

Protecting What Matters: Towards a more confident, cohesive, and resilient United Kingdom

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Executive Summary (created by Claire Clinton – where I have picked out from the report what it says about RE, Religion, SACREs and Education)

1. Strategic Role of Religion in Social Cohesion

- The document positions **religion, belief and faith communities as central to social cohesion**, recognising that over half of the UK population identifies with a religion.
- Faith and belief are framed as:
 - **Anchors for communities**
 - **Drivers of inclusion, understanding, and respect**
 - Key partners in strengthening **national identity and shared values**
- Religious literacy is identified as **essential for cohesion and resilience**, particularly in addressing extremism, hate, and misunderstanding.

2. Strengthening Religious Education (RE)

- The government commits to **raising the profile and quality of RE**:
 - **Driving up standards in RE teaching**
 - Considering whether **RE should be included in the national curriculum** (subject to sector consensus)
- RE is explicitly linked to:
 - Promoting **tolerance and mutual respect**
 - Improving **understanding of different religions and beliefs**
 - Supporting broader **citizenship and values education**
- RE is framed not just as an academic subject, but as a tool for:
 - **Community cohesion**
 - Countering **extremism and prejudice**
 - Building **shared identity in a plural society**

3. Role of SACREs (Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education)

- SACREs are explicitly recognised as playing an **important role in local communities and cohesion**.
- Government actions include:
 - **Improving analysis of SACRE annual reports** to better understand impact
 - Promoting their role in connecting:
 - Schools
 - Local authorities
 - Faith and belief communities
- This suggests a **renewed emphasis on SACREs as local governance mechanisms** for RE and community cohesion.

4. Engagement with Faith and Belief Communities

The document sets out a clear agenda to **strengthen collaboration with faith groups**, including:

a. Building Interfaith Understanding

- Expansion of **Inter Faith Week**, with a focus on:

- Youth participation
- Grassroots engagement
- Continued support for programmes like **Near Neighbours**
- Increased investment in **interfaith and community cohesion initiatives**

b. Faith Literacy

- Commitment to **boosting faith and belief literacy**:
 - Within government (policy-making)
 - Across wider society
- Recognition (following the Bloom Review) that poor religious literacy:
 - Weakens policy effectiveness
 - Risks misunderstanding communities

c. Faith Communities as Delivery Partners

- Faith groups are recognised as:
 - **Key providers of community infrastructure**
 - **Trusted local institutions**
 - Partners in delivering integration, cohesion, and social support

5. Investment in Faith Infrastructure

- £92 million **Places of Worship Renewal Fund** will:
 - Protect and maintain religious heritage buildings
 - Support their role as **community hubs**
- Additional **security funding for places of worship** continues:
 - Responding to rising religious hate crime
 - Protecting faith communities as key civic institutions

6. Education System: Cohesion, Values and Religion

Education policy is positioned as a key lever for cohesion, with religion embedded in several ways:

a. Curriculum and Values Education

- Introduction of **mandatory citizenship education**
- Focus on:
 - British values (democracy, rule of law, tolerance)
 - National history, including:
 - **Holocaust education (compulsory)**
- RE sits within a broader framework of:
 - **values education**
 - **identity formation**
 - **critical thinking**

b. Tackling Hate and Discrimination in Education

- Specific action on:
 - **Antisemitism in schools and colleges**
 - Wider **religious hatred in education settings**
- Measures include:
 - Funding for anti-hate initiatives
 - Reviews into antisemitism in education
 - Training and guidance for schools

c. Cross-Community Interaction in Education

- Investment in **school linking programmes**
 - Bringing children from different backgrounds together
- RE and inter-school work seen as tools to:
 - Reduce segregation
 - Build early understanding across faiths

7. Religion, Extremism and Institutional Safeguarding

- The document identifies that:
 - **Extremists target religious and educational spaces**, including SACREs, schools, and charities
 - Government response includes:
 - Stronger oversight of education institutions (including Prevent compliance)
 - Measures to prevent misuse of religion to:
 - Spread extremism
 - Justify intolerance
 - Clear distinction is made:
 - **Religion as a positive force vs. extremist misuse of religion**
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8. Protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief

- Strong commitment to:
 - **Freedom of religion or belief domestically and internationally**
 - Includes:
 - Diplomatic promotion of religious freedom
 - Domestic policies tackling:
 - Antisemitism
 - Anti-Muslim hatred
 - Other religious discrimination
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9. Key Policy Direction and Implications for RE & Stakeholders

Overall, the document signals:

For Religious Education

- Potential **elevation of RE within the curriculum**
- Greater expectation that RE contributes to **cohesion and values education**
- Increased scrutiny and **possible reform of content and delivery**

For SACREs

- Renewed interest but still evolving role:
 - Likely increased accountability
 - Greater use of data (annual reports)
 - Potential integration into wider cohesion agenda

For Faith Communities

- Recognition as **strategic partners in education and cohesion**
- Increased:
 - Funding
 - Engagement
 - Expectations of contribution to integration and shared values

For Schools and Education Systems

- Stronger requirement to:
 - Address religious hatred and prejudice
 - Promote **interfaith understanding**
 - Embed **shared values alongside diversity**
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Bottom Line

The document reframes **Religious Education and faith engagement as core tools of national cohesion and resilience**, not peripheral subjects. It signals:

- A **strengthened role for RE**
- Enhanced recognition of **SACREs and faith communities**
- A shift toward **education as a vehicle for integration, values, and religious understanding**

This represents a **more strategic, security-linked, and cohesion-driven approach to RE and religion in education policy.**