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believing in children, learning together

The School Curriculum

The Accord Coalition believes all pupils in state funded schools should have an entitlement to receive an objective, broad and balanced education that properly prepares them for citizenship and adult life in our increasingly diverse society.

Sadly, however, the provision of those subjects that can best ensure this, such as Religious Education (RE); Citizenship; Personal, Social, Health and Economic education (PSHE) and school assemblies, can be unsatisfactory. Accord therefore wants the government to take action to raise standards in the school curriculum to ensure that schools fulfil their potential at promoting the growth of mutual understanding and as a source of greater empowerment in society.

Religious Education

Most state funded schools provide RE according to a syllabus produced by their local authority responsible for education, while Academy schools and most faith schools are able to determine for themselves the RE they teach. Many schools already provide excellent RE, including some faith schools, but Accord is concerned that many provide RE that is narrow in scope and/or is instructional.

There are a number of ways that pupils' entitlement to broad and balanced RE could be delivered and defined, including through the introduction of a flexible national RE syllabus framework. Faith schools might still provide pupils with optional instructional RE, but only once they had provided pupils with a core RE entitlement that teaches about the range of beliefs in society.

At the moment the standing of RE in schools is on the decline and Accord hopes that national guidance on RE will help to improve standards and practice. [*An analysis of a Survey of teachers on GCSE change and RE in light of the EBacc changes*](#) by the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education in 2011 found that 20% of schools in England did not meet the statutory requirement for the teaching of RE at Key Stage Four (14 to 16 year olds) and 9.2% at Key Stage Three (11 to 14 year olds). Meanwhile, with fewer schools having to follow the RE syllabus of their local authority and the increased marginalisation of local authorities in the provision of education due to the boom in the number of Academies since 2010, the future and standing of local authority RE seems even less certain.

Citizenship and PSHE

In addition to providing high quality RE, Accord would like state funded schools to provide at both the primary and secondary stages Citizenship and Personal, Social, Health and Economic education (PSHE), which includes age appropriate Sex and Relationships Education (SRE).

Accord supports Citizenship education, as it helps children and young people become more responsible citizens, who can make a more positive contribution to society, while it considers it vital that pupils are provided with thorough and high quality PSHE, as otherwise their future health and wellbeing risk being put at risk.

The current SRE provision in the UK lags behind that of many developed countries. A 2007 [survey](#) by the UK Youth parliament found that 61 per cent of boys and 70 per cent of girls aged over 17 reported not receiving any information at school about personal relationships. Meanwhile, the report [Sex and Relationship Education: Views from teachers, parents and governors](#) (2010) found that 90% of parents thought schools should be involved in providing SRE, but that 80% of teachers do not feel sufficiently well trained and confident to talk about SRE, only 9% of school leaders rated the teaching materials available to them as 'very useful', and more than one in four school leaders rated the current provision of SRE in schools in preparing children for the future as 'not well' or 'not at all well'.

Accord believes that schools should be able to teach about a range of religious and cultural perspectives on these topics, but that schools should have a duty to promote an acceptance of sexual diversity and transgendered people that should trump all other considerations, and that government should provide detailed guidance on this area.

The Accord Coalition calls on the Government to make a broad-based RE syllabus obligatory in all schools by including RE in the National Curriculum and extending it to all state-funded schools.

About the Accord Coalition

The Accord Coalition is a campaign coalition, launched in 2008, which brings together a wide range of organisations, both religious and non-religious, who want state funded schools to be open and suitable to all children of every background, no matter what their parents' or their own beliefs, and who are concerned that restrictive legislation around admissions, employment and the curriculum in state funded faith schools can serve to undermine community cohesion and not adequately prepare children for life in our increasingly diverse society.

Accord's growing list of members and supporters includes the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, the British Humanist Association, the Christian think tank Ekklesia, the British Muslims for Secular Democracy, The General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches and the race equality think tank The Runnymede Trust.