



## Cumbrian SACRE secondary survey 2024

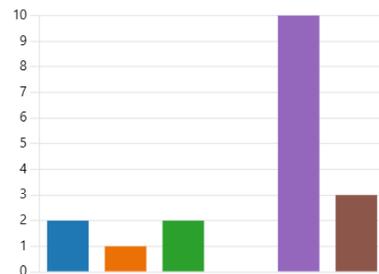
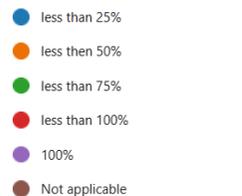
In spring 2024, Cumbrian SACRE invited RE subject leaders in secondary schools across Cumberland and Westmorland & Furness to complete an online survey. This aim of the survey was to see if RE departments across both Councils reflected national surveys around recruitment, retention and training. Just under half of our secondary schools (18 out of 39) completed the survey. While this relatively small sample should not be considered conclusive, the data has provided valuable evidence to support discussions by Cumbrian SACRE members and RE Subject Leaders. These discussions are timely as Cumbrian SACRE are currently in the process of writing their new development plan for 2024-2029 alongside the implementation of the new Cumbrian Agreed Syllabus for RE (2023).

In this survey, we made a focus on the proportions of specialist and non-specialist RE teachers, and whether this varied between key stages. More qualitatively, we opened up conversations around what is meant by a 'specialist' RE teacher in terms of prior and on-going training, and also sought data around the main specialism and special qualities of the non-specialist RE teacher. This has enabled us to consider the impact on secondary RE departments if the shortage of RE specialist teachers continues. Ref: [Shortage of RE teachers “dangerous cycle” within religious education \(natre.org.uk\)](https://natre.org.uk) Discussion at our recent SACRE meeting considered the impact on RE if department leaders are not replaced by specialist RE teachers. A recent national survey of secondary RE teachers found that 1 in 5 respondents said the number of specialist RE teachers being employed is falling and just under 50% reported the reason for the decrease was a result of a member of staff leaving and not being replaced. Ref: [Analysis of a survey of teachers on the impact of political policy on student opportunity to study RE/RME and RVE \(natre.org.uk\)](https://natre.org.uk) p2, p5.

### Proportion of specialist and non-specialist RE teachers in GCSE RE

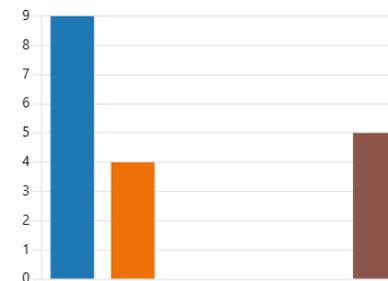
6. What proportion of teachers are specialist RE teachers in GCSE RE

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11. What proportion of teachers are non-specialist RE teachers in GCSE RE

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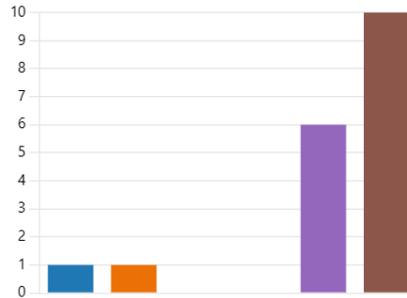
## Proportion of specialist and non-specialist RE teachers in A Level

8. What proportion of teachers are specialist RE teachers in A level

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|                |    |
|----------------|----|
| less than 25%  | 1  |
| less then 50%  | 1  |
| less than 75%  | 0  |
| less than 100% | 0  |
| 100%           | 6  |
| Not applicable | 10 |

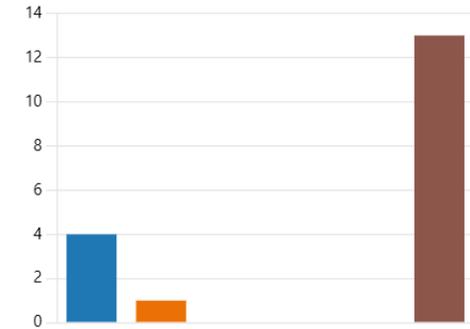


13. What proportion of teachers are non-specialist RE teachers in A Level

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|                |    |
|----------------|----|
| less than 25%  | 4  |
| less then 50%  | 1  |
| less than 75%  | 0  |
| less than 100% | 0  |
| 100%           | 0  |
| Not applicable | 13 |



It is perhaps not surprising to find that most GCSE and A Level students are mostly taught by specialist RE teachers. Our survey shows that 66 % of GCSE classes and 75% of A Level classes are totally (100%) taught by specialist teachers. While there are some examples of non-specialist teachers at GCSE level, this is much less common at A level. Also of interest, is that out of the 18 schools who took part in our survey, 15 out of the 18 offered GCSE Religious Studies and 8 of the 18 offered A Level Religious Studies or an appropriate Philosophy A Level. There are reasons why schools do not offer examinations in RE, varying from not having a 6<sup>th</sup> form and student choices and options. In some cases, this may also be due to lack of specialist subject staff.

## Proportion of specialist and non-specialist RE teachers in KS3

4. What proportion of teachers are specialist RE teachers in KS3

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|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| less than 25%  | 4 |
| less then 50%  | 4 |
| less than 75%  | 4 |
| less than 100% | 4 |
| 100%           | 2 |

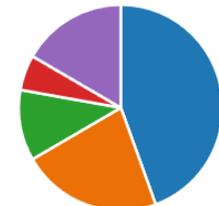


9. What proportion of teachers are non-specialist RE teachers in KS3

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|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| less than 25%  | 8 |
| less then 50%  | 4 |
| less than 75%  | 2 |
| less than 100% | 1 |
| 100%           | 3 |



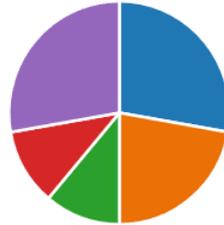
## Proportion of specialist and non-specialist RE teachers in KS4

5. What proportion of teachers are specialist RE teachers in KS4

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|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| less than 25%  | 5 |
| less than 50%  | 4 |
| less than 75%  | 2 |
| less than 100% | 2 |
| 100%           | 5 |

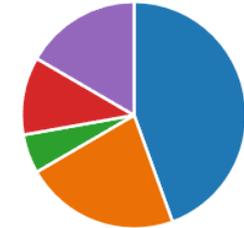


10. What proportion of teachers are non-specialist RE teachers in KS4

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|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| less than 25%  | 8 |
| less than 50%  | 4 |
| less than 75%  | 1 |
| less than 100% | 2 |
| 100%           | 3 |



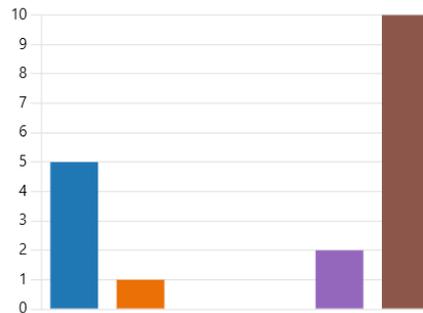
## Proportion of specialist and non-specialist RE teachers in sixth form

7. What proportion of teachers are specialist RE teachers in Sixth Form

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|                |    |
|----------------|----|
| less than 25%  | 5  |
| less than 50%  | 1  |
| less than 75%  | 0  |
| less than 100% | 0  |
| 100%           | 2  |
| Not applicable | 10 |

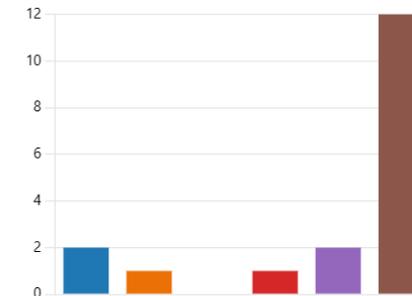


12. What proportion of teachers are non-specialist RE teachers in Sixth Form

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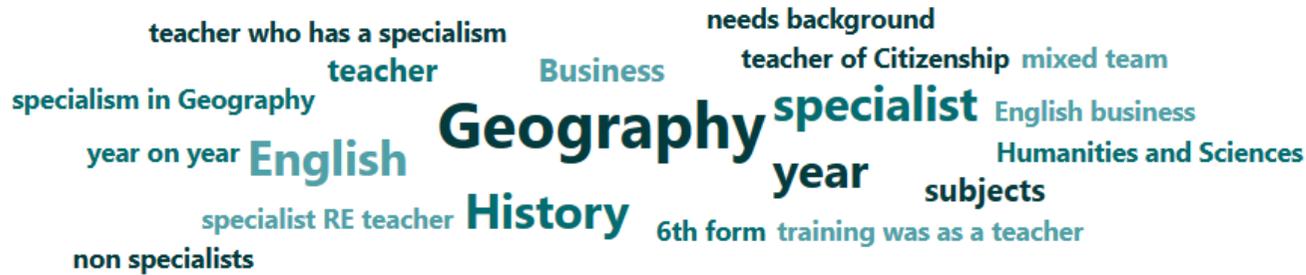
[Insights](#)

|                |    |
|----------------|----|
| less than 25%  | 2  |
| less than 50%  | 1  |
| less than 75%  | 0  |
| less than 100% | 1  |
| 100%           | 2  |
| Not applicable | 12 |



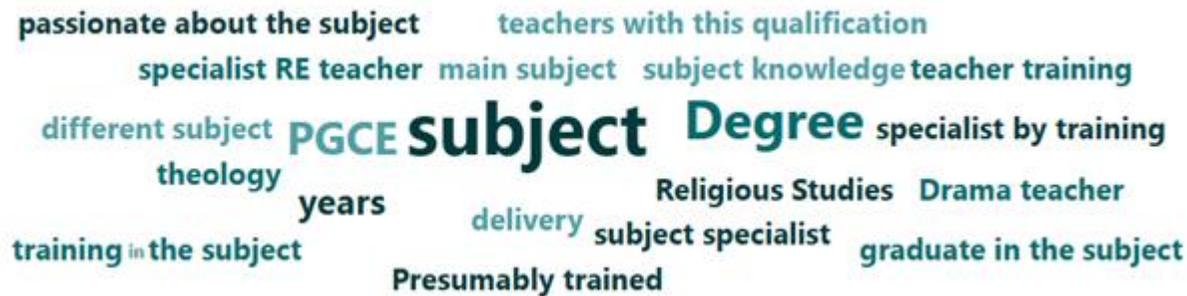
The proportion of specialist and non-specialist teachers in non-examined RE (often called core RE) was found to be more mixed. There are schools with both 100% specialist teachers and some with 100% non-specialist teachers across KS3 and KS4 but with no clear pattern. The data shows slightly more specialist teachers for KS4 non-examined/core RE. Similarly, in sixth forms in secondary schools, there is a varying degree of specialist and non-specialist teachers for RE. It is interesting to note that 12 of the 18 schools indicated that RE in the sixth form was 'not applicable'. While some of these schools (5) do not have a sixth form, the remaining 7 do. It is unclear whether the legal requirement for sixth form core RE for all pupils is currently being fulfilled. The new Cumbrian Agreed Syllabus for RE (2023) states a requirement of 15 hours of RE across KS5. Cumbrian SACRE are really keen to support schools to find innovative and flexible ways to achieve this, within a busy sixth form timetable. It has been encouraging to see some successful examples of sixth forms across both Councils engaging in RE through curriculum enrichment opportunities, such as school speakers, special events or independent study.

## Main subject/s of non-specialist RE teachers that are timetabled to teach beyond RE.



This word cloud above represents the most common specialisms or main timetabled subjects of RE non-specialists. A full range of other subjects were also reported as specialisms in the survey e.g. Textiles, Food Tech, Maths, PE, PD and PSHE. RE is also being taught by non-specialists during tutor time, by cover supervisors and in one example, the headteacher. As a subject, RE often sits within the Humanities department so it was to be expected that the specialisms of non-specialist RE teachers would be most common in geography or history. These findings also reflect the national picture that 51% of RE teachers spend their time delivering another subject. Ref: [Minister admits that most teachers of secondary RE mainly teach another subject. \(natre.org.uk\)](https://natre.org.uk)

## Opening up discussion around what is meant by 'specialist' RE teacher.



This word cloud represents a summary of the most common words used by respondents to describe a 'specialist' RE teacher. Most comments indicated a specialist RE teacher should have an undergraduate degree or PGCE, in subjects such as Religious Studies, Theology, Philosophy or Humanities. In the survey, respondents also indicated the value of experience and passion for RE by non-specialist RE teachers, and the importance of further training. For example: *"someone who has a lengthy history in teaching the subject and has had the relevant CPD,"* or *"planning, teaching and assessing the subject for 3+ years and is confident in their subject knowledge relevant to the ages they are teaching,"* and *"taken part in a subject knowledge enhancement course" or "taken time to deepen their own knowledge and understanding within the subject" and "are passionate about the subject, and are delivering RE permanently on their timetable,"* or *"taught for a number of years and has adequate training in the subject through CPD would also be considered a specialist"*.