workshop. The children were asked to remove their shoes at the door and this grabbed their attention quickly. Once they were seated the purpose for this was explained and children were immediately made to feel comfortable and empowered to ask questions. There was a range of activities that suited all children. The children were able to touch and explore the artefacts, ask questions and be curious. Staff were able engage in practical tasks with the children, and staff were able to improve their own subject knowledge too!

Pupils were able to hear information from a person with first-hand experience of the faith. They were interested to explore the faith and fascinated with the information given. The two sessions were aimed at the relevant SoW being taught and really supported the curriculum.

We do teach about Islam – however the real opportunity to meet and chat with a practising Muslim was invaluable. Hands on opportunities to look at dress, pictures, artefacts with a back story was very valuable.

Any standout comments from the pupils/impact of the workshop?

“That was so interesting”

“It was really fascinating and taught me lots of information.”

“It was really cool to hear the information from someone who is a Muslim and who could share their experiences.”

“It really taught me a lot and will help me with my teaching.”

“What a fascinating talk, I learnt a lot.”

PUPILS LEARNED ABOUT MANY DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF ISLAM, AS DISCUSSED AND AGREED WITH HIFSA BEFOREHAND. THESE INCLUDED THE FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM, PRAYER AND TRADITIONAL COSTUMES.

Children were fascinated with the clothing, the opportunity to try and to learn about the importance of prayer. They were surprised to know about the amount of visits to the mosque and the commitment to pray.

Pupils gained a greater understanding of the Five Pillars of Islam.

All pupils were thoroughly engaged in the activities when looking at each area of the Five Pillars of Islam and were able to discuss and take part in role play.

Any standout comments from the staff/impact of the workshop?

“What a fantastic experience for staff and children alike”

The talk was brilliant and really appreciated. I have been able to refer back to it many times in my lessons and it has helped pupils to recall the information.

I would love to arrange to repeat these two sessions again at the same time next year.

HIFSA WAS INCREDIBLY WARM AND WELCOMING TO THE STUDENTS. STUDENTS REALLY ENJOYED TRYING ON COSTUMES AND HOLDING THE DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS ARTEFACTS. THE DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES IN A CAROUSEL STYLE WENT DOWN REALLY WELL.

Is there anything else you would like to say about the workshop?

Knowledge of Hifsa, her relationships with pupils and the way in which she set up the space and welcomed pupils into her ‘home.

Thank you so much for giving us this opportunity to participate in the workshop!

Hisfa was absolutely amazing. Her organisation, use of personal materials/artefacts, knowledge, understanding and guidance throughout the workshop was exemplary.

Some year groups focused on topics such as

Year 8

10. Five Pillars 1 – Shahadah & Salah

11. Five Pillars 2 – Zakah, & Sawm

12. Five Pillars 3 - Hajj

13. Symbolism in Islam

14. Muslim moral code

15. Religion of giving - Charity

16. Celebrations in Islam – Eid

I FEEL THE WORKSHOP WAS PARTICULARLY EFFECTIVE WHEN HIFSA SPOKE ABOUT HER PERSONAL PRACTISES IN ISLAM, FOR EXAMPLE HOW SHE FITS IN PRAYER TO HER BUSY WORK SCHEDULE (SOMETIMES IN A SHOP CHANGING ROOM) AND HOW, IF SHE IS FEELING NOT QUITE 100%, SHE DOES NOT FEEL THAT SHE WOULD HAVE TO FAST THAT DAY DURING RAMADAN. ALSO, THE RANGE OF CLOTHING, BOOKS, ART WAS FANTASTIC.

I WOULD DEFINITELY LIKE TO INVITE HIFSA BACK AGAIN TO REPEAT THE WORKSHOP. IN ADDITION, I WILL CONTACT HER IN THE FUTURE TO SEE IF SHE COULD RETURN AND SPEAK TO KS3 CLASSES TOO.

If possible, we would want to arrange for my team of RE teachers to be supervising the talks as a form of CPD on subject knowledge.

iv) Ofsted Report on RE/RS Autumn 2023

Ofsted has been monitoring RE more robustly as part of the inspection process- this has spurred schools to review and enhance their delivery of RE/RS

Extract taken from Ofsted's Annual Report 2022-2023 and its commentary on Religious Education presented by Amanda Speilman senior HMI.

RE in schools is generally of poor quality. Although it is a statutory subject **in all** schools, many often consider RE as an afterthought.

As a subject on the curriculum, it is under-valued.

RE is a complex subject, and the lack of clarity and support from government makes schools' job harder. Some schools steer through these challenges well, but most do not. We found that:

- Many schools do not meet the statutory requirement to teach RE at all stages.
- Pupils are rarely taught enough substance to prepare them to engage in a complex, multi-religious and multi-secular society (where religion and non-religion play different parts in different people's lives)
- Too often, schools do not teach topics in the RE curriculum deeply enough for pupils to develop a substantial understanding of the subject matter.
- Non-examined RE is typically not high quality.

All pupils should develop a broad and secure knowledge of the complexity of religious and non-religious traditions. It will take coordinated effort by stakeholders to improve the quality of RE in schools:

- Schools need high-quality professional development to teach RE well.
- Curriculum publishers need to identify clearly what pupils will learn and when, building on knowledge over time, so that pupils develop a deep knowledge of the chosen religious and non-religious traditions.
- The government should provide clear expectations about RE provision in schools. Schools should follow these. Current non-statutory guidance for RE should be updated and include clear information for schools about the breadth and depth of the syllabus they are expected to teach.

The report is available by following this link:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-annual-report-202223-education-childrens-services-and-skills>

Staffordshire have recommended that governors and trustees check:-

- Through link governors that RE is being taught in schools- this applies to all schools from Reception classes up to 6th Form
- That maintained schools are following the 2023 revised Agreed Syllabus (AS).
- Discuss the report as part of monitoring and evaluation.

Deep Dives by Ofsted into RE

Why is RE often not featured in a “deep dive”?

A Bar Chart based on Ofsted’s data shows RE appearing third from the bottom of subjects that were selected to be included in a “deep dive” in secondary schools inspected in 2022/23 and at the bottom of the chart in primary schools inspected in 2022/23.

Please follow this link for more information.

[Schools commentary: Deep dives in school inspections - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/schools-commentary-deep-dives-in-school-inspections)

Ofsted is not permitted to inspect in RE in a VA school designated with a religious character as RE in these schools could only be inspected under a Section 48 inspection.

v) Blasphemy in schools report- see pdf document.

vi) Attendance at various meetings by the adviser

The adviser attended the RE Hub meeting on November 16th 2023 led by Chris Giles. SACREs had been asked to provide information about the impact and the activities of the SACRE over the past year. Unfortunately, most of the meeting time was taken over by the new NASACRE chair who gave a history of his involvement in RE matters, leaving very little time to discuss the expected focus.

All delegates received an apology from Chris Giles a few days after the meeting. A date for a future meeting is to be advised.

The adviser also attended an online meeting of the Association of Religious Education Inspectors, Advisors and Consultants (AREIAC) on 28th November 2023 where a variety of subjects were discussed including the Ofsted report on RE and the Deep Dives.

In addition, the adviser attended a local online NATRE meeting in November plus a face-to-face meeting with S Dennis from Chadsmead Primary Lichfield who is a HLTA that organises the online RE network meetings.

The adviser has been supporting SD in ensuring that any information shared regarding the Agreed Syllabus is accurate and follows the statutory aspects.

'Blasphemy' in Schools

Self-Censorship and Security Fears Amongst British Teachers

Dr Damon L. Perry

Foreword by Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP



‘Blasphemy’ in Schools

Self-Censorship and Security Fears Amongst British Teachers

Dr Damon L. Perry

Foreword by Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP



Policy Exchange is the UK’s leading think tank. We are an independent, non-partisan educational charity whose mission is to develop and promote new policy ideas that will deliver better public services, a stronger society and a more dynamic economy.

Policy Exchange is committed to an evidence-based approach to policy development and retains copyright and full editorial control over all its written research. We work in partnership with academics and other experts and commission major studies involving thorough empirical research of alternative policy outcomes. We believe that the policy experience of other countries offers important lessons for government in the UK. We also believe that government has much to learn from business and the voluntary sector.

Registered charity no: 1096300.

Trustees

Karan Bilimoria, Alexander Downer, Pamela Dow, Andrew Feldman, David Harding, Patricia Hodgson, Greta Jones, Andrew Law, Charlotte Metcalf, David Ord, Daniel Posen, Andrew Roberts, Robert Rosenkranz, William Salomon, Simon Wolfson, Nigel Wright.

About the Author

Dr Damon L. Perry is a Senior Research Fellow at Policy Exchange and an Associate Research Fellow at the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR), London. He is the author of *The Global Muslim Brotherhood in Britain: Non-Violent Extremism and the Battle of Ideas*, published in 2018 by Routledge. He is also the author or co-author of numerous reports, including “The Trojan Horse Affair: A Documentary record” (co-authored with Dr Paul Stott), published by Policy Exchange, and “The Islamic Movement in Britain”, published by ICSR. He received his PhD from the Department of War Studies, King’s College London, in 2016.

© Policy Exchange 2023

Published by
Policy Exchange, 1 Old Queen Street, Westminster, London SW1H 9JA

www.policyexchange.org.uk

ISBN: 978-1-910812

Contents

About the Author	2
Foreword	5
Introduction	7
Key Findings & Recommendations	10
Key findings	10
Recommendations	13
Background	15
Batley and Wakefield	15
The Home Office's response	18
The Prevent Review	19
The Bloom Report	20
Timeline of 'Blasphemy'-Related Incidents in Britain	22
Blasphemy and Laws Against Incitement to Religious Hatred	28
Teachers' Views on Batley, Protests and Self-Censorship	32
The teachers' survey	32
Impact of Batley protests and self-censorship	32
Concerns about protests against the use of 'offensive' images	38
Perceptions of headteacher/school support	41
Attitudes to reporting Islamist and Far-Right extremism	44
Conclusion	45

Foreword

Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP

Member of Parliament for Stratford-on-Avon

Former Secretary of State for Education

Throughout my tenure as Education Secretary, I put forward my vision for an education system that gives every child, regardless of their background, the best possible start in life. Such a system has to encourage schoolchildren to develop inquisitiveness and critical thinking skills. For this to be achieved, teachers need to embrace curiosity and criticism.

In order for this to be the case, there must be a culture free of fear and intimidation to explore and scrutinise ideas and beliefs. That is why I am greatly concerned that a new YouGov poll - commissioned by Policy Exchange - has revealed that a small but significant proportion of teachers in Britain are self-censoring to avoid causing offence on the grounds of religion, race, and gender or sexuality.

I was born in Baghdad, in Saddam's Iraq, and grew up there until my parents fled when I was 11. At the age of 11, I sat at the back of my classroom in London, unable to utter a word of English. Thanks to my teachers, I began to understand, speak, read and write the language. I also began to think for myself. Unlike my schooling in Iraq, no topic was off limits.

As I have written before when arguing for blasphemy laws to be repealed, freedom of speech is not just a Western value – it is our common birth right as human beings.¹

One factor in the self-censoring of teachers is undeniably a fear of losing one's job - and even one's life. Teachers in Britain remember the terrible fate of Samuel Paty in France, who was beheaded for showing a caricature of the Prophet Muhammad in a lesson highlighting the importance of freedom of speech. They also recall an incident closer to home: the teacher from Batley Grammar School who was forced into anonymity after showing a similar image in a lesson on blasphemy. The fact that he is still in hiding over two years later is a national disgrace.

The polling for Policy Exchange shows that around one in ten teachers are less likely to show an image of the Prophet Muhammad in lessons as a result of the Batley Grammar School protests. This is in addition to those – 55% overall, but rising to 64% of all art teachers - who would not use such an image anyway. These are not teachers who would show an image deliberately to offend anyone. The Batley Grammar School teacher had no intention of causing offence or distress – the image was shown as a visual aid to prompt an honest and necessary discussion about the acceptable limits of free expression. The teacher acted within the law.

1. Nadhim Zahawi, 'Nadhim Zahawi MP: It's time for the Islamic world to support free speech – and repeal blasphemy laws', Conservative Home, 12 January 12, 2015, <https://conservativehome.com/2015/01/12/nadhim-zahawi-mp-its-time-for-the-islamic-world-to-support-free-speech-and-repeal-blasphemy-laws/>.

It is, however, a sad and ironic consequence of activist bullying that in precisely the place where schoolchildren should be exposed to different and even potentially offensive ideas and images, the debate has closed down before it has even begun.

Of course, there is no need to expose pupils to offensive, satirical images gratuitously. But to display an image is not necessarily to endorse it; it is to reveal something about the world we live in. Context matters. We have laws against incitement to hatred; we do not need mobs outside school gates pressuring head teachers to fire teachers who are acting within the law and imposing *de facto* blasphemy laws in our country.

Thankfully, there are no blasphemy laws any more in Britain and we do not need them introduced by extremist mobs.

The negative influence of activist groups has been shown quite starkly by this poll: over half of all teachers think that there would be a risk to their physical safety if there were protests outside their schools led by activist groups. In the West Midlands, the proportion of teachers fearing this risk was around six in ten. These activists have somehow managed to persuade teachers and headteachers that all Muslims are offended by all images of the Prophet Muhammad. We actually have diverse traditions regarding the depiction of the Prophet Muhammad, but once again these activist groups – loud in their protests and easily offended – pretend to speak for all Muslims.

Teachers must not feel the need to self-censor out of fear. Headteachers, who set school policy, should not be bullied by *de facto* blasphemy codes.

But the evidence put forward in this report indicates that they would benefit from greater support from the Government. Proper national statutory guidance on the use of potentially offensive images and the freedom of expression would be a welcome thing – as recommended by this important and insightful report by Policy Exchange and as promised by the then Home Secretary back in March.

Our teachers – and their pupils – deserve better than this. We owe it to them to support them to provide a secure environment where open, honest and free discussion is not only permitted, but actively encouraged.

Introduction

In Britain, no one has the right not to be offended. Words or actions that are taken by some as offensive – whether they relate to religion, sexuality or race – are not criminal as long as they are not intentionally hostile and meant, or likely, to incite hatred. The statutory guidance on Non-Crime Hate Incidents, revised in March 2023, is consistent with the law in this regard. It states: “Fundamentally, offending someone is not, in and of itself, a criminal offence. To constitute an offence under hate crime legislation, the speech or behaviour in question must be threatening, abusive or insulting and be intended to, or likely to, stir up hatred”.²

Yet, this does not seem to be fully acknowledged in Britain’s schools. As this revealing survey of over a thousand teachers from YouGov and Policy Exchange demonstrates, since the Batley Grammar School protests, a small but significant proportion of British teachers have self-censored to avoid offence on religious grounds – 16%. (That proportion is slightly higher for teachers of certain subjects, including almost a fifth of all English teachers and art teachers – 19%). In areas with the largest Muslim populations, around 10% fewer teachers do not self-censor than those in areas with the smallest Muslim populations. A worrying proportion believe that – regardless of a teacher’s intentions – images of the prophet Muhammad should never be used in classrooms, even in the teaching of Islamic art or ethics: In addition to the 55% of teachers that would not personally use an image of Muhammad independently from the Batley Grammar School protests, an additional 9% said they personally were less likely to use it as a result of the events in Batley. The case of the teacher at Batley Grammar who went into hiding after death threats thus appears to have had a significant impact on teachers’ confidence and willingness to use materials that fall within the scope of the law.

Alarmingly, half of British teachers believe that if blasphemy-related protests led by activist and advocacy groups occur outside their schools, there would be a risk to their physical safety. Despite most teachers thinking that headteachers get the balance right – between supporting them to use materials that are on the right side of the law but which might offend, and ensuring no offence is caused – they are clearly in need of greater confidence in the support they can expect from their headteachers and, in the case of activist-led protests outside their school gates, the police.

Recent events have given further impetus to concerns regarding the physical safety of teachers and the security at schools. On 13 October, 2023, in Arras, France, a literature teacher, Dominique Bernard, was killed in a knife attack; the suspect, an Islamist extremist, was looking for teachers

2. Statutory guidance, ‘Non-Crime Hate Incidents: Draft Code of Practice on the Recording and Retention of Personal Data (accessible)’, 16 March 2023, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-crime-hate-incidents-draft-code-of-practice/non-crime-hate-incidents-draft-code-of-practice-on-the-recording-and-retention-of-personal-data-accessible>.

of history or geography.³ The case has been compared to that of Samuel Paty, the teacher who was killed three years ago by an Islamist extremist for showing cartoons of Muhammad to a class on freedom of expression.⁴ Both teachers have been described by President Macron as champions of the values of the French republic. Although this tragic incident took place across the Channel, France's battle with Islamist extremism is one shared with the UK.

Closer to home, in the wake of the Hamas terrorist attacks on hundreds of civilians in Israel on 7 October, protests on the streets of the UK against Israeli reprisals in the name of the Palestinian "resistance" have demonstrated alarming levels of hateful extremism and antisemitism.⁵ Some Jewish schools were forced to close on 13 October, when Hamas called for a "Global Day of Jihad", and several Jewish schools were vandalised with red paint.⁶ The atmosphere has been fraught. The Department for Education wrote to school leaders "to ensure that any political activity from pupils in response to the crisis does not create an 'atmosphere of intimidation'".⁷

As this report argues, support for schools – whether in the context of these broader political currents or not – should include clearer and firmer guidance in the event of blasphemy-related incidents. This guidance was promised by the then Home Secretary in the wake of the Kettlethorpe School "Quran incident" in February this year, when a 14-year old autistic student was suspended from school and sent death threats from other students for scuffing a copy of the Quran, which he had brought into school as a forfeit for losing a video game amongst friends. But the Department for Education has said existing guidance is adequate,⁸ and in a written statement the Home Office has suggested such guidance is not being developed.⁹ According to this poll, 40% of teachers say that their schools do not have any guidance for teachers on avoiding offence to religious or community groups from teaching materials or lesson content. This means that many schools lack a code of practice for dealing with blasphemy-related incidents and similar situations where unintentional offence caused by teachers or the use of certain teaching materials may lead to protests and even violence. Schools should not be left to their own devices; there should be national statutory guidance on these matters, since they potentially involve security risks to individuals that we should not take lightly.

In April 2023, Lord Sharpe, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Home Office, said that "the Government has been repeatedly clear that there is no blasphemy law in Great Britain" and, as such, there are no plans to produce guidance for blasphemy-related incidents.¹⁰ The then Schools Minister Nick Gibb said the same thing after the events at Kettlethorpe School. Indeed, blasphemy is no longer a crime in England, Scotland and Wales. And that is a good thing. But the kind of blasphemy that is a concern today is not some outdated transgression against Christianity – as blasphemy was defined in English law until 2008. It is, rather, a perceived act of symbolic violence against Islam, which, in the eyes of those claiming

3. Gabriel Joly, "Il m'a demandé si j'étais professeur d'histoire": un enseignant confronté à l'assaillant d'arras témoigne, BFMTV, 13 October 2023, https://www.bfmtv.com/police-justice/il-m-a-demande-si-j-etais-professeur-d-histoire-un-enseignant-confronte-a-l-assaillant-d-arras-temoigne_AV-202310130575.html.
4. 'Hommage à Dominique Bernard et Samuel Paty : Gabriel Attal annonce "179 saisines du procureur de la République" après des incidents dans des écoles', Le Monde, 17 October, https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2023/10/17/hommage-a-dominique-bernard-et-samuel-paty-gabriel-attal-annonce-179-saisines-du-procureur-de-la-republique-apres-des-incident-dans-des-ecoles_6195023_3224.html.
5. Robin Simcox, 'Hate marches in Britain are a wake-up call to all decent people', The Times, 19 October 2023, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/be0119e8-6dd6-11ee-b5d7-5487922f056f>.
6. *Ibid.* See also: Ali Mitib, Matt Dathan, and Chris Smyth, 'Jewish schools in north London vandalised with red paint', The Times, 17 October 2023, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/jewish-schools-in-north-london-vandalised-with-red-paint-gsgw3fzxs>.
7. 'Israel-Hamas conflict: Ministers urge "sensitivity" in schools', TES Magazine, 18 October 2023, <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/israel-hamas-conflict-dfe-ministers-urge-sensitivity-schools>.
8. Samantha Booth, 'DfE snubs Braverman pledge for new blasphemy guidance', Schools Week, 9 March 2023, <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/df-e-snubs-braverman-pledge-for-new-blasphemy-guidance/>.
9. 'Schools: Blasphemy', Question for Home Office, UIN HL6624, UK Parliament website, 20 March 2023, <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-03-20/HL6624/>.
10. *Ibid.*

blasphemy, may justify threats, and even violent acts of retribution.

It is not good enough to dismiss blasphemy as a crime of the past, when incidents such as those at Batley and Wakefield have over the last decade become increasingly frequent. Last year, in 2022, the Shia-produced film, ‘Lady of Heaven’, caused protests around the country from Sunni Muslims unhappy with the film’s portrayal of the prophet Muhammad. Several cinema chains cancelled their planned screenings of the film. In the same year, a teacher was suspended after photos of him holding a ‘Jesus and Mo’ mug appeared online. In 2021, in addition to the Batley protests, the Christian convert Hatun Tash was stabbed at Speakers’ Corner in London’s Hyde Park for wearing a *Charlie Hebdo* T-shirt. In 2016, Ahmadi shopkeeper Asad Shah was murdered by Tanveer Ahmed for Shah’s alleged disrespect of Muhammad by claiming to be a prophet himself. In 2012, the producer of a Channel 4 documentary that questioned the orthodox Islamic account of the religion’s origins received threats. The programme has not been re-aired.

It is important that the British Government recognises that blasphemy does not need to be defined in the country’s current lawbooks or by any specific school of Islamic jurisprudence for some to resort to violence or issue death threats after taking offence to what they see as blasphemy against their religion or founding prophet. There has clearly been an increasing number of blasphemy-related incidents in Britain in recent years – including violence, threats or intimidation – as the timeline in this report demonstrates. Several of the most concerning of these incidents have taken place outside schools, where additional protests have occurred regarding the teaching of LGBT-inclusive education.

The polling in this report demonstrates that a significant number of teachers – who are self-censoring regarding the use of images of the prophet Muhammad – have been affected by the Batley Grammar School protests. It also suggests that teachers would benefit from firm statutory national guidance from the Government that makes clear that no one has the right not to be offended, and that schools have both a moral and legal obligation to protect teachers’ freedom of expression, as long as it is lawful, as well as their physical safety.

Key Findings & Recommendations

Key findings

In March, 2023, YouGov conducted an online survey of 1,132 teachers from around the country. The key findings of the survey include a widely shared view amongst teachers that protests outside schools, particularly involving activist groups, present a risk to teachers' physical safety; an admission from a significant minority of teachers that they self-censor to avoid causing offence (held most commonly by English and art teachers); a view held by over half of all teachers that they would not use an image of Muhammad even if it did not break any laws (e.g., incitement to hatred); and that around four out of ten schools have no guidance for teachers relating to situations in which what they teach or the materials they use may cause offence.

Protests and physical safety

The vast majority of teachers - three quarters (75%) – thought that if protests break out, they would be “damaging” to the teacher involved, with around four in ten (39%) indicating that they would be “very damaging”. More teachers in regions with the highest proportion of Muslims (45%) thought that the protests would be “very damaging” to the teacher than in regions with the lowest proportion of Muslims (34%). In Yorkshire and the Humber, where Batley is located, 60% of teachers said protests would be “very damaging” (in addition to 25% that said protests would be “fairly damaging”).

Alarmingly, half (50%) of all teachers thought that there would be a risk to the physical safety of a teacher accused of showing an offensive image if the protests were led by external advocacy groups or activists. In areas with the largest Muslim populations, 55% expressed such a view, and in areas with the smallest Muslim populations, that figure dropped to 40%. In the East Midlands, as many as six out of ten (60%) teachers indicated that there would be a risk to their physical safety in the event of activist-led protests. This view was shared by 59% of teachers in Yorkshire and the Humber, and 58% of teachers in the West Midlands.

Nationally, one in five (20%) indicated that there would be “a very big risk” to a teacher’s physical safety in such an event. In areas with the highest percentage of Muslims, one in four (25%) expressed such a view; in areas with the lowest percentage of Muslims, however, around one

in eight teachers (13%) indicated as such. The region with the highest percentage of teachers indicating a “very big risk” was Yorkshire and the Humber, at 33%.

Thus, it is fair to say that a significant proportion of teachers believe that the participation of external groups in protests – rather than parents, governors, or students – pose the greatest risk to their physical safety. This concern is compounded by the view shared by a third of all teachers (33%) that external activists and advocacy groups would be the most likely source of protests.

Self-censorship

Only around 60% of teachers reported that since the Batley Grammar School protests, they have not self-censored with regards to materials that whilst not breaking any law might cause offence to religious groups. Significantly fewer teachers from parts of the country with the highest proportion of Muslims said they had not self-censored (57%) compared with teachers from parts of the country with the lowest proportion of Muslims (67%). These are both lower than we would expect in a society that values open and honest inquiry.

This does not mean that around 40% of teachers have self-censored. Nationwide, just 16% of teachers affirmed that they had self-censored – i.e., self-consciously refrained from teaching content or using materials that they otherwise would have taught or used – since the Batley Grammar School protests. But this is still a notable proportion of teachers, demonstrating the nationwide impact of the Batley protests and, it should be added, of the threats against the teacher involved. The number of self-censoring teachers could be even higher, since a further 24% – almost a quarter of all teachers surveyed – either could not remember or preferred not to answer.

When the figures are broken down by subjects taught, it is notable that almost a fifth of all teachers of English, art, and modern languages (19%) admitted to self-censor to avoid offence on religious grounds. Self-censorship was reported by similar proportions of teachers of history (18%), science (18%), citizenship (17%), geography (17%), and maths (17%).

It is worth noting that across all subjects, a similar proportion of teachers – around a fifth – reported that they had self-censored in relation to issues either of gender and sexuality (20%) or race (21%). This suggests that teachers’ fear of causing offence is not limited to matters of religion. Any future guidance to support schools on dealing with blasphemy-related incidents would thus best address all kinds of possible offence.

Use of images of Muhammad

Over half (55%) of all teachers said they would not use an image of Muhammad in the classroom, independently from the Batley Grammar School protests. For teachers of certain subjects, the figure was significantly higher: 64% of art teachers and 60% of citizenship teachers, for example,

11. Christiane Gruber, associate professor and director of graduate studies at the University of Michigan, whose primary field of research is Islamic book art, paintings of the prophet Muhammad, and Islamic ascension texts and images, writes: "The Koran does not prohibit figural imagery. Rather, it castigates the worship of idols, which are understood as concrete embodiments of the polytheistic beliefs that Islam supplanted when it emerged as a purely monotheistic faith in the Arabian Peninsula during the seventh century." Christiane Gruber, 'The Koran Does Not Forbid Images of the Prophet', Newsweek, 9 January 2015, <https://www.newsweek.com/koran-does-not-forbid-images-prophet-298298>. "The Islamic legal basis for banning images, including Muhammad's, is less than straightforward and there are variations across denominations and legal schools," writes Suleyman Dost, Assistant Professor of Classical Islam at Brandeis University. "It appears, for instance, that Shiite communities have been more accepting of visual representations for devotional purposes than Sunni ones. Pictures of Muhammad, Ali and other family members of the prophet have some circulation in the popular religious culture of Shiite-majority countries, such as Iran. Sunni Islam, on the other hand, has largely shunned religious iconography," Suleyman Dost, 'Muslims have visualized Prophet Muhammad in words and calligraphic art for centuries', 24 November 2020, <https://theconversation.com/muslims-have-visualized-prophet-muhammad-in-words-and-calligraphic-art-for-centuries-150053>. Professor Hugh Goddard, director of the Alwaleed Centre for the Study of Islam in the Contemporary World in the University of Edinburgh, observes: "There isn't unanimity [on the issue of depicting Muhammad] in either of the foundational sources - the Koran and the Hadiths. The later Muslim community has tended to have different views on this question as on others." John McManus, 'Have pictures of Muhammad always been forbidden?', BBC News, 15 January 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-30814555>. See also Sameer Rahim, 'Eye of the beholder - how the Prophet Muhammad has been depicted through the centuries', Apollo Magazine, 18 December 2019, <https://www.apollo-magazine.com/prophet-muhammad-depictions-art/>, and Emma Graham-Harrison, 'Drawing the prophet: Islam's hidden history of Muhammad images', The Guardian, 10 January 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/10/drawing-prophet-islam-muhammad-images>.

said they would not use an image of Muhammad. Such a significantly large proportion of teachers unwilling to use an image of a major religious figure – not just caricatures that are clearly mocking – surely demands an explanation. Is this out of fear or respect? If respect, how have so many teachers – including art teachers – arrived at the view that images of Muhammad are simply taboo in Islam, when there have been Islamic artistic traditions that both revere and depict Muhammad?¹¹ Where are these teachers learning about Islam and why are they not respecting the diversity of Muslim views on aniconism in Islam? Are they learning about Islam, directly or indirectly, through Islamist organisations? In addition to these teachers, an additional one in ten teachers (9%) said they were personally less likely to use an image of Muhammad as a result of the Batley protests. (The same proportion of art and citizenship teachers – 9% – said as much). This clearly shows a negative impact that the protests have had. For these teachers, at least, fear seems to be the motivating factor for self-censorship.

Teachers were also asked about the general acceptability of using an image of Muhammad in different educational settings. Significantly, more teachers expressed the view that images of Muhammad were generally unacceptable in formal displays in classrooms or assembly halls (51%) than other settings, such as in lessons in religious studies (35%), art history (32%), and ethics and freedom of speech (31%). Overall, this perhaps suggests an appreciation of a difference between using such images gratuitously and purposively. But that around a third of all teachers think it is generally unacceptable to use images of Muhammad for educational purposes in relevant subjects is a cause for concern.

Significantly, in areas of the country with the largest proportion of Muslims, 40% of teachers said it was generally unacceptable to use an image of Muhammad when teaching religious studies, but in areas of the country with the lowest proportion of Muslims, those sharing that view comprised just 28%. Furthermore, around four in ten (38%) art teachers stated that using an image of Muhammad is generally unacceptable when teaching topics such as Islamic art or art history, and 36% of citizenship teachers indicated that it is generally unacceptable to use such an image in lessons on ethics, political expression and freedom of speech.

School guidance

Only 36% of teachers said that their schools have issued guidance to avoid causing offence from teaching materials or lesson content. As many as four in ten teachers (40%) indicated that their schools do not have any such guidance. There is thus a significant lack of consistency amongst schools regarding whether or not they have guidance on managing possible offence. But the lack of national guidance from the DfE that specifically relates to managing blasphemy-related incidents suggests that even those schools that have guidance to avoid offence may lack consistency in approach and in the extent to which they prioritise freedom of expression.

The then Home Secretary's promise in March of this year to work with

the DfE to produce guidance “prioritis[ing] the physical safety of children over the hurt feelings of adults”¹² was a welcome response to what has been recognised as a growing issue. But on 3 April, responding on behalf of the Home Office to a Parliamentary question regarding the matter, Lord Sharpe stated that there are “no plans to develop new blasphemy guidance for schools”.¹³

Headteacher support

Encouragingly, most teachers – 52% – thought that headteachers strike the right balance between supporting teachers who wish to use materials of their choice and preventing offence. Teachers in high Muslim population areas were only slightly more inclined than those in low Muslim population areas to indicate that headteachers could be more supportive of teachers who wish to use materials that (whilst legal) might cause offence (19% and 16% respectively). The greatest indication for headteachers to be more supportive of teachers to use such materials was in the East Midlands, at 27%.

The vast majority of teachers (86%) indicated support for headteachers’ commitment to protect a teacher’s identity in the event of protests about the use of materials deemed offensive by some groups. The majority of teachers (77%) also indicated that they support headteachers’ commitment not to automatically suspend teachers on the basis of their use of materials which some communities find offensive. Similarly, the majority (73%) supported headteachers’ commitment to uphold their freedom of expression, as long as it lies within the scope of the law, even if it unintentionally causes offence

Reporting possible extremism

Encouragingly, the Batley protests do not appear to have had a negative impact on teachers’ willingness to report suspected cases of Islamist extremism to the police or safeguarding officers. Only 4% of teachers indicated that they were less likely to report suspected cases of Islamist extremism, whilst 8% indicated that they were more likely to report them. The majority of teachers (67%) indicated that they would report suspected cases of Islamist extremism regardless of the events at Batley Grammar School. Even more teachers (82%) indicated that they were equally likely to report potential cases of Islamist and Far-Right extremism.

Recommendations

1. The Government should issue statutory guidance committing headteachers and schools to:
 - uphold teachers’ freedom of expression, as long as it lies within the scope of the law, even if it unintentionally causes offence;
 - do not automatically suspend teachers who have been accused of using materials which some religious groups or

12. Suella Braverman, ‘We do not have blasphemy laws in Great Britain’, The Times, March 4 2023, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/suella-braverman-we-do-not-have-blasphemy-laws-in-great-britain-9ps9jj8r5>.

13. ‘Schools: Blasphemy’, Question for Home Office, UIN HL6624.

- communities may find offensive, as long as they have been using this for a legitimate teaching objective;
- do not automatically suspend students who have been accused of causing offence or “desecrating” religious books; and
 - protect a teacher’s identity in the event of protests about the use of materials deemed offensive by some groups.
2. The statutory guidance should make clear that a school’s duty to teach fundamental British values does not in any way imply that teachers should be restricted from using materials that some people may find offensive. Contrary to what Batley Grammar School implied after its inquiry into the events of 2021, the promotion of “respect and tolerance between people of different faiths, beliefs and values”¹⁴ is perfectly compatible with supporting teachers using images of religious figures, whether satirical or historical, where there is educational value in the use of such images and where there are no threats or intentions to stir up hatred.
 3. Organisations that publicly name accused teachers on social media or through traditional media channels – thus potentially putting the physical safety of these teachers at risk – should be held accountable. The Government should consider what kind of action can and should be taken through the Charity Commission, or through criminal or civil court procedures, including prohibitory injunctions.

14. Batley Multi Academy Trust, 'Executive summary of the independent investigation commissioned by the Trust', captured on 27 May 2021 at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20210527122819/https://batleymat.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/ExecutiveSummaryoftheIndependentInvestigationat-BGS26052021.pdf>.

Background

Batley and Wakefield

In March 2021, a teacher was suspended from Batley Grammar School after showing a caricature of the prophet Muhammad in a religious studies class.¹⁵ The image was taken from the satirical French magazine, *Charlie Hebdo*, whose offices were attacked in January 2015 by jihadist militants linked to al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula; 12 people, including journalists and security staff, were killed in the attack prompted by the magazine's publication of "blasphemous" cartoons of Muhammad. The teacher at Batley Grammar School, who ironically wished to educate his students about blasphemy, was suspended by the headteacher after a crowd of angry Muslim parents and external activists gathered outside the school.

The protestors, including people who did not have children at the school, saw the use of the image as blasphemous and called for the firing of the teacher. One protestor claimed the image offended "the whole Muslim community".¹⁶ Rather than stand up for the right of the teacher to use materials with which he intended to generate a classroom discussion, the headteacher issued an "unequivocal" apology to the protestors and said that the use of the image was "totally inappropriate".¹⁷ An independent inquiry was commissioned by Batley Multi Academy Trust, which runs the school. The Department for Education did not commission its own inquiry. Some critics argued that by not intervening and by leaving the problem to be resolved at the local level – where the school's own handling of the matter was not part of any investigation – the Government had ceded too much power to "outraged Muslim 'community leaders'".¹⁸ In May 2021, the Trust published the executive summary of its investigation, which concluded that the topics of the lesson "could have been effectively addressed in other ways and without using the image", but affirmed that the teacher did not use the image with the intention of causing offence.¹⁹ The Trust said it "will not avoid addressing challenging subject matter in its classrooms", but – appearing to undermine this pledge – it also said "it is committed to ensuring that offence is not caused".²⁰ The Trust justified its commitment to ensure no offence is caused – criticised by some as a "a route to censorship"²¹ – in the language of "fundamental British values". It stated:

Clearly, where subject content is sensitive or controversial, great care must be taken to ensure that lessons are planned and delivered in a way that promotes respect and tolerance between people of different faiths, beliefs and values.²²

15. 'Prophet Muhammad cartoon sparks Batley Grammar School protest', BBC News, 25 March 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-leeds-56524850>.

16. *Ibid.*

17. Amelia Hill, 'Batley cartoon row "hijacked by extremists on both sides", says Warsi', The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/mar/26/robert-jenrick-condemns-batley-school-protest-intimidation>.

18. National Secular Society Bulletin, Issue 78, Summer 2021, p.7, <https://www.secularism.org.uk/uploads/3885-nss-bulletin-78-summer-2021-web.pdf>.

19. Batley Multi Academy Trust, 'Executive summary of the independent investigation commissioned by the Trust'.

20. *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

21. Camilla Turner, 'Batley Grammar teacher allowed back to school but Prophet Mohammed picture should not be used again', The Telegraph, 26 May 2021, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2021/05/26/batley-grammar-teacher-allowed-back-school-prophet-mohammed/>.

22. Batley Multi Academy Trust, 'Executive summary of the independent investigation commissioned by the Trust'.

23. Nicola Woolcock, 'Prophet cartoon row teacher can return to class', The Times, 27 May 2021, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/prophet-cartoon-row-teacher-can-return-to-class-rs7bzt657>.
24. Charlotte Wace, 'Prophet cartoon was shown at Batley Grammar School "a week before row"', The Times, 3 April 2021, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/prophet-cartoon-was-shown-at-school-a-week-before-row-5sgwwdhdh>.
25. Ewan Somerville, 'Islamic charity that outed teacher in Batley cartoon row is rebuked by watchdog', The Telegraph, 1 October 2021, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2021/10/01/islamic-charity-outed-teacher-batley-cartoon-row-formal-rebuked/>.
26. Vivek Chaudhary, 'EXCLUSIVE - "My son fears he will be murdered": Father of blasphemy row RE teacher says he can never return to his old life after death threats over Prophet Muhammad lesson - and says school has thrown him under a bus', Mail Online, 29 March 2021, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9414625/Teacher-tells-father-fears-life-Prophet-Muhammad-row.html>.
27. *Ibid.*
28. Vivek Chaudhary, 'EXCLUSIVE: Teacher suspended after showing pupils a cartoon of the Prophet Mohammed during RE lesson at West Yorkshire school nearly two years ago has a new identity but is STILL in hiding, his family reveals', Mail Online, 7 March 2023, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11830621/Teacher-suspended-showing-pupils-cartoon-Prophet-Mohammed-hiding.html>.
29. Kim Willsher, 'Teacher decapitated in Paris named as Samuel Paty, 47', The Guardian, 17 October 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/17/teacher-decapitated-in-paris-named-as-samuel-paty-47>.
30. Vivek Chaudhary, 'EXCLUSIVE - "My son fears he will be murdered": Father of blasphemy row RE teacher says he can never return to his old life after death threats over Prophet Muhammad lesson - and says school has thrown him under a bus'.
31. 'National tribute to the memory of Samuel Paty - Speech by Emmanuel Macron, President of the Republic, at the Sorbonne', Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires Étrangères website, 21 October 2020, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/human-rights/freedom-of-religion-or-belief/article/national-tribute-to-the-memory-of-samuel-paty-speech-by-emmanuel-macron>.
32. 'New Threat: "Atmospheric Jihadism"', Le Secrétariat Général du Comité Interministériel de Prévention de la Délinquance et de la Radicalisation (CIPDR) website, 30 April 2021, <https://www.cipdr.gouv.fr/nouvelle-menace-le-jihadisme-datmosphere/>.

The school then lifted the suspension of the teacher.²³ However, the teacher had been named on social media by a local charity, Purpose of Life, and had received death threats.²⁴ In October 2021, the Charity Commission formally rebuked Purpose of Life for "inflaming tensions" and outing the teacher,²⁵ who fled his home under police protection and was given a new identity. The teacher's father said that his son fears he will be murdered: "My son keeps breaking down crying and says that it's all over for him. He is worried that he and his family are all going to be killed".²⁶ He also expressed anger at the way the school had treated his son:

*The school has thrown my son under a bus. The lesson that he delivered in which the picture of the Prophet Muhammad was shown was part of the curriculum, it had been approved by the school . . . So why is my son being victimised like this? The school should have come out fighting for him and made it clear to the protestors that if offence was caused, then it was not my son's fault.*²⁷

Over two years later, the teacher remains in hiding after relocating with his family far from Batley.²⁸

The danger to teachers accused of showing religiously offensive materials in the classroom from social media campaigns stoking a sense of grievance amongst Muslims became all too apparent in October 2020 in France. Samuel Paty, a secondary school history and geography teacher, was killed and decapitated by Chechen refugee, Abdullakh Anzorov, in a Paris suburb after showing an image of the prophet Muhammad - also from Charlie Hebdo - during a moral and civic education class discussion about freedom of speech.²⁹ There is no doubt that the Batley Grammar School teacher had Paty's fate in mind when he went into hiding.³⁰ Anzorov had sought out Paty, paying some students to identify him outside the school, after the father of a girl in Paty's class launched a social media campaign naming Paty, as well as the school in Conflans-Sainte-Honorine, and demanding his sacking.

Following the gruesome murder, President Macron visited the scene of the attack, and on the first anniversary of the event, in October 2021, he delivered a speech paying national tribute to Paty. He said Paty was murdered precisely because he embodied the values of the Republic, such as the freedom of expression: "Samuel Paty was killed," he said, "because Islamists want our future and because they know that with quiet heroes like him, they will never have it."³¹ The case of Paty was described by Gilles Kepel, Macron's special envoy, as an example of the new threat of "atmospheric jihadism".³²

Have the Batley Grammar School protests and the killing of Samuel Paty affected the way in which teachers in Britain teach? Are they less likely, as a result, to use certain teaching materials in classrooms out of fear of offending not just Muslim students but Muslim parents and external activists? How do teachers feel about the prospect of protests outside their schools in the event that a teacher is accused of offending Muslim sensibilities in the classroom? These are relevant questions two years after the Batley affair, and three years after Paty's assassination, since these are

not the only examples of unrest, intimidation or violence triggered by religious offence taken by some Muslims in Britain in relation to teaching in schools.

Most recently, in February 2023, in the West Yorkshire town of Wakefield, just ten miles from Batley, four boys were suspended from school following an incident involving a Quran. At Kettlethorpe High School, a 14-year-old boy ordered a copy of the Quran on Amazon and brought it into school as a forfeit for losing a video game, Call of Duty. The book was reportedly bandied about and slightly damaged when it was dropped in a corridor. It had a slight tear and some pages were lightly marked. Remarkably, the school called West Yorkshire Police to intervene. The police found that there had been only “minor damage” to the Quran and concluded that no crime had been committed. Nonetheless, they recorded the incident as a “non-crime hate incident”.³³ And although the headteacher of the school said there was no “malicious intent”, the boy and three others were suspended from school. It is unclear what offence according to the school’s rules, if any, the children had committed.

As with the Batley protests, social media played a role in agitating a sense of grievance amongst local activists. A Labour councillor, Usman Ali, in a now-deleted tweet, claimed the Quran had been “desecrated” – a point of view echoed by the media outlet 5Pillars³⁴ – and described the incident as a “serious provocative action” that “needs to be dealt with urgently by all the authorities, namely the police, the school and the local authority”.³⁵ And once again, there were death threats. Other students reportedly threatened the boy with arson and beatings. There is no record of other students being disciplined, or of the police taking action against those issuing death threats. West Yorkshire Police merely spoke to a student making such threats. A police spokesperson said that a report was made “of a malicious communications offence in relation to threats being made to a child in connection with this incident. A suspect was identified, who was also a child, and they were given words of advice by an officer”.³⁶

A meeting was held in the Jamia Masjid Swafia mosque, chaired by the mosque’s imam, Hafiz Muhammad Mateen Anwar,³⁷ and attended by the boy’s mother, police officers and headteacher of the school. The non-Muslim mother, wearing a hijab, nervously told the attendees that her boy is autistic, does not always realise what is socially appropriate or inappropriate, and did not intend to cause any offence.³⁸ However, she also repeatedly acknowledged how “disrespectful” his actions had been and apologised on his behalf. Police Chief Inspector Andy Thornton nodded in agreement when Anwar told the attendees that Muslims will never tolerate disrespect of the Quran and will give their lives in its honour.³⁹ At the meeting, independent councillor for Wakefield East, Akef Akbar, acknowledged the numerous death threats sent to the 14-year-old boy – who was so petrified that he had not eaten for days – but appeared to undermine the seriousness of such threats, describing them simply as a flaring of passions.⁴⁰ He added that the boy’s mother had to report the

33. Ben Ellery and Steven Swinford, ‘Quran damaged at school recorded as “hate incident” by police’, *The Times*, 8 February 2023, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/quran-wakefield-school-students-police-investigation-uk-2023-zrj5q75ck>. *The Times* reported that according to police guidance, non-crime hate incidents are “any non-crime incident which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice”.

34. ‘The truth about the Wakefield school Quran desecration’, 5Pillars, YouTube, 14 March 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hOL8LQ_-Tmo.

35. Damo/@concretemilk, Twitter post, 27 February 2023, <https://twitter.com/concretemilk/status/1630148866929459200>.

36. Izzy Hawksworth, SWNS and Jasmine Norden, ‘Police statement as Wakefield schoolboy who “dropped a Quran” is sent death threats’, *Yorkshire Live*, 3 March 2023, <https://www.examinerlive.co.uk/news/local-news/police-statement-wakefield-schoolboy-who-26379609>.

37. Several days after the meeting, *The Telegraph* reported that Anwar had previously “warned worshippers not to wish others a merry Christmas, described homosexuality as ‘barbaric’ and music as ‘toxic’, and also made sectarian remarks about more liberal followers of Islam”. See: Neil Johnston and Gabriella Swerling, ‘Koran row imam suggested Muslims could be punished for celebrating Christmas’, *The Telegraph*, 12 March 2023, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/03/12/imam-discusses-punishing-muslims-celebrating-christmas/>.

38. ‘Community Meeting in Relation to the Qur’an Incident’, Jamia Masjid Swafia, Facebook, 24 February 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/masjidswafia/videos/220999650384772/>.

39. *Ibid.*

40. *Ibid.*

threats to the police, but “to her credit” did not seek further action. “She only asks,” he added, “that her son is not harmed.”⁴¹

The Home Office's response

Writing in *The Times* on March 4, 2023, the then Home Secretary, Suella Braverman, expressed her “deep concern” about events in Wakefield and the broader issues it raised. She said:

*The education sector and police have a duty to prioritise the physical safety of children over the hurt feelings of adults. Schools answer to pupils and parents. They do not have to answer to self-appointed community activists.*⁴²

She said she would work with the Department for Education to issue new guidance to ensure that schools understand this. She also stated that she would announce new guidance for police regarding the recording of ‘non-crime hate incidents’, to ensure they only record such incidents where it is “proportionate and absolutely necessary”.⁴³ Taking a firm stance against political and cultural “timidity” in the face of *de facto* blasphemy codes and their supporters, she asserted:

*We do not have blasphemy laws in Great Britain, and must not be complicit in the attempts to impose them on this country. There is no right not to be offended. There is no legal obligation to be reverent towards any religion. The lodestar of our democracy is freedom of speech. Nobody can demand respect for their belief system, even if it is a religion.*⁴⁴

Less than two weeks later, on March 13, Braverman announced new statutory guidance for the police on the recording of ‘non-crime hate incidents’ to ensure police officers prioritise freedom of expression.⁴⁵ Under the new draft code of practice, personal data may only be included in a non-crime hate incident record if the incident is clearly motivated by intentional hostility and where there is a real risk of significant harm or a criminal offence.⁴⁶

After Braverman’s announcement that the Government would work with the Department for Education (DfE) to produce new guidance for schools to deal with blasphemy-related incidents, the DfE said it “do[es] not plan to issue additional guidance on managing blasphemy related incidents”, and instead referred to a range of existing guidance – on behaviour, exclusions and political impartiality – which help schools meet “the needs of their pupils and to manage and resolve concerns and complaints”.⁴⁷

On March 20, 2023, Lord Godson, the director of Policy Exchange, sought clarity on this matter and raised a question in the House of Lords. He asked “whether the new blasphemy guidance being developed by the Home Office will be legally binding upon schools”; he also asked how the Home Office is “planning to make schools aware of their new responsibilities under this guidance; and how it will be enforced”.⁴⁸ On April 3, Lord Sharpe, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Home Office, responded. He said:

41. *Ibid.*

42. Suella Braverman, ‘We do not have blasphemy laws in Great Britain’.

43. Gabriella Swerling, ‘Home Secretary to crack down on police reporting of non-crime hate incidents’, *The Telegraph*, 5 March 2023, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/03/05/home-secretary-crack-police-reporting-non-crime-hate-incidents/>.

44. Suella Braverman, ‘We do not have blasphemy laws in Great Britain’.

45. Home Office, ‘Police will prioritise freedom of speech under new hate incident guidance’, UK Government website, 13 March 2023, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/police-will-prioritise-freedom-of-speech-under-new-hate-incident-guidance>.

46. Home Office, ‘Statutory guidance: Non-Crime Hate Incidents: Draft Code of Practice on the Recording and Retention of Personal Data’, fn 21, UK Government website, 16 March 2023, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-crime-hate-incidents-draft-code-of-practice/non-crime-hate-incidents-draft-code-of-practice-on-the-recording-and-retention-of-personal-data-accessible#fn:21>.

47. Samantha Booth, ‘DfE snubs Braverman pledge for new blasphemy guidance’, *Schools Week*, 9 March 2023, <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/df-e-snubs-braverman-pledge-for-new-blasphemy-guidance/>.

48. ‘Schools: Blasphemy’, Question for Home Office, UIN HL6624, UK Parliament website, 20 March 2023, <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-03-20/HL6624/>.

In response to recent incidents, the Government has been repeatedly clear that there is no blasphemy law in Great Britain. There are currently no plans to develop new blasphemy guidance for schools.⁴⁹

On April 17, Lord Godson posed the same question but to the DfE. Eleven days afterwards, answering on behalf of the DfE, Baroness Barran reiterated Lord Sharpe’s words with some additional comments:

In response to recent incidents, the Government has been clear that there is no blasphemy law in the UK. The Department [for Education] has no plans to produce specific guidance on blasphemy for schools.

Head teachers are best placed to make the decisions on how to meet the needs of their pupils. In doing so, there are a range of considerations, supported by existing departmental guidance. This includes ensuring political impartiality and promoting respect and tolerance between people of different faiths and beliefs.⁵⁰

This chimes with what the then Schools’ Minister Nick Gibb said after the Kettlethorpe School incident. He stated that there is no blasphemy law and that “schools should be promoting fundamental British values of the respect for rule of law, individual liberty and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs”.⁵¹

However, in her response to the Independent Review of Prevent published on 8 February 2023 – just prior to the Wakefield Quran incident – the Home Office indicated that the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) “will lead on tackling blasphemy-related incidents”. If neither the Home Office nor the DfE will take a lead with the development of the guidance for schools, perhaps the DLUHC will do so.

The Prevent Review

Just two weeks prior to the Kettlethorpe School incident,⁵² blasphemy-related intimidation and violence was highlighted as a growing concern in the Independent Review of Prevent, authored by William Shawcross. The Review stated:

An area of particular importance requiring more attention is that of violence associated with accusations of blasphemy and apostasy. It is vital that Prevent proactively seeks to address this ideological threat, given the serious challenge it poses to our national culture of free speech – which must be fiercely protected – as well as to the safety of individuals and the public.⁵³

The Review noted the significance of the Batley Grammar School protests, stating that it is “precisely the type of challenge where Prevent should institute urgent additional resources”,⁵⁴ as well the murder of Asad Shah, an Ahmadi Muslim shopkeeper, by a Sunni Muslim admirer of a Pakistani cleric who founded an organisation defending Pakistan’s strict blasphemy laws. The Review also expressed concern about the connection between “narratives around blasphemy in the UK ... to hard-line Pakistani clerics

49. *Ibid.*

50. ‘Schools: Blasphemy’, Question for Department for Education, UIN HL7123, UK Parliament website, 17 April 2023, <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-04-17/HL7123/>.

51. Samantha Booth, ‘DfE snubs Braverman pledge for new blasphemy guidance’.

52. ‘Four Wakefield pupils suspended after Quran damaged at school’, BBC News, 24 February 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-leeds-64757799>.

53. William Shawcross CVO, ‘Independent Review of Prevent’, HC 1072, February 2023, p.147. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1134986/Independent_Review_of_Prevent.pdf.

54. *Ibid.*, pp.149-150.

and/or the Khatme Nubuwwat movement".⁵⁵ There are other examples of blasphemy-related intimidation and violence in Britain, including the protests against and cancellations of the 2022 Shia-produced film, 'Lady of Heaven', and the firebombing in 2008 of the home of the publisher of a novel, 'The Jewel of Medina', about one of Muhammad's wives, (see timeline of 'blasphemy'-related incidents below).

Notably, one of the Review's 34 recommendations accepted by the Home Secretary was to:

*Improve understanding of 'blasphemy' as part of the wider Islamist threat. The Homeland Security Group should conduct research into understanding and countering Islamist violence, incitement and intimidation linked to 'blasphemy'. It should feed a strong pro-free speech narrative into counter-narrative and community project work.*⁵⁶

The Home Office responded to the Independent Review of Prevent, stating:

*We accept this recommendation and agree that with the worrying number of incidents such as the killing of Asad Shah, the attack on Sir Salman Rushdie, and the incident at a Batley school, there is more to be done to counter blasphemy-related violence. As the overall lead for religious hatred, DLUHC will lead on tackling blasphemy-related incidents and Prevent will focus on where this contributes to radicalisation or terrorism. We have requested that the CCE conduct research on violence associated with blasphemy. Once they complete this research, we will consider with DLUHC, the CCE and wider Prevent partners, how Prevent should adapt to address the challenge of blasphemy violence.*⁵⁷

The Home Office-funded Commission for Countering Extremism (CCE) is leading a research project on blasphemy incidents in Britain. For the Government to tackle blasphemy-related intimidation and violence in the country, it will certainly be useful to map out the key actors disseminating blasphemy narratives, the methods they use, their sources of funding, their target audiences, and the environments in which they operate. Policy recommendations relating to combating blasphemy-related violence and intimidation are expected to follow from the CCE's research in this area. Hopefully, DLUHC, as the governmental agency taking the lead on blasphemy-related incidents, will produce guidance that is relevant for schools as well as local authorities.

The Bloom Report

On April 26, 2023, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities published the Bloom Report, an independent review into "faith engagement". Led by Colin Bloom, the review sought to understand "how best the government should engage with faith groups in England". One of Bloom's tasks was to look "at some aspects where harm might be caused through religious or faith-based practices and a review of the government's role in tackling them". Encouragingly, amongst its recommendations, Bloom's report urged the Government to "investigate

55. *Ibid.*, p.148. Khatme Nubuwwat/Khatm-e-Nubuwwat (the full name of which, Majlis-e-Tahaffuz-e-Khatm-e-Nubuwwat, means 'The Assembly to Protect the End of Prophethood') is the name of a Barelvi organisation and movement in Pakistan that aims to protect the belief in the finality of the prophethood of Muhammad. It was established in 1950 after the creation of Pakistan and in response to the rise of the Ahmadiyya movement, which was founded in 1889 by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad who claimed he was a prophet. In 2016, after the murder of Asad Shah, *The Middle East Eye* reported: "The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) currently lists both the International Khatme-e-Nubuwwat Mission and Aalami Majlise Tahaffuze Khatme Nubuwwat - two anti-Ahmadiyya organisations linked to the Khatme Nubuwwat movement - as affiliates under 'Local/Specialist' on its website". See: Alex MacDonald, "An unrighteous cult": Ahmadiyya face persecution in UK, *Middle East Eye*, 7 April 2016, <https://www.middleeast-eye.net/news/unrighteous-cult-ahmadiyya-face-persecution-uk>.

56. William Shawcross CVO, 'Independent Review of Prevent', p.158.

57. 'The response to the Independent Review of Prevent', Home Office, 8 February 2023, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-prevents-report-and-government-response/the-response-to-the-independent-review-of-prevent-accessible>.

where existing legislation and policy are failing to prevent the crime of forced and coercive marriage”⁵⁸ and to regulate “‘out-of-school settings’ which include faith-based settings operating below the current minimum threshold for registration”.⁵⁹ However, disappointingly, the report failed to mention blasphemy-related incidents whatsoever. It is curious that a major review into the state’s relationship with religion failed to acknowledge the increasing frequency of events in which religious offence has given rise to murder, violence, threats of murder or violence, intimidation, and censorship.

The Bloom Report was a missed opportunity to understand the extent to which blasphemy-related intimidation and violence is a cultural phenomenon within certain communities: is it more prevalent in some rather than others? To what extent is it driven by overseas actors, such as groups Iran or Pakistan? How important are domestic Islamists, whose interests potentially transcend particular ethnic, sectarian and linguistic Muslim communities? Which activist groups have played the most significant role in organising protests against schools and other public institutions in the blasphemy-related incidents in recent years? These are all important questions. Perhaps the CCE’s research into blasphemy will help answer them.

58. Colin Bloom, ‘The Bloom Review: Does government “do God?”’, April 2023, p.23. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1152684/The_Bloom_Review.pdf.

59. *Ibid.*, pp.20, 24.

Timeline of 'Blasphemy'-Related Incidents in Britain

The Batley Grammar School protests are one of a number of 'blasphemy'-related incidents that have occurred in Britain since the Rushdie Affair in 1989, which "marked the start of a new kind of blasphemy code, imposed not by law but by intimidation and the threat of violence".⁶⁰ Such incidents, as outlined below, have increased in frequency in recent years, particularly over the last decade or so. They are not characterised by a legal definition of blasphemy – there has not been a blasphemy law in England and Wales since 2008 and, even then, it was limited to Christianity. Neither are they characterised by a theological definition. Several of these incidents occurred abroad but had significant repercussions in Britain.

60. Stephen Evans, 'Britain's de facto blasphemy law strikes again', National Secular Society, 9 June 2022, <https://www.secularism.org.uk/opinion/2022/06/britains-de-facto-blasphemy-law-strikes-again>.
61. MCB/@MuslimCouncil, Twitter post, June 6, 2022, <https://twitter.com/MuslimCouncil/status/1533717565687619585>.
62. Nadia Khomami, 'Sajid Javid attacks "cancel culture" as UK cinemas pull "blasphemous" film', The Guardian, 8 June 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2022/jun/08/sajid-javid-voices-cancel-culture-concerns-as-blasphemous-film-pulled-from-uk-cinemas>.
63. Helen Pidd, Jessica Murray and Andrew Pulver, 'UK cinema chain cancels screenings of "blasphemous" film after protests', The Guardian, 7 June 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2022/jun/07/uk-cinema-chain-cancels-screenings-of-film-the-lady-of-heaven-after-protests>.
64. Rory Tingle, Katie Feehan, David Pilditch, Gemma Parry, Jamie Phillips, and Matthew Lodge, 'Showcase becomes latest chain to pull "blasphemous" Islamic history film The Lady Of Heaven from cinemas after furious backlash from Muslim protestors - but defiant Vue refuses to stop screenings', Mail Online, 8 June 2022, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10896361/Showcase-latest-chain-pull-blasphemous-Islamic-history-film-Lady-Heaven.html>.
65. Muslims Against Antisemitism (MAAS)/@MAAS_UK, Twitter post, 7 June 2022, https://twitter.com/MAAS_UK/status/1534243728096894977.

2023 Kettlethorpe Quran incident

In February 2023, a 14-year-old boy brought a copy of the Quran into Kettlethorpe School in Wakefield. The book was slightly damaged after being mistreated by a group of pupils. The 14-year-old was temporarily suspended in the midst of a furore agitated by false claims on social media that the book had been "desecrated", burned and spat on. The school reported the matter to the police, who recorded it as a "non-crime hate incident". The boy, who is autistic, received death threats from other students. His mother attended a public meeting in a mosque, apologising on his behalf. The meeting was chaired by an imam who said Muslims will die for the honour of the Quran.

2022 'Lady of Heaven' protests and cancellations

In June 2022, the Shia-produced film, 'Lady of Heaven', was the subject of protests outside cinemas in Sheffield, Bolton, Birmingham and Bradford. The protestors, comprised of hundreds of Sunni Muslims, insisted that the film was "blasphemous" for its depiction of Muhammad and its negative portrayal of certain Muslim figures. The Muslim Council of Britain described the film as "divisive and sectarian", adding, "There are some – including many of this film's supporters or those engaging in sectarianism in their response – whose primary goal is to fuel hatred."⁶¹ The film's executive producer, Malik Shlibak said he had received death threats.⁶² Cineworld pulled the film nationwide, to "ensure the safety" of its staff and patrons.⁶³ A smaller chain, Showcase, followed suit, and Vue Cinemas showed the film in selected branches.⁶⁴ One of the protestors in Birmingham threatened "repercussions" to those who disrespected Muhammad, stating he and his fellow protestors would "lay our life on the line".⁶⁵

Teacher suspended for using a 'Jesus and Mo' mug

In March 2022, a teacher from Colchester Grammar School was suspended after images appeared online of the teacher holding a mug with an image from the cartoon series Jesus and Mo. A spokesman for the school said: "We have been notified that an image has been shared online of an individual appearing to use a cup that has an offensive image on it."⁶⁶ On the mug, in speech bubbles, a figure resembling Jesus with a crown of thorns says "Hey", whilst another figure with a beard and a turban – Mo – replies: "How ya doin?"⁶⁷ The cartoon's website states that Mo is not really the prophet Muhammad, "it's a body double". Muhammad "couldn't make it," it says, "as he has been dead for centuries".⁶⁸

The Freethinker, a magazine established in 1881, said it will no longer publish Jesus and Mo cartoons because "in the current climate" and "being a small operation", it had "no faith in the ability or willingness of the UK authorities to ensure that our right to freedom of speech is defended against extremists".⁶⁹

2021 Batley Grammar School affair

In March 2021, a teacher was suspended after showing a cartoon of Muhammad in a religious studies class on free speech. Protests by parents and activists outside the school, supported by a social media campaign, claimed he had insulted the founder of Islam and demanded his firing. The headteacher apologised "unequivocally", saying that the use of the image was "totally inappropriate".⁷⁰

An independent inquiry stated that the teacher did not intentionally use the image to cause offence. The school re-instated the teacher. But after being named by a Muslim-run charity, Purpose of Life, and receiving death threats, the teacher was relocated with his family, placed under police protection and given a new identity.

Notably, the Muslim Council of Britain called for disciplinary action against the teacher if any further investigation found them "causing distress" to Muslims in the Batley Grammar School community whether intentionally or not.⁷¹

Speakers' Corner attack

In July 2021, a former Muslim and a convert to Christianity, Hatun Tash, was attacked with a knife at Speakers Corner in London. She was wearing a T-shirt in support of *Charlie Hebdo* magazine. The assailant escaped the scene, despite police officers being in pursuit, and has not since been caught. Media reports at the time suggested Counter Terrorism Command was leading the investigation.⁷² Tash had been arrested by the police at Speakers' Corner earlier, in December 2020 and May 2021, for "breaching the peace". On the latter occasion, she was confronted by a large group of Muslim men calling for her arrest for wearing a t-shirt with an image of Muhammad.⁷³ The Metropolitan Police later sent a written apology⁷⁴ to Tash for the wrongful arrests and paid her £10,000 compensation.⁷⁵

In May 2023, Edward Little pleaded guilty to planning to kill Tash with a gun.⁷⁶ According to an encrypted chat on one of the phones he was arrested with, he had adopted the name "Abdullah" and had exchanged messages about religion and Iraq, whilst referring disparagingly to non-Muslims as "kuffar".⁷⁷

- 66. 'Teacher at Colchester Grammar School in Essex suspended "for using mug with Prophet Muhammad image"', ITV News, 30 March 2022, <https://www.itv.com/news/anglia/2022-03-30/teacher-suspended-for-using-mug-with-prophet-muhammad-image>.
- 67. Katie Weston, 'Top grammar school suspends teacher after a photograph emerged of him holding a mug bearing an image of the Prophet Muhammad', Mail Online, 30 March 2022, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10667917/Top-grammar-school-suspends-teacher-using-mug-featuring-image-Prophet-Muhammad.html>.
- 68. 'About', Jesus and Mo, undated, <https://www.jesusandmo.net/about/>.
- 69. Porcus Sapiens, 'Free speech in Britain: a losing battle?', *The Free Thinker*, 31 March 2022, <https://freethinker.co.uk/2022/03/free-speech-in-britain-a-losing-battle/>.
- 70. Amelia Hill, 'Batley cartoon row "hijacked by extremists on both sides", says Warsi', *The Guardian*, 26 March 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/mar/26/robert-jenrick-condemns-batley-school-protest-intimidation>.
- 71. The MCB tweeted: "Should any subsequent investigation find that the member of staff responsible for causing such distress to Muslim members of the Batley Grammar School community did so intentionally or recklessly, we trust appropriate disciplinary action will be taken." See: MCB/@MuslimCouncil, Twitter post, 25 March 2021, <https://twitter.com/MuslimCouncil/status/1375142257284747265>.
- 72. Carly Mayberry, 'Suspect Who Stabbed Christian Activist Multiple Times at London's Speaker's Corner Still At Large', *Newsweek*, 28 July 2021, <https://www.newsweek.com/suspect-who-stabbed-christian-activist-multiple-times-londons-speakers-corner-still-large-1614088>.
- 73. 'Police Brutality Vs Police Politeness | Speakers Corner', DCCI Ministries, You Tube, 25 May 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MCQYheST8M8>.
- 74. Letter from Metropolitan Police to Hatun Tash, Christian Concern, 29 September 2022, https://christianconcern.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Letter-of-Apology-Tash-6.10.22_Redacted.pdf.
- 75. Anugrah Kumar, 'Christian evangelist awarded \$11,000 for arrest; police apologize', *The Christian Post*, 22 October 2022, <https://www.christianpost.com/news/christian-evangelist-awarded-11000-for-arrest-police-apologize.html>.
- 76. 'Speakers' Corner: Man admits Hyde Park gun attack plot', *BBC News*, 19 May 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-65646464>.
- 77. 'Man pleads guilty to plotting gun attack at Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park', *Sky News*, 19 May 2023, <https://news.sky.com/story/amp/man-pleads-guilty-to-plotting-gun-attack-at-speakers-corner-in-hyde-park-12884310>.

78. 'Samuel Paty: French schoolgirl admits lying about murdered teacher', BBC News, 9 March 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-56325254>.
79. Liam Barnes and PA news agency, 'Man who praised Samuel Paty murder jailed for terrorism offences', BBC News, 11 May, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-nottinghamshire-65561775>.
80. Sima Kotecha, 'Assistant head "threatened" in LGBT teaching row', BBC News, 7 February 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-47158357>.
81. Sima Kotecha, 'Birmingham LGBT lessons: Head teacher threatened', BBC News, 20 May 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-48339080>.
82. Dan Sales, Patrick Gysin and Jason Johnson, 'Has He Got A Screw Louis? Olympic ace Louis Smith accused of mocking Islam after yelling "Allahu Akbar" and pretending to pray in boozy video', The Sun, 7 October 2016, <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/1934586/olympic-ace-louis-smith-accused-of-mocking-islam-after-yelling-allahu-akbar-and-pretending-to-pray-in-boozy-video/>.
83. Stephen Evans, 'The demonisation of Louis Smith: This is how a de facto blasphemy law works', National Secular Society, 11 October 2016, <https://www.secularism.org.uk/opinion/2016/10/the-demonisation-of-louis-smith-this-is-how-a-de-facto-blasphemy-law-works>.
84. Simon Johnson, 'Muslim shopkeeper Asad Shah had "disrespected Islam" according to man who admits his murder', The Telegraph, 7 July 2016, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/07/07/muslim-man-admits-murdering-shopkeeper-asad-shah-who-wished-below/>.
85. 'Asad Shah killing: "Disrespecting Islam" murderer jailed', BBC News, 9 August 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-37021385>.
86. 'Khatm-e-Nabuwat & Dawat-e-Islami linked to murder of Ahmadiyya Muslim Asad Shah', Rabwah Times, April 6, 2016, <https://www.rabwah.net/khatm-e-nabuwat-dawat-e-islami-linked-to-murder-of-ahmadiyya-muslim-asad-shah/>. For a screenshot of the Facebook post, see: <https://www.rabwah.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/CefFC-9zWsAlipX7.jpg>.

2020 Killing of Samuel Paty

In October 2020, French schoolteacher Samuel Paty was murdered and decapitated outside the school in which he worked, the Collège du Bois d'Aulne, in Conflans-Sainte-Honorine, France, by Abdullakh Anzorov, a Chechen immigrant. Paty had showed an image of the prophet Muhammad from *Charlie Hebdo* magazine in a moral and civic education lesson on freedom of speech. Anzorov had been alerted to Paty's alleged transgression by a social media campaign against the teacher instigated by a parent of a student of the school. The student, whose complaints triggered the online campaign, later admitted that she lied about being in Paty's class.⁷⁸

In Britain, in May 2023, Ajmal Shahpal of Nottingham – who had posted an image of Paty's severed head and praised Paty's killer for being "as brave as a lion" – was found guilty of using social media to encourage people "to commit, prepare, or instigate acts of terrorism".⁷⁹ Shahpal had also posted messages saying that anyone who insulted Islam should be killed. Other messages threatened the French government. He was jailed for five-and-a-half years.

2019 'No Outsiders' and anti-RSE protests

In February 2019, protests occurred outside Parkfield Community School in Birmingham over the No Outsiders programme, which teaches LGBT tolerance and equality. The protestors, predominantly Muslims, included parents but also external activists. Although not strictly blasphemy-related, the protests, which spread to other cities, were driven by the sentiment that the Relationships and Sex Education conflicts with orthodox Islamic values. The assistant head teacher of Parkfield who created No Outsiders⁸⁰ and the head teacher of another school teaching LGBT equality both received threats.⁸¹

2016 Gymnast Louis Smith's mocking of Islam and death threats

In October 2016, Olympic gymnast Louis Smith and another gymnast, Luke Carson, appeared in a video online in which they made fun of Islam, pretending to pray whilst calling out "Allahu Akbar" (meaning God is the greatest).⁸² Smith received death threats and issued an apology, recognising the "severity" of his mistake.⁸³

Asad Shah murder

In March 2016, shopkeeper Asad Shah, an Ahmadi Muslim, was stabbed and killed by Tanveer Ahmed in a premeditated attack. Ahmed, who drove from Bradford to Glasgow to carry out the attack, was incensed by Shah's claim of being a prophet, and stated that Shah disrespected the prophet Muhammad by claiming so.⁸⁴ Ahmed, who admitted to killing Shah, was jailed for life and will serve a minimum of 27 years in prison.⁸⁵ After Shah's murder, the anti-Ahmadi group Khatm-e-Nubuwwat, which has an office in London, "congratulated all Muslims".⁸⁶

2015 Charlie Hebdo jihadist massacre

In January 2015, 12 people were killed in a jihadist terror attack on the offices of the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris. The perpetrators, Said and Cherif Kouachi, claimed they were acting on behalf of Al-Qaeda to avenge the magazine's publication of cartoons of the prophet Muhammad. Although this did not take place in Britain, a mentor of the Kouachi brothers, Djamel Beghal, was a "regular worshipper at London's Finsbury Park mosque and a disciple of the radical preachers Abu Hamza and Abu Qatada".⁸⁷ Beghal's attendance of the mosque was when it was under the control of Abu Hamza.⁸⁸

In a BBC/ComRes poll of British Muslims just after the massacre, 27% said they had some sympathy for the motives behind the Paris attacks; 24% disagreed with the statement that acts of violence against those who publish images of Muhammad can "never be justified"; and 11% agreed that organisations that publish images of Muhammad deserve to be attacked.⁸⁹

On the first anniversary of the massacre, a motion was tabled in the House of Commons that recognised "the tragedy as an attack on the right of free speech".⁹⁰

2014 Maajid Nawaz death threats

In January 2014, Maajid Nawaz, the co-founder of the Quilliam Foundation and a Liberal Democrat candidate for parliament, received abuse and death threats for tweeting a 'Jesus and Mo' cartoon. Nawaz wrote that his intention "was to defend my religion from those who have hijacked it just because they shout the loudest"; to "carve out a space to be heard without constantly fearing the blasphemy charge, on pain of death; and to "highlight that Muslims can engage in politics without insisting that our own religious values must trump all others' concerns".⁹¹

Mohammed Shafiq, a member of the Liberal Democrats Ethnic Minority group, called for Nawaz's deselection from contesting the 2015 general election. Shafiq, also the CEO of the Ramadhan Foundation and then a presenter on Ummah Channel, tweeted about Nawaz: "We will notify all muslim [sic] organisations in the UK of his despicable behaviour and also notify Islamic countries."⁹² For this, journalist Andrew Neil asked Shafiq in a television interview whether he was "organising a lynch mob".⁹³

2012 'Innocence of Muslims' protests

In September 2012, some 7,000 Muslims demonstrated outside the U.S. embassy in London over a short film uploaded onto YouTube called 'Innocence of Muslims', which they argued Muslims saw as blasphemous.⁹⁴ The protests, which also took place outside Google's office in London, were organised by the Muslim Action Forum.⁹⁵ Similar protests took place in other countries, the most notable in Pakistan, where tens of thousands of people turned out onto the streets, leading to deaths and injuries.⁹⁶

87. Josh Halliday, Duncan Gardham and Julian Borger, 'Mentor of Charlie Hebdo gunmen has been UK-based', *The Guardian*, 11 January 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/11/mentor-charlie-hebdo-gunmen-uk-based-djamel-beghal>. See also: Matthieu Suc, 'Charlie Hebdo : quand Chérif Kouachi rencontrait des djihadistes sur un terrain de foot', *Le Monde*, 8 January 2015, https://www.lemonde.fr/police-justice/article/2015/01/08/charlie-hebdo-quand-cherif-kouachi-rencontrait-des-djihadistes-sur-un-terrain-de-foot_4552070_1653578.html.
88. Sean O'Neill, John Simpson, David Brown, 'Charlie Hebdo killer was mentored by al Qaeda lieutenant', *The Times*, January 8 2015, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/charlie-hebdo-killer-was-mentored-by-al-qaeda-lieutenant-cd5t96dftds>.
89. 'Most British Muslims "oppose Muhammad cartoons reprisals"', *BBC News*, 25 February 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-31293196>. For the full poll results see: BBC Today Programme British Muslims Poll tables, captured on 26 February 2015 at: https://web.archive.org/web/20150226184646/http://comres.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/BBC-Today-Programme-British-Muslims-Poll_FINAL-Tables_Feb2015.pdf.
90. 'Anniversary of Charlie Hebdo Attack', Early Day Motion 929, 7 January 2016, UK Parliament website, <https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/48717/anniversary-of-charlie-hebdo-attack>.
91. Maajid Nawaz, 'Why I'm speaking up for Islam against the loudmouths who have hijacked it', *The Guardian*, 28 January 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/comment-isfree/2014/jan/28/speaking-islam-loudmouths-hijacked>.
92. Mohammed Shafiq/@mshafiquk, Twitter post, January 18, 2014, <https://twitter.com/mshafiquk/status/424575029599543296>.
93. 'Cartoon row: Deselection call for Lib Dem Maajid Nawaz', *BBC News*, 24 January 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/uk-politics-25881508>. Shafiq replied: "I think that's quite offensive of you to suggest that ... You can't link anything to me that says I've advocated violence". When Neil asked, for the second time, "What's this got to do with other Islamic countries?", Shafiq said, "It affects every Muslim around the world when a cartoon depicts the Holy Prophet". He went on to state that Muslims find the depiction of Muhammad forbidden and offensive.
94. Jessica Elgot, 'Muslims Call For Blasphemy Law In UK And UN To Prevent Repeat Of Anti-Mohammed YouTube Film', *The Huffington Post UK*, 25 September 2012, https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2012/09/25/muslims-blasphemy-law-uk-un-mohammed-youtube_n_1912004.html.
95. Chris York, 'Anti-Islam Film Protesters Rally Outside Google's London Headquarters (video)', *The Huffington Post UK*, 15 October 2012, https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2012/10/15/anti-islam-film-protests-google-london-headquarters_n_1966081.html.
96. 'Death, destruction in Pakistan amid protests tied to anti-Islam film', *CNN*, September 21, 2012, <https://edition.cnn.com/2012/09/21/world/anti-islam-film-protests>.

97. Lisa O'Carroll, 'Channel 4 documentary Islam: The Untold Story receives 1,200 complaints', *The Guardian*, 3 September 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2012/sep/03/c4-islam-untold-story-complaints>.
98. John Hall, 'Channel 4 cancels controversial screening of Islam: The Untold Story documentary after presenter Tom Holland is threatened', *The Independent*, 12 September 2012, <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/news/channel-4-cancels-controversial-screening-of-islam-the-untold-story-documentary-after-presenter-tom-holland-is-threatened-8125641.html>.
99. 'Asia Bibi's case: Weighed down by guilt, blasphemy accuser mulls pulling back', *The Express Tribune*, January 21, 2012, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/324943/asia-bibi-case-weighed-down-by-guilt-blasphemy-accuser-mulls-pulling-back/>.
100. Jerome Taylor, 'Hardliners call for deaths of Surrey Muslims', *The Independent*, 21 October 2010, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/hardliners-call-for-deaths-of-surrey-muslims-2112268.html>.
101. 'Asia Bibi's case: Weighed down by guilt, blasphemy accuser mulls pulling back', *The Herald Tribune*.
102. '700-strong lawyers' alliance remains defiant after Qadri's execution', *The Herald Tribune*, 7 March 2016, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1060789/lawyers-group-behind-spike-in-blasphemy-cases-in>. See also: Shumaila Jaffery, 'Asia Bibi: Pakistan's notorious blasphemy case', *BBC News*, 29 January 2019, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-sh/Asia_Bibi.
103. 'Asia Bibi's case: Weighed down by guilt, blasphemy accuser mulls pulling back', *The Herald Tribune*.
104. Haseeb Bhatti, 'Supreme Court acquits Asia Bibi, orders immediate release', *Dawn*, 30 October 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1442396>; 'Pakistan blasphemy case: Asia Bibi freed from jail', *BBC News*, 8 November 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-46130189>.
105. Kathy Gannon, 'Pakistan upholds acquittal of woman in blasphemy case', *AP*, January 29, 2019, <https://apnews.com/article/ap-top-news-pakistan-acquittals-supreme-courts-international-news-3cf437e-7f39845a0ba3a8275991eba77>.
106. Random House Publishing Group statement on *The Jewel of Medina*, undated, <https://www.randomhouse.com/rhpg/medinaletter.html>.
107. Jamie Doward and Mark Townsend, 'Firebomb attack on book publisher', *The Guardian*, 28 September 2008, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2008/sep/28/muhammad.book.attack>.
108. Janet Albrechtsen, 'Will 2009 Be Another Bad Year for Free Speech?', *Real Clear Politics*, December 31, 2008, https://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2008/12/will_2009_be_another_bad_year.html.

Islam Channel 4 documentary cancelled after threats

In August 2012, Channel 4 broadcast 'Islam: The Untold Story', a documentary by historian Tom Holland, which questioned the orthodox Islamic account of the origins of the religion. The programme claimed there was little written evidence of Muhammad and doubted the authenticity of some of the stories in the Quran. Ofcom received over 1,200 complaints about the programme,⁹⁷ and after Holland received threats, Channel 4 decided to cancel a repeat broadcast of the documentary.⁹⁸

Asia Bibi blasphemy case supported by UK-based group

Asia Bibi, a Christian woman, accused of blasphemy in Pakistan in June 2009, became the first woman to be sentenced to death under Pakistan's blasphemy laws.

In January 2012, the *Pakistani Express Tribune* reported that the complainant in Bibi's trial, Qari Salam, was considering dropping the case, but was "convinced" not to change his mind by the son of the leader of Khatm-e-Nabuwwat's "London chapter".⁹⁹ According to *The Independent*, the Khatm-e-Nabuwwat group – which has chapters in multiple countries – has close connections to the Pakistani establishment and met Pakistan's high commissioner in the UK in the summer of 2010.¹⁰⁰ *The Express Tribune* also reported that, according to Salam, Khatm-e-Nabuwwat's London chapter had hired Mustafa Chaudhry as counsel to fight the case in Lahore High Court, in order to secure the death sentence for Bibi.¹⁰¹ Chaudhry is the leader of the Khatm-e-Nabuwwat Lawyers' Forum – an alliance of 700 lawyers based in Lahore – whose stated mission is "to use its expertise and influence to ensure that anyone insulting Islam or Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is charged, tried and executed".¹⁰² Salam reportedly told *The Express Tribune* that the son of the leader of Khatm-e-Nabuwwat's London chapter said: "We will chase her through hell ... don't worry about the money, [we are] hiring [the] best lawyers."¹⁰³

Bibi was eventually acquitted and her death sentence quashed by the Supreme Court in October 2018, triggering violent protests in Pakistan.¹⁰⁴ The court reaffirmed her acquittal in January 2019.¹⁰⁵

2008 'The Jewel of Medina' cancellation and firebombing

In August 2008, Random House cancelled its publication of *The Jewel of Medina*, a novel by Sherry Jones that told the story of Muhammad's relationship with his child bride, Aisha. The American publisher stated that it feared publication "might be offensive to some in the Muslim community" and incite "acts of violence by a small, radical segment".¹⁰⁶ Jones planned to publish the book in the UK with Gibson Square, but a few days before the book's planned publication, the home of the imprint's founder, Martin Rynja, was firebombed.¹⁰⁷ Gibson Square subsequently cancelled publication of the book.¹⁰⁸

2005 Danish Cartoon crisis

In September 2005, the Danish magazine *Jyllands-Posten* published cartoons of Muhammad to contribute to a debate on self-censorship and Islam in Europe. A group of Danish imams toured the Middle East with a dossier including the cartoons plus some fake cartoons to agitate a robust diplomatic response. Several European embassies in the region were physically attacked.¹⁰⁹ Some countries boycotted Danish goods. Protests were held internationally, including in Britain, where placards called for the death of those who insult Islam or Muhammad.¹¹⁰

Responding to the Danish cartoon controversy, members of a group called the Muslim Action Committee met in Birmingham and called for both changes to the Race Relations Act “to give Muslims the same protections as Sikhs or Jews”, and also changes to the Press Complaints Commission code, to “prevent publication of any images of Muhammad” in Britain.¹¹¹

1989 Rushdie Affair

Following the publication in Britain in September 1988 of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, Muslims in Bolton staged a public demonstration and in Bradford a public book-burning protest was held. The book was deemed to be blasphemous for its portrayal of the prophet Muhammad. The protests spread internationally. Violent demonstrations followed in Pakistan. Threats were issued to bookshops in Britain and the United States, resulting in violence and bombings in London, High Wycombe and York, and in California.¹¹² The novel was banned in numerous countries.

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini of Iran issued a religious edict calling for the killing of Rushdie as well as his editors and publishers. Several of the book's translators were attacked; the Japanese translator, Hitoshi Igarashi, was killed.¹¹³ Rushdie went into hiding under police protection for nine years.

In August 22, 2022, Rushdie survived an assassination attempt in New York. The suspect, Hadi Matar, was reportedly “sympathetic to Shia extremism and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps causes”.¹¹⁴

109. 'Iran and Syria "incited violence"', BBC News, 8 February 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4694876.stm.

110. George Jones and Ben Fenton, 'Arrest pedlars of hate, police urged', The Telegraph, 6 February 2006, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1509742/Arrest-pedlars-of-hate-police-urged.html>.

111. 'Muslims call for changes in law', BBC News, 8 February 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/4694090.stm>.

112. Andrew Anthony, 'How one book ignited a culture war', The Guardian, 11 January 2009, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/jan/11/salman-rushdie-satanic-verses>.

113. Peony Hirwani, 'The Satanic Verses: What happened to the translators who have worked on the controversial book?', The Independent, 14 August 2022, <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/the-satanic-verses-translators-murdered-salman-rushdie-b2144744.html>.

114. Joshua Goodman, 'Who Is Hadi Matar? NJ Man Charged With Attempted Murder in Salman Rushdie Attack', NBC, August 12, 2022, <https://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/who-is-hadi-matar-nj-man-suspected-in-salman-rushdie-attack/3822984/>.

Blasphemy and Laws Against Incitement to Religious Hatred

Since the Rushdie Affair in 1989, in addition to activist-led protests against allegedly blasphemous books, films or incidents, there have been politically organised efforts to criminalise the criticism or satire of Islam in Britain on the basis of combatting 'Islamophobia'. The Rushdie Affair was thus not only significant for being the first Muslim-led national outcry in Britain against perceived blasphemy; it was also significant for being the catalysing event for the creation of the first national interlocutor for Muslim interests in the country, which has played a key role in countering perceived blasphemy and Islamophobia in law as well as in the media.

The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), founded in November 1997, was established from plans drawn up in 1994 by an organisation called the National Interim Committee on Muslim Unity (NICMU). The leading figures of NICMU – including Manazir Ahsan and Hashir Faruqi – were also the driving force behind the United Kingdom Action Committee on Islamic Affairs (UKACIA), a group that they hastily set up to express Muslim discontent regarding – and protest the Government to ban – *The Satanic Verses*. The UKACIA also aimed to persuade the Government to extend the then-existing blasphemy laws to include Islam.¹¹⁵ The MCB has continued this lobbying work, alongside other organisations, including the Association of Muslim Lawyers (AML), which was established in 1993 to “promote the legal rights of Muslims and the availability of advice in accordance with the Shari’ah of Islam”.¹¹⁶ The MCB and the AML campaigned for an extension of England’s blasphemy law to apply to Islam and a redefinition of the crime of incitement to hatred to protect Muslims.

In 2002, the co-founder of the AML, Ahmad Thomson, made written and oral representations to the House of Lords Select Committee on Religious Offences. Anti-blasphemy legislation, he urged, ought to be updated to criminalise behaviour that is “likely to shock and outrage the feelings of the general body of believers”.¹¹⁷ He stated that it is not just the people who follow the religion, but “the religion itself” which has to be protected.¹¹⁸ This prioritisation of group rights – and proposed protection against collective sentiments of being offended – clearly conflicted with individual rights, a fundamental tenet of liberal democratic law and culture. In seeking to protect “the religion itself” it potentially restricted non-Muslims – whether non-religious or followers of other faiths – from critiquing Islam. These lobbying efforts were in vain, however, since the offences of blasphemy and blasphemous libel were abolished in England and Wales in May 2008.

After 9/11, partly as a result of lobbying from the MCB, the Labour Government, led by Prime Minister Tony Blair, tried to introduce a clause on incitement to religious hatred in the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001-02; this was rejected, however, in the House of Lords.

115. At the time, England and Wales’ blasphemy laws only applied to Christianity. This was evident when, in 1990, Abdul Hussain Chowdhury, acting on behalf of a group called the British Muslim Action Front, brought a private prosecution against Salman Rushdie, on the basis that *The Satanic Verses* blasphemed Islam. The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate refused to prosecute Rushdie. This decision was reaffirmed during an appeal to the Divisional Court on the basis that under English common law only Anglican Christianity was capable of being blasphemed. See: ‘Bid to Prosecute Rushdie Is Rejected’, *The New York Times*, April 10, 1990, <https://www.nytimes.com/1990/04/10/books/bid-to-prosecute-rushdie-is-rejected.html>. See also: Ian Hunter, ‘English Blasphemy’, *Humanity Journal*, Vol.4, No.3 (Winter 2013), pp.403-428; published online, June 12, 2014, at: <https://humanityjournal.org/issue4-3/english-blasphemy/>.

116. AML, ‘Aims and Objectives’, AML website, webpage captured on June 4, 2014 (the current website omits this information), <http://web.archive.org/web/20140604195835/http://aml.org.uk/aboutaml>.

117. ‘Memorandum by the Association of Muslim Lawyers’, Minutes of Evidence, Select Committee on Religious Offences in England and Wales, 17 October 2002, n.18.1.1. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200203/ldselect/ldrelol/95/2101711.htm>.

118. *Ibid.*, n.23, emphasis added.

¹¹⁹ The Government then tried to introduce such a clause in the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2004-05, but dropped it in the run up to the May 2005 General Election after opposition in the House of Lords on the basis that it would make illegal any criticism of, or jokes about, Islam.¹²⁰ After a manifesto commitment, the Government re-introduced the clause in the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2005-06 (more on this below). Just prior to the Act's discussion in the House of Lords at the committee stage, an alliance of writers, comedians, bishops and peers proposed three amendments to the bill, to ensure it would protect people, rather than beliefs. These amendments were:

1. Nobody can be found guilty of new religious hate crimes unless it is proved they intended to stir up hatred.
2. Only threatening words should be banned by the bill, not those which are only abusive or insulting.
3. There should be a specific part of the bill saying the law should not restrict discussion, criticism of expressions of antipathy, dislike, ridicule, insult or abuse of particular religions or beliefs.¹²¹

The Act incorporated these considerations. It created new offences of stirring up hatred on racial or religious grounds, incurring a prison sentence of up to seven years. But, in the interests of free expression, the clauses criminalising “insult” and “abuse” of religion were removed from the final draft of the Act in the House of Lords.¹²²

There have been no blasphemy laws in England and Wales since 2008 and in Scotland since 2021. On 23 April 2021, the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021 - which reformed hate crime legislation to provide better protection against race, sex, age and religious discrimination in Scotland – received royal assent. It also abolished the common law offence of blasphemy, leaving Northern Ireland as the only British country with blasphemy laws on its books.

There is no need for such laws. In a liberal and democratic society, no ideas or beliefs should be beyond the scope of rational inquiry, criticism, satire, or even insult. However, where insults become threatening or turn into incitement to hatred or violence, then there is a clear need for legal protection. And there are numerous legal provisions in place in Britain that prohibit incitement to hatred and violence on the basis of religion. These include:

- **The Public Order Act 1986**¹²³

This Act makes it an offence to use threatening words or behaviour - or to display, publish or distribute any written material or imagery which is threatening – if there is an intention thereby to stir up hatred on the basis of religion, race, or sexual orientation. This means that it is illegal to use any graphic content that is both threatening and intended to incite hatred against a person or group of people based on their religion.

119.. See: Caroline Cox and John Marks, *The West, Islam and Islamism* (2nd ed.), London: Civitas, 2006, p.132-133.

120. *Ibid.* See also: Lucinda Maer, 'The Abolition of the Blasphemy Offences', Standard Note SN/PC/04597, Parliament and Constitution Centre, 9 May 2008, pp.20-21, available at: <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN04597/SN04597.pdf>.

121. 'Deal offer on religious hate law', BBC News, 20 October 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/4359982.stm.

122.. See Caroline Cox and John Marks, *The West, Islam and Islamism*, p.132-133; and Dominic Raub, *The Assault on Liberty: What Went Wrong with Rights*, London: Fourth Estate, 2009, p.59.

123. Public Order Act 1986, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1986/64>.

- **Crime and Disorder Act 1998**¹²⁴

Under this Act, specific offences of “racially aggravated” crime were created, based on offences of wounding, assault, criminal damage, harassment, provocation of violence, and threatening behaviour.¹²⁵ The term “racial group” is defined under the Act as a group of individuals distinguished by their race, colour, nationality (including citizenship), or ethnic or national origins. In December 2001, an amendment extended the Act’s scope, creating new specific offences that are “religiously aggravated”. Under the Act, racially and religiously aggravated crimes are defined by hostility shown by the offender towards a victim based on the victim’s membership (or presumed membership) of a racial or religious group. The term “religious group” is defined under the Act as a group of individuals defined by their religious belief or lack thereof.

- **The Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006**¹²⁶

This Act amended the Public Order Act 1986 by creating new offences of stirring up hatred against persons on religious grounds. It defines religious hatred as “hatred against a group of persons defined by reference to religious belief or lack of religious belief”. The new offences apply to the use of words or behaviour or display, publication or distribution of written material (including images); the public performance of a play; the distribution, showing or playing of a recording; and the broadcasting or inclusion of a programme in a programme service.¹²⁷ They also apply to the possession of written materials or recordings with a view to display, publish, distribute or include in a programme service. The words, behaviour, written material, recordings or programmes must be both threatening and intended to stir up religious hatred in order for an offence to have been committed under this Act. As the Crown Prosecution Service website states, “Threatening is the operative word, not abusive or insulting.”¹²⁸ Section 29J of the Act contains a defence of freedom of expression, which states:

Nothing in this Part shall be read or given effect in a way which prohibits or restricts discussion, criticism or expressions of antipathy, dislike, ridicule, insult or abuse of particular religions or the beliefs or practices of their adherents, or of any other belief system or the beliefs or practices of its adherents, or proselytising or urging adherents of a different religion or belief system to cease practising their religion or belief system.

As mentioned above, this clause was included as a result of a protracted public debate regarding incitement to hatred and the freedom of expression. The law is clear that unless there are threats and the intention to stir up hatred, the critique, ridicule, and even abuse of religious ideas, beliefs or figures are perfectly legitimate.

124. Crime and Disorder Act 1998, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/37>.

125. Crown Prosecution Service, ‘Racist and Religious Hate Crime - Prosecution Guidance’, 3 March 2022, <https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/racist-and-religious-hate-crime-prosecution-guidance>.

126. Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/1>.

127. Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006: explanatory notes, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/1/notes>.

128. Crown Prosecution Service, ‘Racist and Religious Hate Crime - Prosecution Guidance’, emphasis added.

Blasphemy in English law

Halsbury's Laws Direct, which provides a complete narrative statement of law in England and Wales, defined the two blasphemy-related offences that existed until May 2008 - blasphemy and blasphemous libel – in the following terms:

Blasphemy is an indictable offence at common law consisting in a publication of contemptuous, reviling, scurrilous or ludicrous matter relating to God, Jesus Christ, the Bible or the formularies of the Church of England. The publisher must intend to publish, but he need not intend that the words amount to blasphemy. It is immaterial whether the words are spoken or written; but, if written, they constitute blasphemous libel. The offence is punishable by fine and imprisonment at the discretion of the court.¹²⁹

Thus, blasphemy only related to Christianity, and the intention to publish – not to blaspheme – was a crucial element of the legal definition of blasphemy. But what constituted “contemptuous, reviling, scurrilous or ludicrous” intentionally published material was a matter for court judges to decide.

Earlier, in the Select Committee on Religious Offences 1993 report, the Committee explained that they had asked their advisor, Professor David Feldman, to construct “as best as he could a modern definition of the elements of common law offence [of blasphemy] as it stands”. He devised the following formulation:

Blasphemy is committed “by anyone who makes public words, pictures, or conduct whereby the doctrines, beliefs, institutions, or sacred objects and rituals of the Church of England by law established are denied or scurrilously vilified or there is objectively contentious, violent or ribald conduct or abuse directed towards the sacred subject in question, likely to shock and outrage the feelings of the general body of Church of England believers in the community.¹³⁰

These words – particularly “shock and outrage” to the “general body of ... believers” – were to form the basis of the Association of Muslim Lawyers' unsuccessful appeal to the Government to expand the then-existing blasphemy laws to Islam, as cited above.

129. 'Halsbury's Laws Direct', para 826. Cited in: Lucinda Maer, 'The Abolition of the Blasphemy Offences', Standard Note SN/PC/04597, p.3.

130. Select Committee on Religious Offences, 'Religious Offences in England and Wales', HL 96 2002-03, Appendix 3, paragraph 6. Cited in: Lucinda Maer, 'The Abolition of the Blasphemy Offences', Standard Note SN/PC/04597, pp.16-17.

Teachers' Views on Batley, Protests and Self-Censorship

The teachers' survey

To understand teachers' views on religious offence in schools, the freedom of expression, and the possible effects of public protests outside school gates, Policy Exchange commissioned YouGov to conduct a survey of teachers across the country. The survey was conducted between 6-16 March, 2023, using an online interview administered to YouGov's pool of 2.5 million people who have agreed to take part in its surveys. A total of 1,132 respondents participated in the survey, almost three quarters female (71%) and a quarter male (29%). Almost half the respondents were over the age of 55 (46%), with around a fifth aged 45-54 (22%) and another fifth aged 35-44 (20%); a smaller number of respondents were aged under 35 (12%). These were teachers of all grades from reception to year 13, approximately half teaching in primary schools (47%) and half teaching in secondary schools (53%). Most of the respondents teach in England (90%), whereas a minority teach in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (10% combined). Around a quarter teach in the London area (26%); and the second region with the most respondents was the Midlands (16%). The subjects taught by the teachers encompass all areas of the National Curriculum, including English, maths, science, history, art and design, and citizenship. The majority of the respondents teach in state schools (59%), around a quarter in academy schools (27%), and a small minority in private or independent schools (10%), with a smaller number teaching in faith schools (6%).

Impact of Batley protests and self-censorship

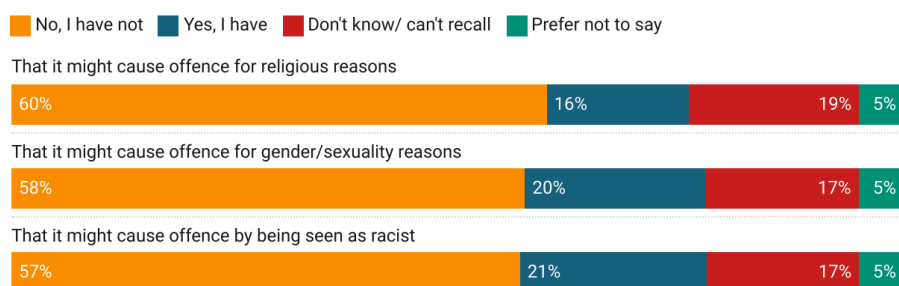
Very few schools issued new or amended guidelines or rules about avoiding causing offence to religious or community groups as a result of the Batley Grammar School protests. Just over one in ten teachers indicated that existing guidance was recirculated (13%). Even fewer indicated that existing guidance was updated (8%) or that new guidance was introduced (3%). Just over a third (36%) of the teachers indicated that their schools have issued guidance on avoiding offence to religious or community groups from teaching materials or lesson content. Of these, the vast majority (81%) said the guidance was issued in general terms without reference to any specific religious groups. Four in ten teachers (40%), however, said that their schools have not issued such guidance. The lack of consistency with which schools approach the issue of offence and

the freedom of expression suggests an opportunity for national guidance on these matters.

Since the Batley Grammar School protests, most teachers have not self-censored either what they teach or the materials they use in classrooms.¹³¹ Around 60% of teachers indicated that they have not self-censored since the Batley protests with regards to materials that might cause religious offence (see figure 1 below). This is approximately the same when broken down by subject taught. But there were some regional differences: Significantly fewer teachers from the parts of the country with the highest proportion of Muslims (Group 1)¹³² said they had not self-censored compared to teachers from the parts of the country with the lowest proportion of Muslims (Group 2)¹³³ – the figures were 57% and 67%, respectively.

Figure 1: Self-censorship of either what is taught or the materials used in classrooms

Since the Batley Grammar School protests, have you self-censored either what you teach or the materials you use in classrooms for any of the following reasons? (Please select one option on each row)



16% of all teachers admitted to self-censoring to avoid possible religious offence. Of some interest is the proportion of self-censoring teachers broken down by the subject they teach.

The proportion of teachers who admitted to self-censor to avoid religious offence amongst those who teach subjects where an image of the prophet Muhammad might be relevant to their teaching was only slightly higher than the proportion of all teachers (see figure 2 below). But these approach a fifth of all English teachers (19%) and the same proportion of art teachers (19%). Furthermore, 18% of history teachers; 17% of those teaching citizenship; and 17% of geography teachers admitted to have self-censored since the Batley protests. Notably, a similar proportion of teachers of other subjects – where we would not expect self-censorship to avoid religious offence – also admitted they had censored what they teach or the materials they use. These include 19% of modern languages teachers; 18% of science teachers; and 17% of maths teachers. It may be that there are other considerations – in addition to the use of images of Muhammad – that factor into teachers' perceptions of the risks of religiously offending students. The range of teaching content and materials perceived by teachers to be potentially offensive is clearly an issue deserving further research.

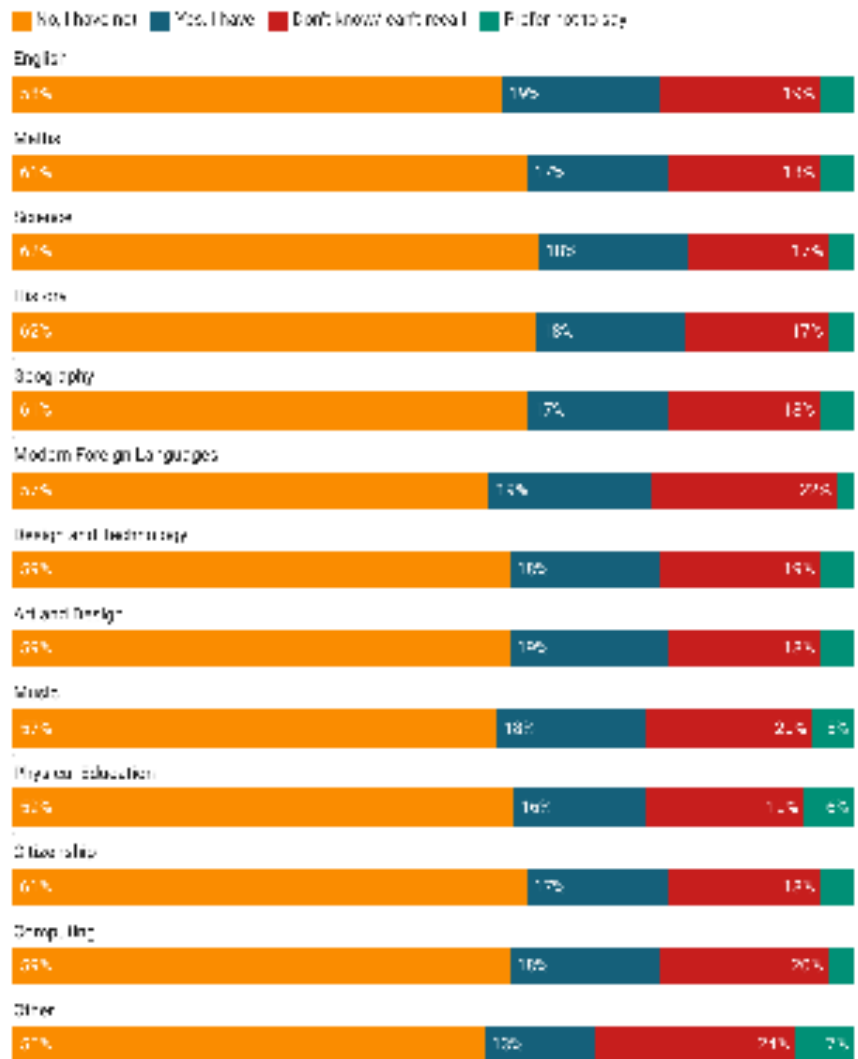
131. "Self-censorship" refers to the conscious decision to avoid referring to subject matter that normally would have been referred to, and/or to the conscious decision to avoid using materials that normally would have been used.

132. Group 1 included local government authorities with the highest percentage of Muslims: Tower Hamlets (32%), Newham (26%), Bradford (23%), Redbridge (23%), Luton (23%), Slough (22%), Blackburn with Darwen (22%), Birmingham (20%), Waltham Forest (19%), Pendle (19%), Brent (17%), Westminster (17%), Enfield (17%), Ealing (16%), and Oldham (16%). Teachers in this group numbered 480.

133. Group 2 included local government authorities with the lowest percentage of Muslims – all with less than 1%: Allerdale, Amber Valley, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon, Causeway Coast and Glens, Cornwall, Derbyshire Dales, Derry City and Strabane, Fermanagh and Omagh, Forest of Dean, Herefordshire, Inverclyde, Isles of Scilly, Melton, Mid and East Antrim, Mid Devon, Mid Suffolk, Mid Ulster, Mourne and Down, Na h-Eileanan Siar, Newry, North Ayrshire, North Norfolk, Orkney Islands, Ryedale, Scottish Borders, Shetland Islands, Staffordshire Moorlands, Selby, South Lakeland, Torridge, and West Devon. Teachers in this group numbered 221.

Figure 2: Self-censorship – to avoid religious offence – by subjects taught

Since the Batley Grammar School protests, have you self-censored either what you teach or the materials you use in classrooms, since it might cause offence for religious reasons?



Across all subjects, there was only a slight difference between the regions with the largest and smallest proportion of Muslims: Self-censorship in Group 1 was reported at 17% and in Group 2 at 13%. These figures relating to self-censorship to avoid religious offence may not indicate a large-scale problem of self-censorship in general – and may not indicate a problem specific to areas with large Muslim populations – but it is not an entirely insignificant number either.

A slightly greater proportion of all teachers indicated that they have self-censored to avoid offence relating to gender and/or sexuality (20%), and a similar proportion said they have avoided offence that might be considered racist (21%). This shows that concerns about possible offence are not uniquely related to religion and perceived blasphemy. There are comparable fears of causing offence relating to race, sexuality and gender-

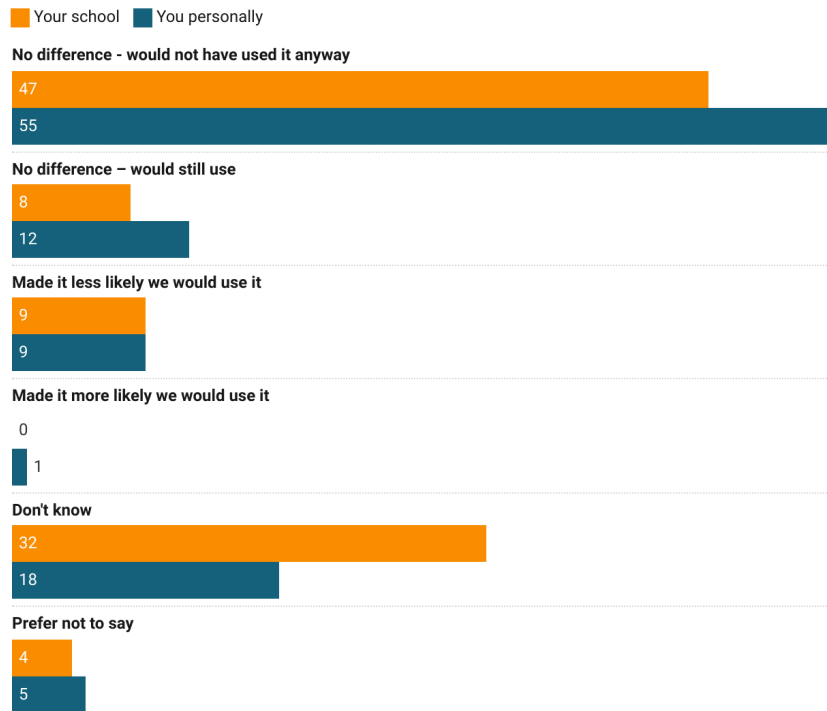
related issues that may be influencing teaching in British schools. Are fears of blasphemy part of a more general concern about identity politics and cancel culture? This is a question worthy of further research.

Interestingly, the proportion of teachers who admit to having self-censored to avoid offence relating to race is higher for those teaching certain subjects than the 21% national proportion. Most notably, over a quarter of English teachers (27%) have consciously self-censored to avoid possible offence on the grounds of race. A similar proportion (24%) of teachers of art; design and technology; history; and modern languages have likewise self-censored. Also of interest, there was a small but significant difference between Group 1 and Group 2 teachers (across all subjects) regarding self-censorship in relation to possible racial offence. Almost a quarter of teachers in Group 1 (in areas with the largest proportion of Muslims) were more likely to self-censor due to possible offence perceived as racist (23%), compared with 17% of teachers in Group 2 (in areas with the least Muslims).

Asked if the Batley Grammar School protests have influenced whether or not they would personally use an image of the prophet Muhammad in a lesson, just over half of all teachers (55%) responded negatively, indicating that they would not have used such an image anyway (see figure 3 below). Such a large proportion of teachers unwilling to use an image of a religious figure – independently from the Batley protests – demands explanation. But in addition to these, 9% said they were personally less likely to use an image of Muhammad as a result of the Batley protests. This figure was the same in Group 1 and Group 2. Only 12% said the protests had not made a difference, since they would still use one anyway. The teachers were also asked if the protests have influenced whether or not their school – rather than them personally – would use an image of Muhammad in lessons. The teachers' answers were similar – with 47% of all teachers saying that their schools would not use such an image anyway – although slightly more teachers from Group 1 (49%) than those in Group 2 (44%) responded as such.

Figure 3: Influence of the Batley Grammar School protests on the likelihood of using an image of the prophet Muhammad in a lesson

Have the Batley Grammar School protests influenced whether or not you or your school would use an image of the prophet Muhammad in a lesson? (Please select one option on each row)



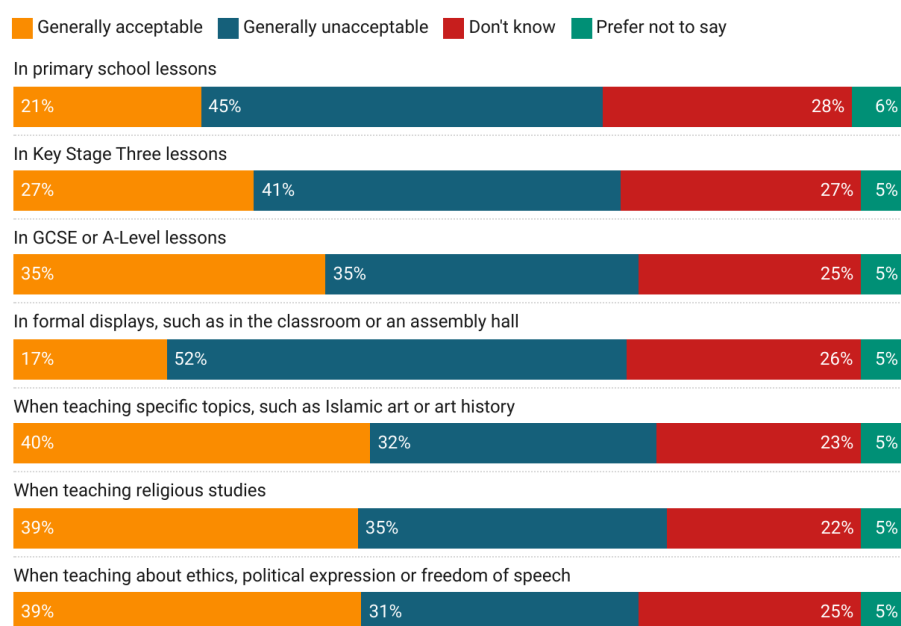
It is worth noting that the proportion of teachers unwilling to personally use an image of Muhammad – regardless of the events in Batley – was higher for some subject teachers than the 55% proportion of all teachers. These include 64% of art teachers; 63% of geography teachers; 62% of history teachers; and 60% of English and citizenship teachers. An additional 10% of English and history teachers, and 9% of art, citizenship, and geography teachers said they are less likely to personally use an image of Muhammad as a result of the Batley protests. Thus, around 15% of all the English teachers who are not willing to use an image of Muhammad – i.e., one in seven of them – have become unwilling to do so because of the Batley Grammar School protests.

The teachers were also asked if they thought it is generally acceptable or unacceptable for a teacher to use an image of the prophet Muhammad in a number of educational situations (see figure 4 below). In most situations, neither those who thought the use of such an image was generally acceptable, nor those who thought it was generally unacceptable, comprised a majority. When teaching subjects such as art history, religious studies, ethics or freedom of expression, around four in ten thought the use of an image of Muhammad was generally acceptable. Slightly less thought it was generally not acceptable for teaching those subjects. The educational situation in which the use of an image of Muhammad was most strongly considered as unacceptable was in formal displays in classrooms

or assembly halls; just over half of all teachers indicated as such (51%), with less than one in five (17%) indicating it was generally acceptable.

Figure 4: Acceptability for a teacher to use an image of the prophet Muhammad

Do you think it is generally acceptable or unacceptable for a teacher to use an image of the prophet Muhammad in the following situations? (Please select one option on each row)



It is worth noting that there was a marked difference of attitude between teachers regarding the use of an image of Muhammad depending on their location. In the parts of the country with the highest proportion of Muslims, teachers were more opposed to using such an image in all educational situations than teachers in areas with the lowest proportion of Muslims.

In Group 1, the cluster of the local authorities with the highest proportion of Muslims, for example, 40% of teachers said that it was generally unacceptable to use an image of Muhammad when teaching religious studies; in Group 2, the cluster of local authorities with the lowest proportion of Muslims, that figure dropped to 28%. In Group 1, only 33% said it was generally acceptable to use an image of Muhammad in religious studies, but in Group 2, 46% said the same. Regarding the use of an image of Muhammad in Islamic art or art history, 44% of teachers in Group 2 said it was generally acceptable; in Group 1, only 37% agreed. In Islamic art or art history, 37% of teachers in Group 1 indicated it was generally unacceptable; the figure dropped significantly to 27% in Group 2.

There are clearly significant differences between the views of teachers on the appropriateness of using an image of Muhammad regardless of

subject or school phase, depending on whether they are teaching in areas with a large or small Muslim population. But it is arguably more significant that even in areas of the country with the smallest Muslim populations, a sizeable minority believes that the use of an image of Muhammad is out of bounds. This is the case *even if the use of such an image is not intended to offend and does not break any law*, including those protecting against incitement to religious hatred.

When teachers' views on the general acceptability or unacceptability of using an image of Muhammad in different educational settings are broken down by subjects taught, it is remarkable that around four in ten (38%) art teachers stated that such an image is generally unacceptable when teaching specific topics such as Islamic art or art history. It is also notable that almost the same proportion of citizenship teachers (36%) stated that using an image of Muhammad is generally unacceptable in lessons on ethics, political expression and freedom of speech. The question about the use of an image of Muhammad did not specify whether the image was satirical or, as found in some Islamic traditions, historically depictive or devotional.

Concerns about protests against the use of 'offensive' images

Teachers were asked - in the event that they personally or another teacher was accused of using offensive teaching materials – how likely or unlikely they thought it would be for protests to occur at their school. The majority (58%) thought that protests would be unlikely. Only one in five (20%) thought that protests would be likely (14% “fairly likely” and 6% “very likely”).

Teachers' responses significantly differed in regions of the country with the highest and lowest proportion of Muslims: In Group 1, 28% of teachers said protests would be likely, but in Group 2, only 10% said the same. In Group 1, 46% of teachers said protests would be unlikely, but in Group 2, the figure was much higher, at 70%. This shows there are vastly different perceptions held by teachers in regions of the country with different population profiles.

In Yorkshire and the Humber, where Batley is located, the proportion of teachers who thought protests would be likely if a teacher was accused of using offensive materials was similar to the national figure (22%). Most (54%) thought that protests would be unlikely. Interestingly, however, in the West Midlands, including Birmingham, significantly more teachers said that they would be likely (32%) and significantly less said that protests would be unlikely (48%). And in Birmingham alone, 36% said protests would be likely, and 41% said protests would be unlikely. This is a remarkable difference from the national figures, suggesting that there are much greater concerns and fears about protests in Birmingham and the West Midlands than elsewhere in the country.

In the case of protests breaking out, three quarters of all teachers (75%)

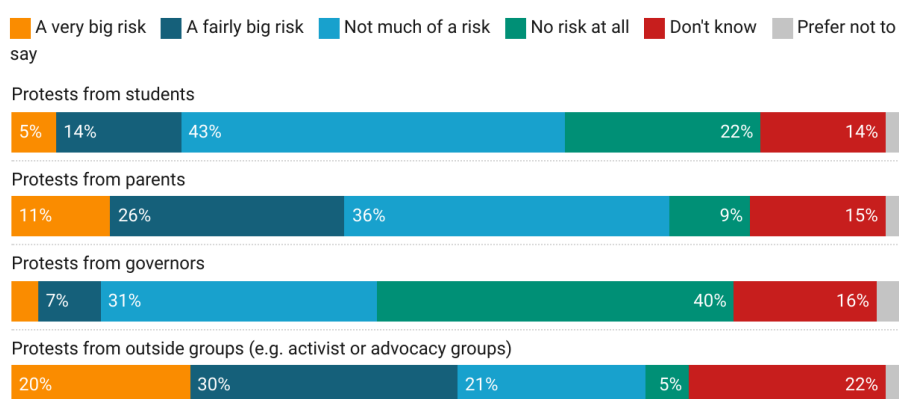
thought that they would be damaging to the teacher involved, with around four in ten (39%) indicating that protests would be “very damaging” to the teacher.

Notably, more teachers in Group 1 (45%) thought that the protests would be “very damaging” to the teacher than those in Group 2 (34%). In Yorkshire and the Humber, where Batley is located, 60% of teachers said protests would be “very damaging” (in addition to 25% that said protests would be “fairly damaging”). Almost seven in ten (68%) teachers thought that protests would be damaging to the school’s reputation; and around four in ten (41%) thought they would be damaging for the education of the children attending the school.

The teachers were asked – in the event of protests occurring outside their school over the use of materials considered offensive by some groups – how much of a risk, if any, they thought the protests would pose to the physical safety of the teacher accused. They were asked this question in relation to protests led by different actors: students, parents, governors, and external organisations, such as activist or advocacy groups. Significantly, half (50%) of all teachers surveyed indicated that there would be a risk to the physical safety of a teacher accused of showing an offensive image if the protests were led by external activist or advocacy groups (see figure 5 below).

Figure 5: Risk to physical safety of a teacher accused of causing religious offence in the case of protests outside school

If protests occurred at your school over the use of religious materials considered offensive by some groups, how much of a risk, if any, do you think the following pose to the physical safety of the teacher accused? (Please select one option on each row)



An even larger proportion of teachers in Group 1 indicated that there would be a risk to the physical safety of an accused teacher in the event of protests led by activist groups: 55% of teachers in areas with the highest Muslim populations expressed such a view. This was not only 5% higher than the national average, but 15% higher than the number of teachers in Group 2 sharing the same concerns. The three regions with the highest proportion of teachers expressing this view were the East Midlands, Yorkshire and the Humber, and the West Midlands, where approximately six out of ten

teachers indicated that there would be a risk to their physical safety in the event of activist-led protests (60%, 59% and 58% respectively). The proportion of teachers agreeing that protests from activist groups present a risk to their physical safety was similar between teachers of different subjects – around half – but the greatest proportion seeing such a risk was amongst science teachers, at 56%.

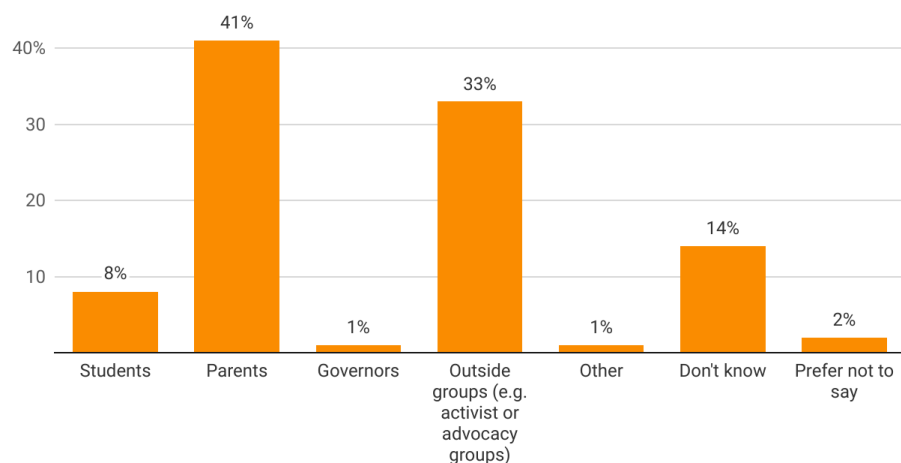
Across all subjects, one in five (20%) indicated that there would be “a very big risk” to a teacher’s physical safety in the event of activist-led protests. In Group 1, one in four (25%) expressed such a view; in Group 2, however, around one in eight teachers (13%) indicated as such. This is a significant discrepancy in attitudes between teachers in different regions towards their physical security. Such a discrepancy was also marked by the responses of teachers in Yorkshire and the Humber, and Scotland: In the former, a third of teachers (33%) said activist-led protests would incur a “very big risk” to their physical safety, but in the latter only 8% shared that view.

Overall, only one in twenty teachers (5%) indicated that protests led by activist groups would present no risk to an accused teacher’s physical safety. The involvement of activist or advocacy groups – compared with parents, students, or governors – inspires the least confidence in teachers’ physical security in the event of blasphemy protests at schools. Still a significant concern, however, almost four in ten (37%) teachers indicated belief in a physical safety risk if the protests were led by parents. The figure was slightly higher for Group 1 teachers (42%) and significantly lower for Group 2 teachers (25%). Protests led by students and governors were viewed as presenting less of a risk to teachers’ physical safety – fewer indicated a “big risk”, and more indicated “no risk” in such cases.

Teachers were asked for their views on the most likely source of protests over the use of allegedly offensive materials. More teachers agreed that parents would be the most likely source of such protests over any other source (see figure 6 below). Around 4 in ten teachers (41%) identified parents to be the most likely source of protests. External activist or advocacy groups were identified as the second most likely source of protests, with 33% of teachers indicating as such. Significantly fewer teachers identified students or governors as the most likely source of protests.

Figure 6: Most likely source of protests about the use of materials considered religiously offensive

In the event of protests at your school over the use of religious materials considered offensive, which one, if any, of the following do you think would be the most likely source of any protest?



It is worth mentioning, however, that in both Yorkshire and the Humber, and the East Midlands, external activist or advocacy groups were identified as the most likely source of protest (45% and 44% respectively), with parents identified as the second mostly likely source (42% and 40% respectively).

Thus, a significant proportion of teachers – around one in five - believe that protests would be likely at their school if a teacher was accused of showing offensive images. Three quarters of all teachers think that in the event of a protest, it would be damaging to the teacher accused. The two groups that teachers believe are most likely to lead such protests are parents and external activist organisations – the two very groups whose involvement in protests teachers consider as presenting the largest risk to an accused teachers' physical safety. That around half of all teachers believe that protests led by activists would present a risk to an accused teacher's physical safety is an alarming indication of the extent to which teachers view activist-led protests as a security threat.

Perceptions of headteacher/school support

Teachers were asked about the level of support, instruction or guidance they get from headteachers about using material in their classrooms that is not illegal but might be offensive to some groups. Around half (52%) indicated that headteachers get the balance between supporting teachers and preventing offense about right. Roughly equal proportions of teachers indicated that headteachers should be more supportive of teachers who wish to use materials that may be offensive (17%) or that headteachers should

do more to prevent teachers using materials that may be offensive (15%). Notably fewer teachers in Group 2 (11%) indicated that headteachers should do more to support teachers than those in Group 1 (16%). Although the difference was not hugely significant, this may suggest a greater need for teacher support in regions of the country where blasphemy is more of a concern.

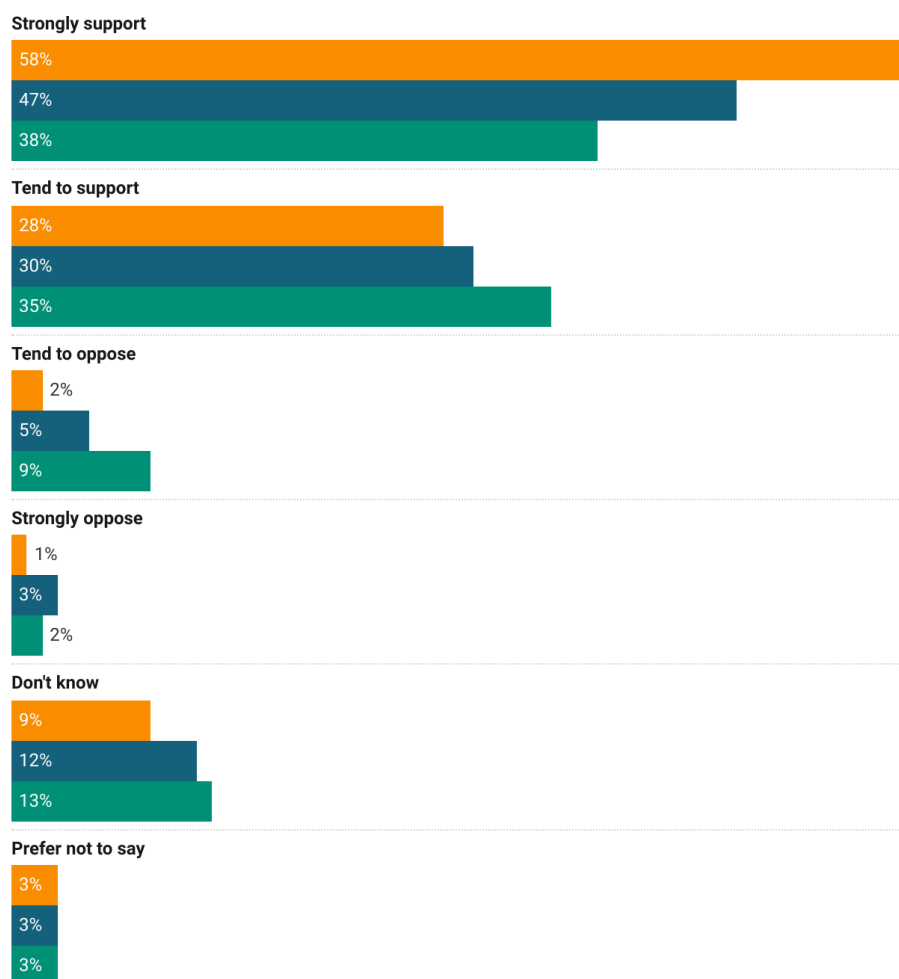
It is noteworthy that teachers' desire for greater headteacher support for them to use materials that may be offensive (but do not fall foul of any law) was expressed most strongly in the East Midlands: Over a quarter (27%) of teachers in that region said headteachers should be more supportive; that is 10% greater than the national proportion. Suggesting a rather polarised picture in the East Midlands, the proportion of teachers who thought headteachers should do more to prevent teachers from using potentially offensive materials was also high – at 21% – compared to the national proportion of 15% (only the North West was higher at 22%).

Although nationally and in most regions the majority of teachers think that headteachers adequately balance supporting teachers and preventing offense, an even larger proportion of them (86%) indicated that they would support headteachers' commitment to protect a teacher's identity in the event of protests about the use of materials deemed offensive by some groups (see figure 7 below). Almost six out of ten of all teachers (58%) indicated that they strongly supported such a commitment, indicating the extent to which teachers value their personal safety in such a context. This figure was the same, give or take one percentile, in Groups 1 and 2, but, notably, in Yorkshire and the Humber, 73% of teachers strongly supported headteachers protecting a teacher's identity.

Figure 7: Support or opposition to headteachers committing to protect an accused teacher's identity, not to automatically suspend an accused teacher, and to uphold an accused teacher's freedom of expression

In general, would you support or oppose school headteachers introducing the following?

■ A commitment to protect a teacher's identity in the event of protests about the use of materials deemed offensive by some groups
 ■ A commitment not to automatically suspend teachers on the basis of their use of materials which some communities find offensive
 ■ A commitment to uphold teachers' freedom of expression, as long as it lies within the scope of the law, even if it unintentionally causes offence



The majority of teachers (77%) also indicated that they support headteachers' commitment not to automatically suspend teachers on the basis of their use of materials which some communities find offensive; almost half (47%) said they strongly support such a commitment. Similarly, most teachers (73%) supported headteachers' commitment to uphold their freedom of expression, as long as it lies within the scope of the law, even if it unintentionally causes offence; around four in ten (38%) expressed strong support for this commitment. This level of strong support was almost the same in Group 1 (38%) and Group 2 (41%).

Attitudes to reporting Islamist and Far-Right extremism

The Batley protests do not seem to have negatively affected teachers' willingness to report suspected cases of Islamist extremism to the police. Only 4% of teachers indicated that they were less likely to report such cases (5% for Group 1 teachers and 3% for Group 2 teachers), whilst 8% indicated that they were more likely to report them (10% for Group 1 teachers and 8% for Group 2 teachers). Encouragingly, the majority of teachers (67%) indicated that they would report suspected cases of Islamist extremism anyway. In some regions this figure was higher, including Yorkshire and the Humber (76%), the South East (74%) and the West Midlands (72%). A very small proportion of teachers – just 4% - indicated that they would not report suspected cases of Islamist extremism. Whilst this appears insignificant, 4% of the total number of teachers in the UK – 468,400¹³⁴ - would potentially indicate that over 18,700 teachers in the country would not report possible cases of Islamist extremism.

Asked a similar question about their likelihood to report suspected cases of Islamist and Far-Right extremism relative to each other, the vast majority of teachers (82%) indicated that they were equally likely to report both kinds of extremism to the police or safeguarding officers. In the South East, and Yorkshire and the Humber, that figure was as high as 89% and 88% respectively. Only a very small proportion (3%) indicated that they were more likely to report cases of Far-Right extremism, and a similar proportion (5%) indicated that they were more likely to report extremism relating to Islamism.

134. 'School workforce in England' (reporting year 2022), 8 June, 2023, (captured 8 June 2023), <https://web.archive.org/web/20230608194202/https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>.

Conclusion

Self-censorship amongst teachers in Britain is a problem for free rational inquiry in schools and for conceding ground to ideological groups and perspectives that undermine freedom of expression, individualism, and viewpoint diversity. Although over half (60%) of the teachers in this survey said that they have not self-censored since the Batley Grammar School protests in 2021, a small but significant minority – 16% – admitted they have self-censored to avoid causing religious offence. This figure is slightly higher for English and art teachers, rising to almost one in five (19%). A similar proportion of teachers also admitted self-censoring to avoid causing offence on the grounds of race (21%) or gender and sexuality (20%).

Thus, whilst the Batley protests – and the accused teacher’s disappearance after receiving death threats – have no doubt had a negative impact on teachers’ confidence to teach freely per the requirements of the national curriculum, there appears to be a more general reluctance to include certain topics, use certain materials, or discuss certain viewpoints that cut against the grain of an increasingly woke ideological influence in education.

Such influence was confirmed by another YouGov survey of over 1,500 18-20 year-olds commissioned in April 2022 for Professor Eric Kaufmann’s report, ‘The Political Culture of Young Britain’, published by Policy Exchange. Kaufmann noted that Critical Social Justice concepts – including critical race and gender theory – had been taught to 73% of the young people in his survey.¹³⁵ He also noted that these contestable concepts “are being taught largely as fact, rather than as one perspective among others”:¹³⁶ 68% “were either not taught about counterarguments or were told that alternatives were not respectable”.¹³⁷

In modern Britain, no teacher ought to be self-censoring. Schoolchildren ought to be exposed to – and be able to discuss – subject-relevant and age-appropriate facts, opinions, and perspectives. So, these figures for self-censorship, even without reaching a majority, are cause for concern.

The number of times teachers have self-censored, and the content that they have consciously decided not to discuss or share verbally, textually or visually – despite being on the right side of the law – are unclear. These are issues worthy of additional research. It is clear from this survey, however, that images of Muhammad are self-consciously off-limits to the majority of teachers of all subjects in Britain.

Over half (55%) of teachers said they would personally not use an image of Muhammad independently from Batley, and an additional 9% would not use one due to Batley. From this we can deduce that the freedom of expression of almost one in ten teachers across all subjects has

135. Eric Kaufmann, ‘The Political Culture of Young Britain’, Policy Exchange, November 2022, p.36. Available at: <https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/The-Political-Culture-of-Young-Britain.pdf>.

136. Eric Kaufmann, ‘Report: Critical Race Theory is endemic in British schools’, Unherd, 21 November 2022, <https://unherd.com/the-post/report-critical-race-theory-is-endemic-in-british-schools/>.

137. Eric Kaufmann, ‘The Political Culture of Young Britain’, p.38.

been negatively impacted by the plight of the accused teacher from Batley Grammar School who remains in hiding for fear of his life. The proportion of teachers unwilling to show an image of Muhammad independently from events in Batley – and regardless of the image's satirical, historical or devotional purposes – was significantly higher for certain subjects, including two of the most relevant subjects for schoolchildren to learn about artistic expression and freedom of expression – art and citizenship. As many as 64% of art teachers and 60% of citizenship teachers said they would not use an image of Muhammad. Furthermore, 38% of art teachers said that using an image of Muhammad is “generally unacceptable” when teaching Islamic art or art history, and 36% of citizenship teachers said that it is “generally unacceptable” in lessons on ethics, political expression and freedom of speech.

How many of these teachers (wrongly) believe that there is only one Islamic viewpoint on the visual representation of Muhammad? How many believe that all depictions of Muhammad are offensive to all Muslims, regardless of the purpose of the image and intent of the creator of the image? How are teachers arriving at such beliefs? Are activist organisations playing an influential role to this end? To what extent are teachers self-censoring out of respect or fear?

Fear seems to be a factor, given the views of teachers on the potential impact of protests outside schools. Three quarters (75%) of teachers said that protests would be “damaging” to a teacher accused of causing offence. In Yorkshire and the Humber, where Batley is located, that rose to 85%, with 60% believing protests would be “very damaging”. More alarmingly, half of all teachers said protests led by activist or advocacy groups would incur a risk to an accused teacher's physical safety. In three regions in the north of England, this rose to around six out of ten teachers (the East Midlands (60%), Yorkshire and the Humber (59%), and the West Midlands (58%).

Half of all teachers (52%) think headteachers get the balance right between supporting teachers to use materials that are lawful but might offend, and preventing offence. However, the vast majority, 86%, indicate support for headteachers' commitment to protect a teacher's identity in the event of protests about the use of materials deemed offensive by some groups; in Yorkshire and the Humber, 73% of teachers strongly supported headteachers protecting a teacher's identity. Similarly, most teachers (77%) indicate they support headteachers' commitment not to automatically suspend teachers on the basis of their use of materials which some communities find offensive. And the majority (73%) support headteachers' commitment to uphold their freedom of expression, as long as it lies within the scope of the law.

It therefore seems uncontroversial to suggest that most teachers would welcome better safeguards for teachers in situations where they might be accused of offending a group or community regardless of their intentions. Such safeguards could be provided in the form of statutory guidance committing headteachers to:

- uphold teachers’ freedom of expression, as long as it lies within the scope of the law, even if it unintentionally causes offence;
- not automatically suspend teachers who have been accused of using materials which some religious groups or communities may find offensive, as long as they have been using this for a legitimate teaching objective;
- not automatically suspend students who have been accused of causing offence or “desecrating” religious books; and
- protect a teacher’s identity in the event of protests about the use of materials deemed offensive by some groups.

In February this year, after the ‘Quran incident’ at Kettlethorpe High School in Wakefield, the then Home Secretary, Suella Braverman, said that the Government would produce guidance for schools to manage blasphemy-related incidents. The importance of that work – whether led by the Home Office, the DfE or DLUHC – is demonstrated by this poll of teachers’ attitudes. Only 40% of schools, according to the teachers in this poll, have any guidance relating to causing offence and the freedom of expression. The Batley and Wakefield cases may not be the last.

Statutory guidance for schools on blasphemy-related incidents would ensure there is consistency across the country in how schools provide teachers with greater confidence to teach without fear of damaging consequences. But the guidance should not only ensure headteachers support teachers’ freedom of expression in the classroom and protect accused teachers’ identities. It should also assert that a school’s duty to teach fundamental British values does not in any way imply that teachers should be restricted from using materials that some people may find offensive.

The executive summary of the “independent investigation” into the events at Batley Grammar School in 2021, commissioned by the Batley Multi Academy Trust, cited the DfE as stating that “schools are free to include a full range of issues, ideas and materials” that are “challenging or controversial”. However, it added that:

where subject content is sensitive or controversial, great care must be taken to ensure that lessons are planned and delivered in a way that promotes respect and tolerance between people of different faiths, beliefs and values.¹³⁸

The implication was that promoting fundamental British values requires respecting religious groups’ desire for what is effectively the censorship of lesson materials, even when such materials do not fall foul of any law – even where there is educational value in the use of such materials and where there are no threats or intentions to stir up hatred. The implication is that the “respect and tolerance” of “beliefs and values” that are at odds with freedom of expression, critical thinking and political literacy ought to take priority. Of course, this is not to say that schools should gratuitously cause offence to minority communities. But schools cannot ensure that “offence is not caused”¹³⁹ by lesson materials or content. The then Home

138. Batley Multi Academy Trust, ‘Executive summary of the independent investigation commissioned by the Trust’, captured on 27 May 2021 at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20210527122819/https://batleymat.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/ExecutiveSummaryoftheIndependentInvestigationat-BGS26052021.pdf>.

139. *Ibid.*

Secretary, Suella Braverman, was right to state:

There is no right not to be offended. There is no legal obligation to be reverent towards any religion. The lodestar of our democracy is freedom of speech. Nobody can demand respect for their belief system, even if it is a religion.¹⁴⁰

The Government ought to make it clear to schools that the promotion of the fundamental British values of respect and tolerance does not mean respect or toleration of demands to censor certain ideas or materials on the grounds of offence. Teachers should be free to use such materials where they have educational value. The Teachers' Standards – used to assess trainee teachers in Britain¹⁴¹ – states that teachers should not undermine fundamental British values, such as “mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs”.¹⁴² It does not elaborate or provide examples. But respect and tolerance refer to individuals – not ideas or beliefs. More specifically, they refer to “the rights of others”.¹⁴³ The DfE's advice to maintained schools states: “Pupils must be encouraged to regard people of all faiths, races and cultures with respect and tolerance.”¹⁴⁴ It does not define or discuss “respect” and “tolerance”, but appears to frame them within the parameters of the law, by adding, in the next sentence: “It is expected that pupils should understand that while different people may hold different views about what is ‘right’ and ‘wrong’, all people living in England are subject to its law.”¹⁴⁵ Tolerance is not open-ended, as Theresa May stated, when, as Home Secretary in 2015, she gave a key speech on British values and extremism.¹⁴⁶ But the Government should make clearer what it means by “respect” and “tolerance” in all of its guidance relating to fundamental British values. It should make it clear that these terms do not give a *carte blanche* to religious beliefs and values that stymie teachers' freedom of expression (as long as it lies within the law) and the teaching of critical thinking, citizenship and political literacy.

Just as it is important that headteachers commit to protect the identity of any teacher accused of causing religious or other kinds of identity-based offence, it is equally important to ensure that external individuals or groups do not leak this information. Organisations that publicly name accused teachers on social media or through traditional media channels potentially put the physical safety of these teachers at risk – the case of Samuel Paty in France is a tragic reminder of the dangers of leaking accused teachers' identities. As such, organisations that do so should be held fully accountable. The Government should consider what kind of action can and should be taken through the Charity Commission, or through criminal or civil court procedures, including prohibitory injunctions. It may be that such organisations can be held liable for incitement. The Government needs to be clear about what action it can and should take in situations where an organisation – whether a registered company or charity – puts a teacher's life and livelihood at risk.

140. Suella Braverman, 'We do not have blasphemy laws in Great Britain'.

141. The Teachers' Standards document, updated in 2021, states: “The standards define the minimum level of practice expected of trainees and teachers from the point of being awarded qualified teacher status (QTS). The Teachers' Standards are used to assess all trainees working towards QTS, and all those completing their statutory induction period. They are also used to assess the performance of all teachers with QTS who are subject to The Education (School Teachers' Appraisal) (England) Regulations 2012, and may additionally be used to assess the performance of teachers who are subject to these regulations and who hold qualified teacher learning and skills (QTLS) status.” See: Department for Education, 'Teachers' Standards: Guidance for school leaders, school staff and governing bodies', December 2021, p.3. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1040274/Teachers_Standards_Dec_2021.pdf.

142. *Ibid.*, p.14.

143. *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

144. Department for Education, 'Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools: Departmental advice for maintained schools', November 2014, p.4. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/380595/SMSC_Guidance_Maintained_Schools.pdf.

145. *Ibid.*

146. Home Office and The Rt Hon Theresa May MP, 'A Stronger Britain, Built On Our Values', 23 March 2015, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/a-stronger-britain-built-on-our-values>.

**Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
7th February 2024
Report of the Director for Children and Families
An Update on NASACRE**

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 To present members of SACRE with a brief update on key issues that have developed or arisen since the last meeting of SACRE.

2 Summary

2.1 Members of SACRE will receive a brief report on a number of NASACRE issues. These are matters on which it is appropriate to brief members of SACRE.

3 Recommendation

3.1 That members of SACRE receive the oral report.

4 Background

4.1 NASACRE is the national body of SACRE's. National meetings and conferences are held to which members of SACRE are invited and encouraged to attend.

Further information can be found by following this link. <https://nasacre.org.uk/>

Most areas of the website are open to all, but the log-in is required to access parts of the Resources section.

As a member SACRE, **you can share the log-in details below with your SACRE members.**

Log in details: Username: members Password: 23@Gr8RE24!

4.2 Members will be briefed on any key developments.

2024 NASACRE Conference – Monday 20 May 2024 in York

5 Equal Opportunities

5.1 This report has been prepared in accordance with the County Council's policies on equal opportunities.

6 Financial implications

6.1 Financial implications may be raised by individual items. These have been dealt with elsewhere or will be raised at future meetings of SACRE.

Contact Officer: Mary Gale 07816374873

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
7th February 2024
Report of the Director for Children and Families.
Application for Culham St Gabriel (CSTG) charity grant including the
Development of a Safeguarding Policy.

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present to members of SACRE an update on CSTG grant of £6500.

2 Summary

- 2.1 The adviser to SACRE applied for a grant to support a project which involves the ongoing developments in schools. Along the lines of bringing about a development in the mindset for some, and a refinement for others in enabling them to lead organisations that provides an inclusive respectful and enriching educational experience for all stakeholders.

This involved filling in an expression of interest for alongside a first interview with the CEO of CSTG. The next stage involved a second interview and then a stage 2 grant application. The application was presented to the Charity Trustees of CSTG. Each stage was supported by paperwork and references were taken up from Tim Moss and a Trustee of a local MAT. One condition of the grant was to write a Safeguarding policy document and another to present the accounts of three years of our SACRE to the Trustees.

3 Recommendation

- 3.1 That members of SACRE support the work that will be needed to complete the project. Be prepared to accept three reports summarising the project over the next three meetings.

4 Background

- 4.1 This project enables school leaders to address the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus, plus equality, diversity and inclusion aspects. This project could be viewed as a *seedcorn* funded initiative which develops and clarifies strategic leadership at governance level, so Trustees and Governors are equipped to seek assurances from headteachers and Principals that understanding and appreciation for the richness of human diversity/ world views including different RE curricula, content, pedagogy, and provision is at the heart of their organisation.

Equal Opportunities

- 5.1 This report has been prepared in accordance with the County Council's policies on equal opportunities.

6 Financial implications

6.1 The SACRE will be responsible for the monitoring of the spending of the £6500 charity grant alongside the current SACRE budget. A separate grid will show the separation of funds.

Received to date on 15th December £3510 the spend will involve the following:

- Advertising £210
- Analysis of questionnaires on evaluation of need £450
- Writing of materials for each term £450 x 3 = 1350
- Delivery of webinars x 6 (2 at the start of each term) £2700
- £450 newsletter/ dissemination support 450 x 3 = £1350
- Project evaluation £440
- Total =£6500

Contact Officer: **Mary Gale 07816374873**

Report up to February 2024

The adviser has researched the project brief in great detail. She has identified and met with a trainer to support the delivery of the two trial webinars- see below. *Eventbrite* links have been provided for schools. A draft webinar has been written and is being finalised in preparation for delivery on February 28th.

She has advertised the project to over 300 schools through information packs and face to face meetings and online meetings this has supported the evaluation of need. Here is a brief summary of the information provided for schools so far.

There is now **FREE** support for **strategic** training on Equality/Diversity and Inclusion aspects in connection with the Staffordshire 2023 Agreed Syllabus funded by a very prestigious charity grant from Culham St Gabriel.

This training is for Trustees, Governors of all schools and headteachers on this Eventbrite link for the February session. There is a limit of 23 delegates, but there will be additional opportunities in March if you are unable to secure the February session, just let Mary Gale know and she will send you the March link if it does not appear.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/developing-and-defining-strategic-leadership-in-re-tickets-772167793657?utm-campaign=social&utm-content=attendeeshare&utm-medium=discovery&utm-term=listing&utm-source=cp&aff=ebdsshcopyurl>

The Entrust/SCC Associate consultant Mary Gale working on behalf of Staffordshire County Council SACRE has been tasked with delivering this training either online or face to face.

Two trial webinars are proposed for February 28th 6-8pm and March 19th 6-8pm

If you would like to be part of this exciting initiative, then contact Mary Gale on

mary.gale@entrustassociate.com

RE is a complex subject, and the lack of clarity and support from government makes schools' job harder. Some schools steer through these challenges well, but most do not. We found that:

- Trustees and governors do not understand the strategic actions that need to be taken to ensure their schools are compliant with regard to RE/RS and in addition with regard to Equality/Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.
- Many schools do not meet the statutory requirement to teach RE at all stages
- Pupils are rarely taught enough substance to prepare them to engage in a complex, multi-religious and multi-secular society (where religion and non-religion play different parts in different people's lives)
- Too often, schools do not teach topics in the RE curriculum deeply enough for pupils to develop a substantial understanding of the subject matter
- Non-examined RE is typically not high quality.

General research indicated that all pupils should develop a broad and secure knowledge of the complexity of religious and non-religious traditions.

It will take coordinated effort by stakeholders to improve the quality of RE in schools. The Culham grant will support this in Staffordshire schools.

- Schools need high-quality professional development to teach RE well and understand the holistic approach to this.
- Curriculum support needs to identify clearly what pupils will learn and when, building on knowledge over time, so that pupils develop a deep knowledge of the chosen religious and non-religious traditions.

**Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
7th February 2024
Report of the Director for Children and Families.**

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 To present to members of SACRE an opportunity to discuss in small groups the meaning of Equality/Equity, Diversity and Inclusion supported by the Culham Grant.

2 Summary

2.1 Since schools are being invited to discuss these issues, it is important that SACRE also have this opportunity.

3 Recommendation

3.1 That members of SACRE understand and therefore support the work that will be needed to complete the Culham Project.

4 Background

4.1 This project enables school leaders to address the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus, plus equity/ equality, diversity and inclusion aspects.

SACRE members need to explore the issues surrounding the understanding and appreciation for the richness of human diversity/ world views including different RE curricula, content, pedagogy, and provision is at the heart of their organisation.

Equal Opportunities

5.1 This report has been prepared in accordance with the County Council's policies on equal opportunities.

6 Financial implications

6.1 See previous agenda item.

Contact Officer : **Mary Gale 07816374873**

**Please discuss the following in small groups.
Questions about Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.**

1. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being very low and 5 being very high, how would you rate your current knowledge and understanding of Equality, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion?

Person 1 1 2 3 4 5
Person 2 1 2 3 4 5
Person 3 1 2 3 4 5

School Policies and Practices

2. Do you know which policies, organisations such as schools need in order to promote Equality, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion?
 - Yes List a few here if you can remember.
 - No
 - Not sure
3. How often do you think Equality, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion topics are discussed in school settings?
 - Rarely
 - Occasionally
 - Frequently
 - Always

Challenges and Opportunities

4. In your opinion, what are the main challenges faced in promoting Equality, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion?

Personal Development

5. How do you personally stay informed about current trends and best practices related to Equality, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in education?
6. Are there specific areas within Equality, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion where you feel you need additional training or support?

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
7th February 2024
Report of the Director for Children and Families
Standards

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 To present members of SACRE with an update on the results of the 2023 GCSE and A level results and make comparisons to previous years.

2 Summary

2.1 Members of SACRE will receive a report on standards in RE and will understand the comparisons to previous years.

3 Recommendation

3.1 That members of SACRE receive the report and note the contents.

4 Background

4.1 GCSE and A Level examinations are sat in the summer of each years

4.2 Members will be briefed on the key developments.

5 Equal Opportunities

5.1 This report has been prepared in accordance with the County Council's policies on equal opportunities.

6 Financial implications

6.1 Financial implications may be raised; These have been dealt with elsewhere or will be raised at future meetings of SACRE.

Contact Officer Mary Gale 07816374873

SACRE agenda item 10 Feb 7th 2024

Standards at GCSE and A levels 2023

Staffordshire SACRE reviews and discusses standards and achievement in RE during meetings as appropriate. Please note there were no external examination results for the summer of 2021 due to the pandemic. These resumed in summer 2022 with some modifications and in 2023 normal exam practice resumed.

Throughout 2022-23 Religious Education network meetings which schools can choose to attend included a discussion on standards across year groups and schools to support schools with the judgements they make against the revised 2023 Agreed Syllabus Age Related Expectations.

a) Public examination entries in Religious Education (RE) and Religious Studies (RS) for 2023

In the 2023 Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education, legal requirements state that RE should be provided as part of the broad and balanced curriculum for all registered pupils from Reception to 6th Form.

Background

At Key Stage (KS) 4 many pupils fulfil their entitlement by following as a basis an accredited specification (from a recognised examination board) in Religious Studies (RS). Schools should provide reasonable time for pupils to complete this and if appropriate, to attain an external qualification.

At KS5, pupils are encouraged to follow the programme of study provided within the Agreed Syllabus or an accredited examination scheme.

Staffordshire SACRE recognises the independence of Academies and Free Schools. However, it commends the Agreed Syllabus to them as a constructive and collaborative way to meet their legal requirements in Religious Education.

Update on summer 2023 external examination results

b) Overall GCSE results and things to note

The GCSE system continues to use the grading of 9-1, with 9 being the exceptional grade. Across the UK, a greater proportion of students achieved good passes in religious studies in 2023 compared to all GCSE subjects. A total of 72.6% of pupils achieved grade 4 or higher in religious studies compared to 68.2% for all subjects.

More girls than boys were entered for the RE GCSE exams in 2023, there has been no change in this for a number of years.

NB Grades were awarded following different process in 2020 and 2021 after public exams were cancelled this led to a large increase in the share of top grades awarded.

2022 saw the start to return to pre pandemic processes but there was still some lea way with regard to marking and awarding the top grades.

In 2023, we saw a return to pre-pandemic processes of 2019.

RS saw the smallest drop in top grades compared to other subjects.

See below for the 2023 results.

c) Religious Studies GCSE 2023

Here are the trends in the latest religious studies GCSE results for summer 2023.

The proportion of grade 9 results achieved by students nationally in 2023, (equivalent to a high A* under the old GCSE system) fell to 7.9 % compared to 9.7 per cent in 2022 more in line with pre pandemic results of and 7.4 per cent in 2019.

Staffordshire information

Overall figures to report for 2023 in comparison to 2022.

	Number of candidates	Grade 9 and above - %	Grade 8 and above - %	Grade 7 and above - %	Grade 6 and above - %	Grade 5 and above - %	Grade 4 and above - %	Grade 3 and above - %	Grade 2 and above - %	Grade 1 and above - %
England 2022	178,890	8.4	23.8	37.7	53.2	65.0	76.7	89.9	95.7	98.9
Staffordshire 2022	3,394	6.5	14	23	55	61	73.4	85.7	95.4	99.2

2023 data

	Number of candidates	Grade 9 and above - %	Grade 8 and above - %	Grade 7 and above - %	Grade 6 and above - %	Grade 5 and above - %	Grade 4 and above - %	Grade 3 and above - %	Grade 2 and above - %	Grade 1 and above - %
England 2023	168,270	8.3	19.4	31.6	48.3	62.2	72.6	86.5	94.0	97.8
Staffordshire 2023	3,703	3.7	11.4	20.5	39.2	54.6	66.1	84.2	93.6	98.3

The number of pupils taking GCSE Religious Studies increased in Staffordshire, but fell in the rest of England.

Key outcomes

Staffordshire % achieving grades 9-4 for the full RS course in 2020 was 76.4% and 2021 was 77.5% with a fall to 73.4% in 2022 and a further fall to 66.1% in 2023. A fall of 7.3%

England % achieving grades 9-4 for the full RS course in 2020 was 80.5% 2021 was 80.2% with a fall to 76.7% in 2022 and a fall to 72.6 in 2023. A fall of 4.1%

Therefore Staffordshire % of students achieving grades 9-4 for the full RS course in 2023 was over 6.5% lower than the England average in 2023.

Historically

2019 National Average 9 to 4 **72.3%**

2019 Staffordshire Average 9 to 4 **65.9%**

2020 National Average 9 to 4 80.5%

2020 Staffordshire Average 9 to 4 76.4%

2021 National Average 9 to 4 80.2%

2021 Staffordshire Average 9 to 4 77.5%

2022 National Average 9 to 4 76.7%

2022 Staffordshire Average 9 to 4 73.4%

2023 National Average 9 to 4 **72.6%**

2023 Staffordshire Average 9 to 4 **66.1%**

Data shows a stabilising of results back to pre-pandemic levels of 2019- see bold above. This is a more realistic comparison.

Schools which had the highest amount of entries and their grades include the following:-

John Taylor High (246)	9 to 4	78%	Higher than National
Thomas Alleyne's High (224)	9 to 4	51.4%	
Painsley Catholic (211)	9 to 4	81%	Higher than National
Wolgarston High (200)	9 to 4	69%	
Alleynes academy (218)	9 to 4	64.7%	
Erasmus Darwin Academy (183)	9 to 4	60.1%	
King Edward VI (192)	9 to 4	62%	
St John Fisher Catholic College (192)	9 to 4	55.2%	
The Rawlett School (176)	9 to 4	59.7%	
Cardinal Griffin Catholic College (171)	9 to 4	57.3%	
The Kings CE Academy (146)	9 to 4	30.1%	
Blessed William Howard (146)	9 to 4	78.8%	Higher than National
Paget High (107)	9 to 4	43.9%	

Here are some additional comments to support...

- Grade 5 plus in 2022 for Staffordshire was 61% compared to the National of 65% and in 2023 was at 54% compared to the national of 62.2%. This is a drop.
- In 2023 John Taylor High School entered the most students with 246 entries (a drop of 10 from 2022) 20% achieved grades 8 and 9 (a drop of 5%) and 78% achieved the Grades 9-4 a drop of 4%.
- Closely followed by Thomas Alleynes High with 224 (a drop of 35 from 2022) entries. 6% achieved grades 8 and 9 (a drop of 4% from 2022) and 51.4% achieved the Grades 9-4 (a drop of 3.9% from 2022).
- Painsley Catholic High school achieved the highest gradings for its 211 entries (a drop of 3 from 2022) entries, with 22.7% achieved grades 8 and 9 (21% in 2022) 81% achieved the Grades 9-4 a slight drop from 82.2% in 2022.
- Alleyne's High School Stone entered 218 students a slight increase from 2022. 11.4% achieved grades 8 and 9 compared to 7% in 2022. 64.7% achieved the Grades 9-4- very similar to 2022.
- Blessed William Howard entered 146 students (an increase of 6 from 2022) and in 2023 28.1% achieving grades 8 and 9 (an increase from 25% in 2022) and at grades 9 to 4, 78.8% which is higher than National and increase on the school's 2022 results of 76.4%.

d) Religious Studies A-level 2023 in comparison to 2022.

	Number of entries	A*-A	A*-C	A*-E	Average Grade
Staffordshire 2022	164	32.6%	88.2%	97.8%	B
National 2022	15, 220	36.2%	87.5%	98.7%	B
	Number of entries	A*-A	A*-C	A*-E	Average Grade
Staffordshire 2023	226	18.0%	77.2%	97.5%	B
National 2023	14, 720	25.5%	78.5%	97.3%	B

At KS5 the information in the table shows the picture for A level results.

25 schools in Staffordshire entered pupils for A levels an increase of 4 from 2022 this represented all types of schools with a total of 226 entries an increase of 62 pupils from 2022.

- The table shows that Staffordshire in comparison with the top grades is nearly 7.5% below the National at A*-A
- This shows that Staffordshire, in comparison is just below the National comparing A*-C grades in 2023. In 2022 we were just above.
- Here are some noteworthy results....
- ✓ John Taylor High School entered the most candidates- 37 entries (an increase of 1 from 2022). 27% achieved A*-A (a decrease from 56% in 2022) and 65.8% achieved the A*-B a decrease from 80.6% in 2022) but 83.7% achieved A*- C compared to the National of 78,5%
- ✓ King Edward VI entered 16 candidates, 18.8% achieved A*-A and 37,6% achieved the A*-B, but 81.4% achieved A*- C compared to the National of 78,5%
- ✓ Blessed William Howard entered 12 candidates. 8.3% achieved A*-A and 41.6% achieved the A*-B, and 66.6% achieved A*- C;
- ✓ Walton High School entered 20 candidates. 25% achieved A*-A an increase of 10% from 2022 and 45% achieved the A*-B, but 55% achieved A*- C
- ✓ Newcastle and Stafford Colleges group entered 26 candidates. 15.4% achieved A*-A and 65.4% achieved the A*-B but 88% achieved A*- C compared to the National of 78,5%
- ✓ Erasmus Darwin entered 15 candidates. 6.7 % achieved A*-A and 20% achieved the A*- B and 80% achieved A*- C compared to the National of 78,5%
- ✓ The remaining schools entered between 1-9 candidates.
- 14 out of 25 schools achieved gradings of A*-A- a drop of 3 from 2022.

The increase in the number of entries suggests that candidates continue to recognise the value of RS A-level for Higher Education entry, graduate employment, and as a valuable life skill.

Budget 2023-2024 as per February 2024 (£6590 allocated)

GL Account Codes for: Enquiry Group: Curr Budget (v2) v Act + GRNI/GL Account Code Range: EM1100/*** to EM1100/***** / Enquiry Year: 2023/ Period: 00 to 12**

<u>GL Account Code</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Current Budget (v2)</u>	<u>Actual + Grni</u>	<u>Actuals</u>	<u>Variance Bud v(Act +GRNI)</u>
EM110010002	SACRE Teachers Gross	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
EM110044316	SACRE CONSULTANT'S FEES	0.00	1,320.00	1,320.00	3930
EM110044038	SACRE Curriculum workshops see below	0.00	0.00	0.00	1583
EM110046204	SACRE Conference Fees	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
EM110047017	SACRE Grants to third parties	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
EM110047202	SACRE Subscriptions General	0.00	295	295	365
EM110048342	SACRE Contingency	6,590.00	200.00	200.00	6,390.00
EM110064550	SACRE Tfrs to Oth Accounts	(10,890.00)	(10,890.00)	(10,890.00)	0.00
					512

Total Available before commitments

**£512 left
£638 over drawn when
pending workshops paid for
but can use the Culham
Grant to support this short
fall until the new budget
starts.**

Workshop breakdown

£1583.20 Workshops up to Feb 2024 included above
 Perton £268, St Lukes £266.30,
 Penkridge Middle £254.50,
 Walton Priory Middle Stone £264.40
 Chancel Primary £254.50 Sir John Offley £275.50

Future workshops Approx £1150 see below

Stafford Manor The Croft Reginal Mitchell

Culham St Gabriel £3510 allocated Dec 15th 2023

Evaluation of need visits and drafting of information	£660
Writing draft paperwork and sharing of information in 5 meetings	£900
Draft of webinar for February and March	£450

7th February 2024

SACRE DEVELOPMENT PLAN and Agreed Syllabus PLAN

Staffordshire SACRE								
Chair	Michael Metcalf			Date Range for completion:	November 23- November-24			
Commissioned support adviser	Mary Gale							
Self-evaluation:	Amber board			Self-evaluation:				
Objective	Activities	Time scale	Led by	Success criteria	Evidence	Evaluation Nove 2022	RAG in Feb 2024	
Page 89	1. New members become familiar with roles and responsibilities	Attendance at 3 annual meeting	Nov 23- Nov 24	Chair and consultant	SACRE members are familiar with roles and responsibilities.	Through meetings, knowledge is evidenced of the process and procedures of SACRE	As meeting are convened then new members become familiar with their roles.	RED
	2. SACRE are made aware of current philosophy regarding RE and CW and resources under key issues	Update information received at meetings	Nov 23- Nov 24	Chair and consultant	SACRE members are aware of current philosophy regarding RE and CW and resources to assist.	Through meetings, knowledge is increased.	This is always an update at each meeting and is ongoing	Amber

Agenda Item 12

3. Support for the Agreed Syllabus (AS)	Workshops delivered on diversity aspects through Engaging with Islam resources and Christianity resources	Nov 23- Nov 24	Trainer x2	Target schools receive half day or full day support	Through workshops, knowledge is increased in line with AS	This is underway	Amber
4. Culham St Gabriel grant utilised	Training of leaders on EDI aspects in schools x6 workshops	Jan 24- autumn 24	Trainers x2	School leaders become more aware of AS and its connection with EDI aspects	Evaluations and dissemination of information	This will start in February and March 2024	Red
5. Understanding of Equity/Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	SACRE members to increase their knowledge of these aspects	Feb 24- Feb 25	Consultant and Trainer	SACRE members become more aware of AS and its connection with EDI aspects	Evaluations and dissemination of information	This will be highlighted in February, June & November 2024	Red
6. Development of websites to share resources including AS and reports. Entrust and SACRE	Information shared with website providers. Resources updated	Nov 23- Nov 24	Clerk and consultant	Websites up and running x2 SACRE members able to access information through one website for SACRE information and one for resources through Entrust. Link for Entrust https://www.entrust.education/Page/35474 Link for SACRE https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Education/SACRE/Home.aspx	Stakeholders use of website	Feedback is presented at June and November 2024 meeting	Red

7. Engagement with RE Hubs and stakeholders	Attendance at Hub meetings and NATRE meetings and NASACRE and AREIAC meetings	Nov 23- Nov 24	Consultant and RE HUB leaders	Increased engagement and quality assurance of information shared	Up to date resources utilised in schools.	Feedback is presented at Feb/June and November 2024 meeting	Amber
Impact Summary				Area/s for further development			

**Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
7th February 2024
Report of the Director for Children and Families
Applications for variation of practice**

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To consider any applications for variation of practice to religious education and or collective worship.

2 Summary

- 2.1 Upon receipt of a written application from a headteacher of a county school SACRE should determine whether it is appropriate to dis-apply the requirement for broadly Christian collective worship and/or make amendments to the way the Agreed Syllabus is followed in the case of that school.

3 Recommendation

- 3.1 That members of SACRE are updated on any new developments in this area.

4 Background

- 4.1 No applications have been received at this time.

5 Equal Opportunities

- 5.1 This report has been prepared in accordance with the County Council's policies on equal opportunities.

6 Financial implications

- 6.1 There are no immediate financial implications.

Contact Officer:

Mary Gale 07816374873

