



Free Church Education Committee Response to the Final Report of the Commission on Religious Education

Religion and Worldviews: the way forward A national plan for RE

The Free Church Education Committee welcomes the publication of this report and is grateful to the members of the Commission for their hard work and commitment. The Committee has engaged with the Commission on Religious Education at every stage of its work, and we are pleased to see recommendations that reflect our position, and that of many others.

We agree that change is needed. Religious Education is, perhaps, more important now than it has ever been in helping young people navigate the complexities of a diverse society and forming their own views. The Commission's extremely thorough analysis of the current situation has led it to propose substantive change that, we hope, will attract the support of stakeholders and Government, and lead to rounded and rigorous educational experiences for all young people, including those who are studying vocational subjects.

We support the concept of a Statutory National Entitlement, leading to more consistent, high-quality provision, and welcome the proposals for a more creative role for local bodies, which should be properly funded and resourced. The composition of both the national and local bodies needs to be carefully examined, in order to draw on the best of what has gone before as well as making space for newer voices. Alongside this, it is essential that there is accountability, and inspection, publication of data, and inclusion of the subject in school performance measures seem good ways in which to achieve this.

There is an urgency to the proposals concerning Initial Teacher Education and teacher supply. The Free Churches have for many years expressed their concerns about the paucity of training, particularly for primary teachers, and the lack of specialist teachers in secondary schools, and we urge Government to consider these points carefully.

There are areas of the Commission's report that we feel need further discussion and development, and we will respond to these in more detail.

We are committed to working with others in the RE Community, and with Government to offer children and young people an engaging, academically rigorous, thought-provoking and life-enhancing educational subject that should, rightfully, find its place at the heart of the curriculum.

Sarah Lane Cawte
Free Church Education Officer
12 September, 2018