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The First Years of Teaching

# Final Report

on a study of Early Career secondary Religious Education  
teachers, 2020-2023



“The quality of teaching is the single most important in-school driver of pupil attainment. There are no great schools without great teachers, and no other profession is as important in shaping the lives of the next generation.”

DfE (June 2021) Opportunity Areas Insight Guide, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, and Workforce Development. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/992744/6-7335\\_DfE\\_OA\\_Teacher\\_Insight\\_Guide.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/992744/6-7335_DfE_OA_Teacher_Insight_Guide.pdf)



## Acknowledgements

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Finally, thanks to various RE professionals who have expressed interest, engaged me in further discussion, and helped to publicise the various findings of this study.

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# Introduction



## Introduction

This report explores the experience of a recent cohort of English secondary school Religious Education (RE) teachers as they enter the profession.

In late spring 2021 I circulated an online survey to all providers involved in the training of secondary Religious Education teachers in England during the school year 2020-21. The aim was to find out who was applying to become a secondary RE teacher, their hopes of and motivations for entering the profession, and to identify some of the triggers that had influenced their decision to become a teacher. I hoped that this might provide insights which could be of benefit to me in shaping my PGCE teaching as well as guiding marketing strategies for attracting future RE teachers. A full copy of the report can be accessed at <https://bgro.repository.guildhe.ac.uk/id/eprint/881/> and a summary of the findings is included as Appendix 1 to this document.

About half of the participants in the above study agreed to be contacted for further surveys and these were carried out in 2022 and 2023, at the end of each year of their recently introduced two-year Early Career Teacher induction programme. The focus of these studies was to discover their career pathway so far, the quality of their experience as early career teachers, and their hopes and dreams for the future. A copy of the first follow-up survey can be accessed here: <https://bgro.repository.guildhe.ac.uk/id/eprint/971/> and a summary of key findings is attached as Appendix 2 to this document.

This final report summarises the results of the concluding 2023 survey and offers some observations on the overall feedback received from trainees throughout the study.

In addition to being the first ITE cohort to surpass the government set target for RE ITE applicants in recent years, teachers involved in this study are also the first to experience the new two-year induction into teaching, based on the 2019 Early Career Framework for teachers<sup>1</sup>. The survey explores whether they are being provided with the various components intended by that programme, and what other resources and networks have been of help during these formative years of teaching.

Overall the study provides only a snap-shot of the experience of a select group of early career teachers, but the results may be of interest to those within and beyond the RE community and they might also provide stimulus for additional research in related areas.

## Mark Plater

Senior Lecturer, Religion & Theology.  
Bishop Grosseteste University Lincoln.  
October, 2023.

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[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/978358/Early-Career\\_Framework\\_April\\_2021.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/978358/Early-Career_Framework_April_2021.pdf)

# Key findings of this final (2023) survey

1. A higher percentage of RE trainees (87%) secured teaching jobs in schools compared with trainees from many other school subjects (average=73%).
2. Nearly half of this cohort (41%) had changed schools (or was planning to do so= 16%) during, or at the end of their early career teacher induction period.
3. Most early career (EC) RE teachers (78%) are positive about their role and about the profession, although some (22%) have mixed feelings; only one of those presently in teaching jobs planned to leave teaching in the near future.
4. Most respondents (82%) have jobs in the type of school that they had hoped to teach in.
5. Those leaving the profession cite pay (75%), workload (75%) and the constraints of curriculum (50%) or a poor ITE experience (50%) as reasons for their decision.
6. Most EC RE teachers (85%) are content with the type of RE being taught in their school, a noticeable increase from the 2022 survey, possibly as a result of a move by some from their original employing school.
7. Most EC RE teachers (85%) claim to devote eight or more hours to schoolwork per day, with some working 10-12 hours (15%) and even 13+ hours (7%).
8. NATRE (National Association for Teachers of Religious Education) and social media RE support networks (e.g. Facebook, Twitter) continue to be the most used support structures (67% and 79% respectively) for these EC RE teachers.
9. Slightly fewer (41%) EC RE teachers were content with their salary than was the case at this time last year. However a similar number (52%) would like a better work-life balance.
10. As in the previous 2022 survey, in retrospect most (64%) of the cohort considered their initial teacher education course to be an excellent preparation (19%) or containing lots of useful preparation (45%) for their job as teachers. A further 10% considered it to be not much help, or a complete waste of time (3%), although it should be noted that these were all trainees who subsequently chose not to enter the profession.
11. In terms of the academic study element of their initial teacher education, 22% of respondents felt that this had been very helpful, 52% that it had been quite helpful, and 22% that it had been unhelpful or even “wasted time and energy”. Again, it should be noted that most negative responses were provided by respondents who subsequently chose not to enter the profession.
12. Most respondents (82%) felt that they had been adequately supported in their early career induction period, although this dropped to 74% who felt satisfied with the induction and training provided by their particular employing institution.

13. Although generally content with the overall support provided by their EC induction programme, half of the respondents (52%) indicated that this was not tailored to their individual needs, and only a quarter (26%) had received any subject specific training.
14. Only 12% of the cohort indicated that they were presently continuing studies for an M level qualification, although 35% planned to complete an M level qualification in the next five years.
15. Asked to identify what they considered to be the main aims of RE, respondents selected a wide range of options, with the largest number (78%) identifying “To enable pupils to appreciate other people’s beliefs and practices” as a significant intention of their subject.
16. Interestingly, one third of the group (33%) felt that their view on what RE is for, and what they hoped to achieve through the subject, had changed since beginning teaching, with a further one third (33%) unsure if their views had changed. This would suggest an uncertainty among EC RE teachers about the purpose of the subject, and this warrants further investigation.

## Highlighted issues from this three year study for further reflection

1. Those leaving the profession express very strong condemnation of the school system and of their experience of it. What (if anything) can be learned from their feedback? [Leaving the profession]
2. EC induction is generally appreciated by new entrants to the profession, but they indicate that it lacks personalisation and subject-focus<sup>2</sup>. Might a stronger emphasis on these two elements be appropriate, especially for RE teachers, and if so, how might that be integrated into the present government programme? [EC induction]
3. Feedback from both the 2022 and 2023 surveys confirms that initial teacher education (ITE) is generally appreciated as a preparation for entering the profession. However, what more can we learn from the feedback provided by these participants? [ITE]
4. The initial survey in 2021 indicated that RE teaching attracts a wide range of people of different types and backgrounds (see <https://bgro.repository.guildhe.ac.uk/id/eprint/881/>). What can we learn from this data to attract the right kind of teachers for the future? [Marketing]

<sup>2</sup> Although not intended as a subject-specific provision, one of the four responsibilities of the induction mentor is “to provide, or broker, effective support, including phase or subject specific mentoring and coaching” (p. 47; 5.7) [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1151553/Statutory\\_Induction\\_for\\_early\\_career\\_teachers\\_england.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1151553/Statutory_Induction_for_early_career_teachers_england.pdf)

## Completion rate

72 teachers were invited to participate in this survey. These were trainees who had indicated that they were willing to participate in a follow-up survey when completing the original Covid-cohort online survey, 2021.

31 (43%) of the cohort responded, and these provided a good representation of the cohort in terms of course provider, age, gender, religion, ethnicity, past school experience, previous degree subject, and previous employment and life experience.

## Securing a teaching post

The first follow-up survey in 2022 indicated that 87% had successfully secured a teaching post by the end of their ITE course. This compared very favourably with an overall cross-subject 73% of trainees from the cohort who by the end of their course had secured a teaching post in a state-funded school<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, an additional 8% of those responding to the 2022 survey identified that they were working in other capacities in schools (e.g. as teaching assistants, agency work, etc.).

This final survey confirms that 87% of those responding were still in secure teaching posts two years after completion of their training, although 11 (=41%) of these had moved on to a new school from the one in which they had begun their teaching, and a further 5 (16%) had plans to change their present school at the end of July 2023.

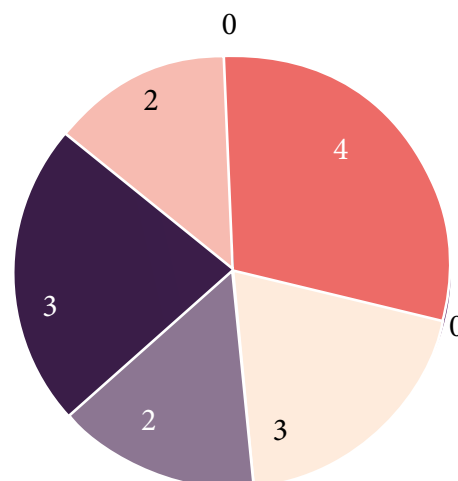
## Leaving the profession

The relatively small number of participants, especially of those leaving teaching, make it impossible to discern any specific characteristics [age, gender, religion, FIT-choice scale factors (see 2021 study), etc.] either of those who leave the profession, or of those who are most enamoured with it.

However, in addition to the below insights from the survey, I am aware of anecdotal cases where early career teachers have been enticed out into alternative careers by offers that seemed more attractive at the time. In particular I cite one of my own students -an excellent practitioner, and from this very cohort- who, during her first year of teaching was contacted by her old firm and lured back into the legal profession by an incentive package (better salary, hours and working conditions) which was “just too good to turn down”. In explaining this to me she seemed both disappointed and apologetic about her decision, but explained that, for her children’s sake, she felt that she had no choice.

The following lists reasons selected by survey participants for choosing not to pursue a career in teaching:

You feel that the pay is inadequate for the amount of work (75%)
Your ITE experience put you off teaching (50%)
The job seemed all-consuming; you wanted more time for yourself & others (75%)
You were put off by red tape and government accountability
You just feel that it’s not the right job for you
The curriculum felt too constrained and controlled (50%)
Other (100%)



Multi answer: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question’s respondents chose that option).

<sup>3</sup> <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/initial-teacher-training-performance-profiles/2020-21>

Further comments in response to a question, “If you intentionally chose not to secure a teaching job, please explain why” are provided below:

I found the environment in teaching was incredibly toxic, particularly for individuals from minority backgrounds. I was treated very poorly by both my PGCE provider and training schools, giving me the impression that teaching is not a profession that welcomes certain individuals. Additionally, the amount of work that went into teaching for the very small pay comparative to workload felt honestly like a scam. How is it reasonable that a new teacher makes around 25k a year when they work from 7am until 7pm daily with no pay incentive for that overtime? Further to this there is no respect from the children and the other teachers were frankly nasty. I experienced homophobia and anti-Hindu sentiment first hand in my training year. Overarching I was disgusted by the profession.

The scrutiny and workload was not at all matched by any understanding or allowance for stress-related illness.

I have had bad experiences with agencies whereby I was employed then lost the job due to sick days I have had. This was at XXXXX Academy and so they hired someone else when I was very ill and had to be hospitalised. The egoistical leaders at the top who belittle ECT teachers and not getting the right support from mentor and SLT which made my teaching experience hard to deal with as no adequate support was offered. I had to leave the profession for my own mental health. I am now looking for a HLTA role within school.

I started the course during Covid in September 2020, I waited 6 months for a placement then finally in March I was offered a placement that took 2 hours each way to get to on public transport. This was unreasonable during covid, I wasn't offered another placement and left the course without QTS because of this. This has seriously put me off teaching.



Two further comments which were provided at the end of this survey are added in full (below). These were given in response to the question, Do you have any further comments or feedback about this survey or the content it explores?

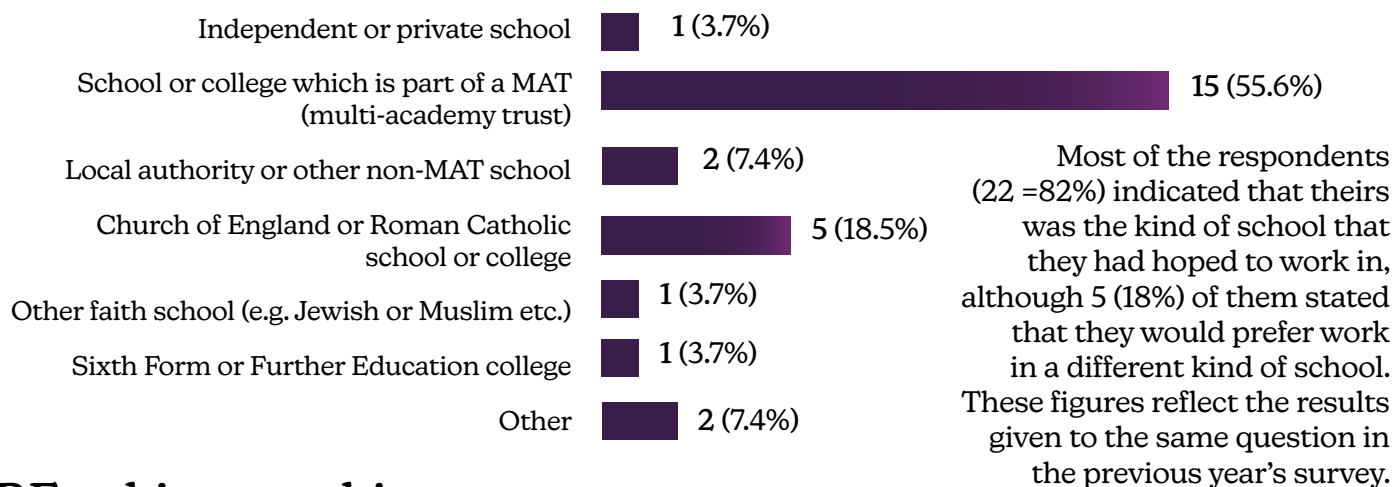
In regard to the study, if there is an interest in why teachers leave so soon after qualifying it is this: where is the incentive to be a teacher? We can sit around and say that it is the opportunity to shape the minds of the next generation but that is not what I saw in my experience. Teachers are forced into tight and limited parameters for success because a school lives and dies by its exam results. This kills the ability to inspire independent thought and interest in the classroom and more and more education is not about thinking and is about regurgitating information to fit an exam spec. Because of this teachers don't get to do what many of them aspire to do which is shape and guide young people, because they merely coach them to write a perfect prescribed exam answer. On top of this, there isn't the incentive of plenty of time off because teachers are expected to work whenever they are off meaning they rarely have actual time for themselves to decompress from the job. There is no such thing as a work-life balance. It was hard enough for me to manage a relationship and teaching, so I have no idea how people teach while having children, elderly dependents etc. The worst part of it all is that they give up their lives and it isn't even for a fair salary. I truly admire people who can stick it out in teaching because for me it was so depressing to think that I would be working that hard, sometimes for 12 hours a day, and not even see myself appropriately financially compensated for my work. It also seems like the behavioural standards for children are so poor now, despite only being 10 years out of high school myself, the children I taught felt so different behaviourally to what my school days were like. There were no standards or expectations, and frankly not enough hardline discipline. All of this compounds to make teaching VERY draining, depressing, and for many people a total soul destroying experience. Where is the incentive when teachers are expected to sacrifice so much and get next to nothing in return? There is none.

I am in my fifties and after being made redundant started training when I was fifty. My university based course was the worst course I have ever been on. I was very enthusiastic at the beginning of the course, but on reflection I think teaching and the course, at least in my area was not open to what mature people can offer. I've left the course with the impression that there may be limited offers of work if you are an older person coming into the profession and hoping for a career change.

## Type of employing school

The majority of the cohort was employed in state-sponsored institutions, with most of these having jobs in schools affiliated to a multi-academy trust (MAT):

### What kind of school is it? (tick as many as appropriate)

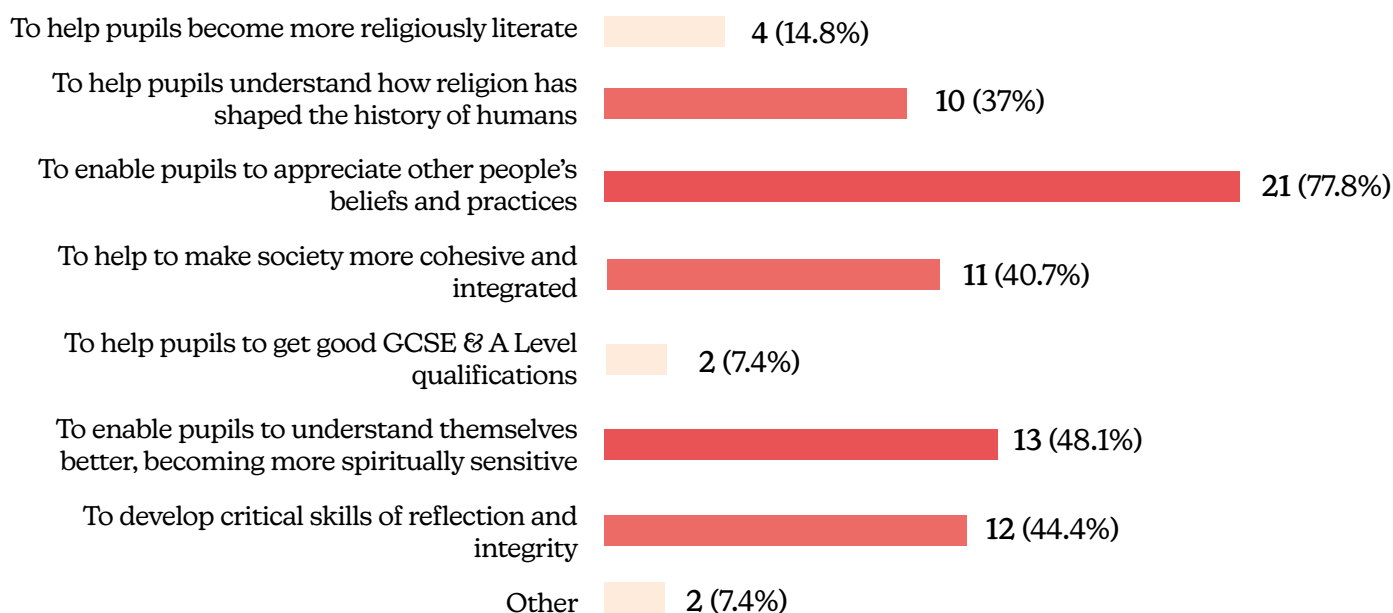


## RE subject teaching

Whereas 6 teachers (16%) had indicated in the 2022 survey that they did not feel that the kind of RE taught in their school was suited to them, this had now fallen to just 2 teachers (7%) in the 2023 survey, with the majority (85%) stating that they were happy with the kind of RE being taught. This decrease might be as a result of some of the job changes made (see Securing a teaching post section above).

## Aims for RE teaching

Two questions were added to this final survey concerning respondents' aims for Religious Education, and whether these had changed during their early career induction period. The results are provided below:



Multi answer: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question's respondents chose that option).

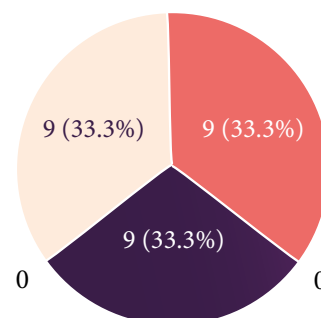
If you selected other, please specify: Showing all 2 responses	
To help pupils begin to answer the ultimate questions	1062554-1062536-111626185
Not teaching RE	1062554-1062536-112837825

This range and variety of aims for the subject is worthy of further study to ascertain from where such a mix of intentions for the subject is acquired, and even more significantly, what has been the cause of a change in perspective by so many of the respondents, as seen in their responses to the following question:

**Has your view of what RE is for, or your idea of what you hope to achieve in RE, changed over the past two years?**

Unfortunately, no further comments were added, but, having a particular interest in the aims and purposes of RE, I am intrigued to know what might have brought about such changes in the cohort.

Yes
No
Not Sure
Further comments
Other



## Early career teacher (ECT) support

As in the previous survey, most of the respondents (22=82%) feel adequately supported as early career teachers, although this drops to 74% when asked how satisfied they are with the training and support specifically provided by their institution, and their responses to the below questions indicate that although generally they are adequately provided for, training support is often not specifically personalised (48%), and even less is RE-related (26%).

	YES	NO
Do you receive a 5% timetable reduction as a 2nd year ECT?	24 (92%)	2 (8%)
Has an ECT mentor been allocated to you?	22 (85%)	4 (15%)
Is ECT training support provided by your institution?	22 (82%)	5 (18%)
Is the training support tailored to your individual needs?	14 (52%)	13 (48%)
Is any of the training specifically RE-related?	7 (26%)	20 (74%)
Have you received regular reviews to monitor & support?	20 (74%)	2 (7%)
Overall, are you satisfied with the induction & training support provided?	20 (74%)	7 (26%)

Respondents had the following further comments to make about their employing institutions as EC training providers:

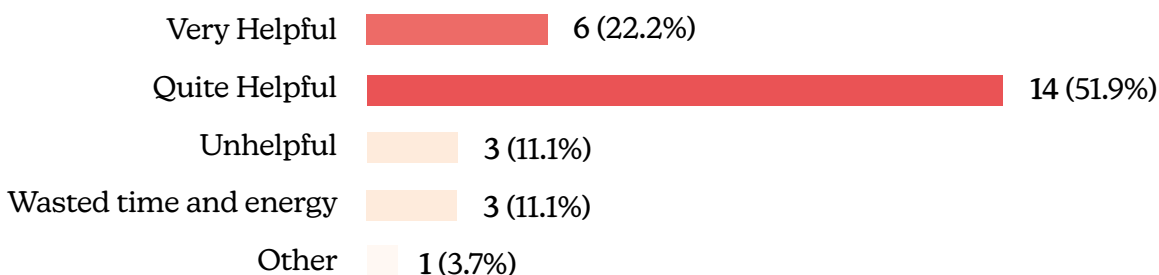
The training from the provider was mixed with primary and secondary, meaning that the actual content that was useful to me in sessions was limited. There was no explicit mention of RE whatsoever in my second year. However in first year it was solely secondary training and sometimes was RE specific.	I had to seek out support myself. My mentor wasn't helpful in terms of encouragement and feedback on lessons. He didn't observe me until June for various reasons.
I had to change a mentor during the process because the relationship was not suitable.	Observation every half term. Progress review twice a year.
Looking into ECT as just joined FE college in April.	It only happened when some staff were available.

## Ongoing academic study

Although only one of the respondents was continuing with their academic studies towards an MA or MEd degree in the 2022 survey, this had increased to 3 (12%) in the present study, with a further six (total 9 =35%) saying that they intend to complete an M-level award within the next five years. However, this was a noticeable drop from the 53% who had expressed an intention to complete an M-level award in 2022.

Asked to reflect back on the helpfulness of the academic study element of their initial teacher education yielded the following:

Two years on, how helpful for teaching was the academic study part of your ITE/PGCE year?



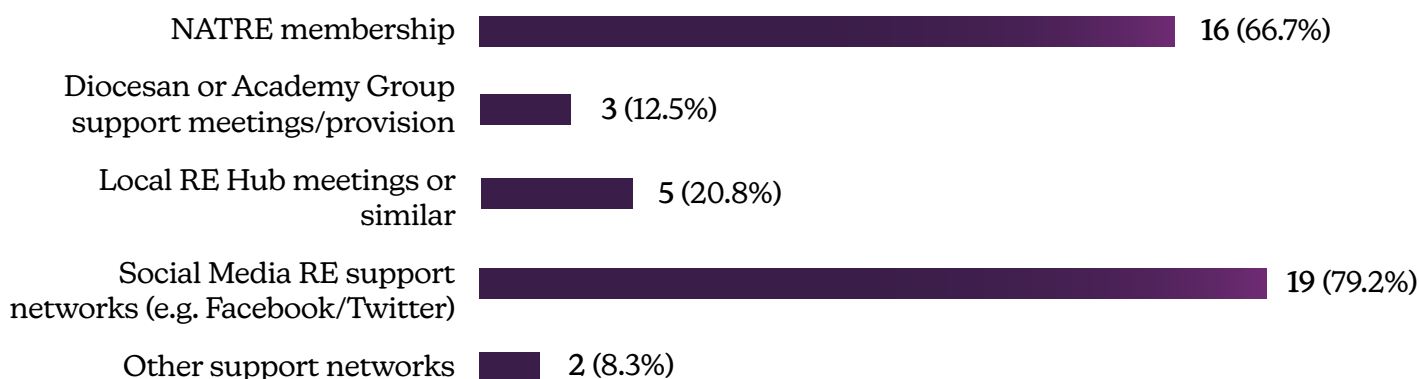
Multi answer: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question's respondents chose that option).

The above indicates a largely positive attitude towards the academic component of their initial teacher education.

## RE Support Networks

As in the 2022 survey, once again NATRE and Social Media networks prove to be the most supportive networks for early career RE teachers:

Which of the following RE Support Networks do you use?



Multi answer: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question's respondents chose that option).

Other supportive material identified by respondents included TES (Times Educational Supplement), REOnline, Culham St Gabriel, Philosophy Cat, TrueTube, Joe Kinnard's Blog, and past AQA GCSE RE papers.

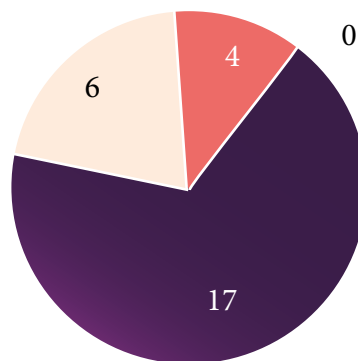
## Overall assessment of teaching so far

When invited to indicate if they had any regrets about choosing to become an RE teacher some chose not to respond, but 12 of the sample (39%) gave a definitive 'no', and a further 4 (13%) made reference to aspects of their school or the job that was challenging but without expressing regrets concerning the job itself.

As in the 2022 survey, most of the cohort said that they were still enjoying teaching and found the job to be what they had hoped:

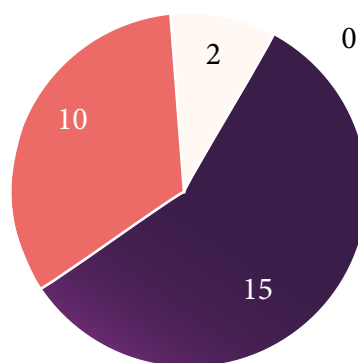
So far, how much are you enjoying teaching?

Hard work, but it's worth it. (63%)
I'm loving it! (14.8%)
Not sure/ mixed feelings (22.2%)
I'm not enjoying it at all (0%)



Is the job proving to be what you had hoped?

Yes (55.6%)
Not sure (37%)
No
Other (7.4%)



Given the opportunity to describe their teaching experience so far the following responses were provided:

Mixed but mostly enjoyable.	Very busy.	Varied depending on support.
Enriching, being in a multi-cultural/diverse school. Intense with having 24 classes to teach.		
Challenging, exciting, rewarding.	Stimulating, Demanding, Exhausting.	
Intense. Difficult. Rewarding.	Great and stressful.	Challenging, exciting, inspiring.
Fun, challenging, helpful.	Knowledge rich, worldviews, academically rigorous.	
Challenging fulfilling stressful.	Underrated, decent, meh.	Wonderful enlightenment.
Lots of classes, lots of freedom (perhaps too much).		Inspiring
Helpful, exciting, challenging.	A year of development.	It's going well.
Interesting, Challenging, Engaging.	Good, but behaviour can be challenging.	
Difficult but very rewarding.	Hard, Rewarding, New.	Loved every minute.

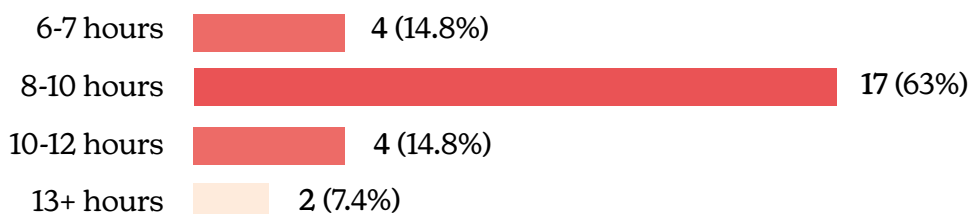
(Give 2 or 3 words or phrases to describe your overall experience of teaching RE so far)

## Salary & work-life balance

Attitudes concerning contentment with salary were similar to those expressed in the 2022 survey (down slightly from 47% in 2022, to 41% in 2023) as were those for work-life balance (34% identified this as OK in 2022 compared with 33% in 2023).

The majority of respondents (85%) indicated that they devoted 8+ hours to schoolwork each day:

Typically how many hours do you devote to school work each day (not including travel)?



Further comments on salary, working conditions, or work-life balance:

No such thing as work life balance.	Too much admin.	I am currently unsatisfied with the governments lack of willingness to change or increase teacher wages as I am genuinely struggling to pay my bills.
Work-life balance is non-existent and is why I am leaving. I've only stayed for the last year because the salary is one of the best wages that I would find in London. I am always depleted at the end of a half term and often experience exhaustion.		
Salary does not reflect hours put in, probably one of the only professions where overtime is not rewarded but it is impossible to get everything done in your contracted hours.		One person department from the start, recently received TLR as been doing HOD job since beginning.
Either pay needs to increase to reflect the actual working hours teachers do, or the workload needs to be significantly reduced.		Too many hours. Long travel.

## The future

Asked what were their hopes for the next five years, most of the cohort (29= 94%) still saw themselves in teaching, and the majority (19=61%) aspired to a management role as Head of Department or in pastoral or special needs work. Likewise, their ten-year career hopes were mostly school related, with just a few indicating changes such as a possible move to priesthood, raising family or other improved work-life balanced possibilities.

Complete list of comments from all participants in response to the question, Where would you like your career to be in 5 years' time?

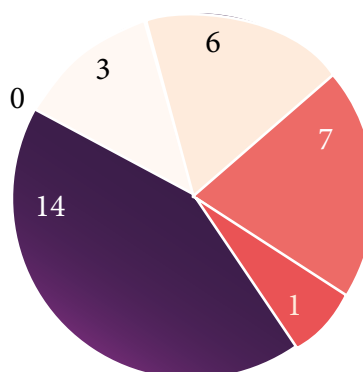
Still teaching but more content with the job and workload.	Content in a teaching job I find fulfilling and rewarding.	Head of department or head of year	Progress in some way	Subject lead.
In a more pastoral role.	Managing	Some kind of management role	Head of Department	abroad HoD
I handed in my resignation to study fulltime for a Masters in Sociology. I don't intend on returning to teaching soon and will hopefully have a job as an academic or something outside of the classroom. I've entered ITT at 23 so I'd like to use my late-20s to do something that doesn't involve being stressed out, overworked and telling off children all day.				MPS6 HoD Abroad
Head of Department	I would like to be working with SENco more and safeguarding.		Pastoral position	
Same, with higher salary	Head of Department	Hopefully actually teaching.	Head of Department	
In 5 years time I hope to be established in my own business as an EDI consultant and regularly work with businesses to make their places of work inclusive to everyone. In regard to pay I already earn more than the average HOD in a school but would like to be on at least 15k more a year than I am on now.				
Potentially re-entering teaching	Still teaching RE	Head of department	Assistant head	Re teacher
Possibly head of a keystone	Continue as HOD or progress further maybe?		head of department/ SLT	

# Reflections on ITE and guidance to future RE trainees

In retrospect, most respondents rated their initial teacher education positively (see below), with as-expected negative responses from those leaving the profession:

After two years of teaching (or other activity), and in retrospect, how would you rate your initial teacher education (ITT) training course?

An excellent preparation for teaching (19.4%)
It didn't help very much in preparing for the actual job of teaching (9.7%)
It included lots of useful preparation for teaching (45.2%)
Not sure/mixed feelings (22.6%)
A waste of time; no help at all (3.2%)
Other



A complete outline of Further Comments is provided below:

<p>The course was naturally hindered by the pandemic which I of course understand is not anybody's fault, however the instruction we received was poor regardless. We were not able to ask open questions or provide feedback without course providers snapping at individuals raising concerns and despite being in a course where we had to behave more mature than our years due to our interactions day to day with children, the course facilitators often infantilised us. I also felt that the subject specific instruction was very weak, to the point that I as an individual from one of the largest religions in the world (Hinduism) had to volunteer to provide instruction on the faith as our provider had failed to secure any input on it and would not have done so otherwise. The ultimate issue though was that there was a disconnect between the realities of teacher training and the institution. Many of us, myself included, experienced discrimination and bullying but could not communicate these issues to the university, even when I asked to remain at a placement school that had asked me to stay and had a healthy relationship with me, the university denied this request and forced me to return to a school where I had been bullied and discriminated against. Additionally, we were provided no guidance in managing relationships with mentors.</p>	<p>A lot of it felt more pastoral than academic; a lot of the time it was people reflecting on incidents that they'd experienced. Similarly, I wish that we could've actually been taught *how* to teach writing in RE - it was never touched upon and we're supposed to be a writing subject. It was such a major disappointment that I had to figure it all out with trial and error (because I had no time to sit down and figure it out for myself). This was helpful but sometimes I think I would've appreciated some academic insights.</p>
	<p>I completed ITE during covid lockdown and that they may have something to do with it as did not get the full teacher experience. It is important for future trainees that mentors in school placements give a real picture and responsibilities of the responsibilities and duties of a full time teacher rather than the snippets.</p>
	<p>The initial teacher training course offers you a very small snap shot of what it is like teaching full time. It is more about meeting demands and checking boxes initially and then once you are teaching, you are able to develop yourself more.</p>
<p>I do not feel enough emphasis was placed, and therefore tuition time spent, on the importance of classroom rules and routines. This became apparent when beginning my first full-time teaching job.</p>	<p>Not enough subject related pedagogy and knowledge.</p>
	<p>I would've liked to have been better prepared for the hate and disrespect the subject can receive and how to deal with that.</p>
<p>School's own training is good but official ECT training from XXX was poor.</p>	<p>Would recommend the course.</p>
	<p>My training year was quite different due to it being during Covid times.</p>
<p>My initial training was good, however my experience with the ECT system has disillusioned me toward the profession.</p>	<p>Some lecturers were excellent and theoretically prepared me for teaching, my course leader was not so good.</p>

Responses to the question, What advice would you give to someone beginning their initial teacher education?:

Aside from subject knowledge and pedagogical theories and practice, spending time establishing routines is the first essential for classroom practice. Subscribe to Peps McCrea for bitesize advice and strategies for developing and improving classroom practice.

Set your own boundaries early and do not allow yourself to be made to feel inadequate. You may meet challenging colleagues, stick to your own goals and listen to the words of your trusted mentors rather than those who love to criticize.

Be 100% sure it's what you want to do, as it's extremely demanding and exhausting, and therefore won't be worth the effort if you don't genuinely want to be a teacher.

The NQT year is much more full on than PGCE (depending on your route).

Keep going! It is intense at the start but it does get easier and the work load does decrease.

Persevere!

Be sure this is what you want.

Hang on in there as the job is heavily front-loaded

Be prepared for long days and nights sometimes. But don't forget to take those 5 minutes at the start of the day to feel fully prepared!

Don't do it unless you truly love children and have nothing else in your life that can get in the way of your training. Be prepared for this to be the worst year of your life and be prepared to fend for yourself. Teaching is a total rip off, you will be worked like a dog for an insultingly low pay only to be treated like sh\*t by your superiors, students and their parents. Ask yourself if it is really truly what you want, and if there is ANY doubt then save yourself the stress of it. Teacher training was the worst mistake I have ever made and the only thing that makes the year worth it is that I made some great friends and it gave me structure in the midst of the pandemic.

Be dedicated.

Organise yourself, get tips from mentors, follow your heart.

Work experience is key.

Allow yourself to make mistakes.

The ITT course is designed to sift out 'weak links', it will be extremely demanding and will seem completely unreasonable - that's the point. Do as little as you can feasibly get away with, because that will still be exhausting. Cut as many corners as you can find so you can have SOME time to yourself and pray that you have a mentor who realises what's important (i.e. being an effective teacher not completing endless paperwork).

Do not feel as though you have to fit into another teachers mould, be sure to develop your own techniques that work for you and have fun while you are doing it.

Don't worry about your knowledge. It will come with time.

Plan prepare be ready.

If the course is university based, check where the university's partnership schools are located because they may have none in your area and your travelling distance may be long. Download your handbook, and make sure they are delivering what they say for your course fees. Complain in the first instance, through the proper channels if necessary.



# Appendix 1:

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS from the 2021 Report on the Covid-cohort RE ITE trainees.

There are arguably no great surprises in the results of this survey. Overall, it reflects a group of RE teachers who are varied, world-and-work experienced, and with a wide range of personal interests.

- 662 trainees were enrolled for RE ITT in 2020, 130% of the government target (510). This was the first time that the government target had been met for many years. 152 of the cohort (23%) completed this survey.
- The majority of these RE teachers were trained in universities (54%), or through the school direct route (29%).
- More than half (52%) of the cohort were over 25 years of age, the majority (82%) bringing previous work experience, and many (over 40%) were making a career switch.
- The majority were female (78%), which approximately reflects government figures of 27% male/ 73% female for RE trainees in this cohort.
- The group represent a range of faith traditions, although the largest groups were Christian (34%), and Atheist/Agnostic (33%). 7% describe themselves as Undecided/Don't know. In total, 29% describe themselves as strongly committed to a religious faith perspective.
- 16% of the cohort identify as Black, Afro-Caribbean, Asian or Mixed race, and an additional 9% as Irish or European.
- Most of the group were educated in state schools, although 9% had experienced private education. Some had attended schools overseas, and one had been home-schooled.
- 36% of the group have other family members who are teaching, with 35 (65%) of these being immediate family (parents, partners or siblings).
- 46% of the cohort had a first degree which included Theology/ Religious Studies, and a further 15% have a first degree in Philosophy. The other 40% of the group have degrees in a wide range of subjects, including business, journalism, law, health and social care, etc.
- Nearly 43% of the group completed a subject knowledge enhancement course prior to commencement of their ITE training, and the majority (85%) found this helpful.
- Both personal and social utility factors (such as enjoying work with young people and wanting to make a difference to people's lives) attracted this group into teaching, whereas career value factors (e.g. holidays, job flexibility, fit with family responsibilities, etc.) did not.
- Likewise, fascination with the subject matter, and RE's scope for making a difference to young people's lives, was what specifically attracted them to teach RE, rather than financial incentives (e.g. the government bursary) or social influences (such as doing well in RE at school, or other people suggesting that they might become an RE teacher).
- A range of 'landmarks' contributed to peoples' choice to become a RE teacher, particularly love of philosophical debate (75%), having relevant qualifications (71%), and encouragement from others (51%).
- Respondents have several hopes and intentions from teaching RE, particularly, breaking down prejudice and misunderstanding (71%), helping pupils to discover their own perspectives (51%), and enthusing students in the study of religion and worldviews (43%).
- Trainees appreciated various aspects of their ITE experience, and offer a range of suggestions for improving the initial training year.
- Only 8% of trainees would travel to anywhere in the UK or abroad for a teaching job, and 75% would only travel up to 25 miles for a teaching job.

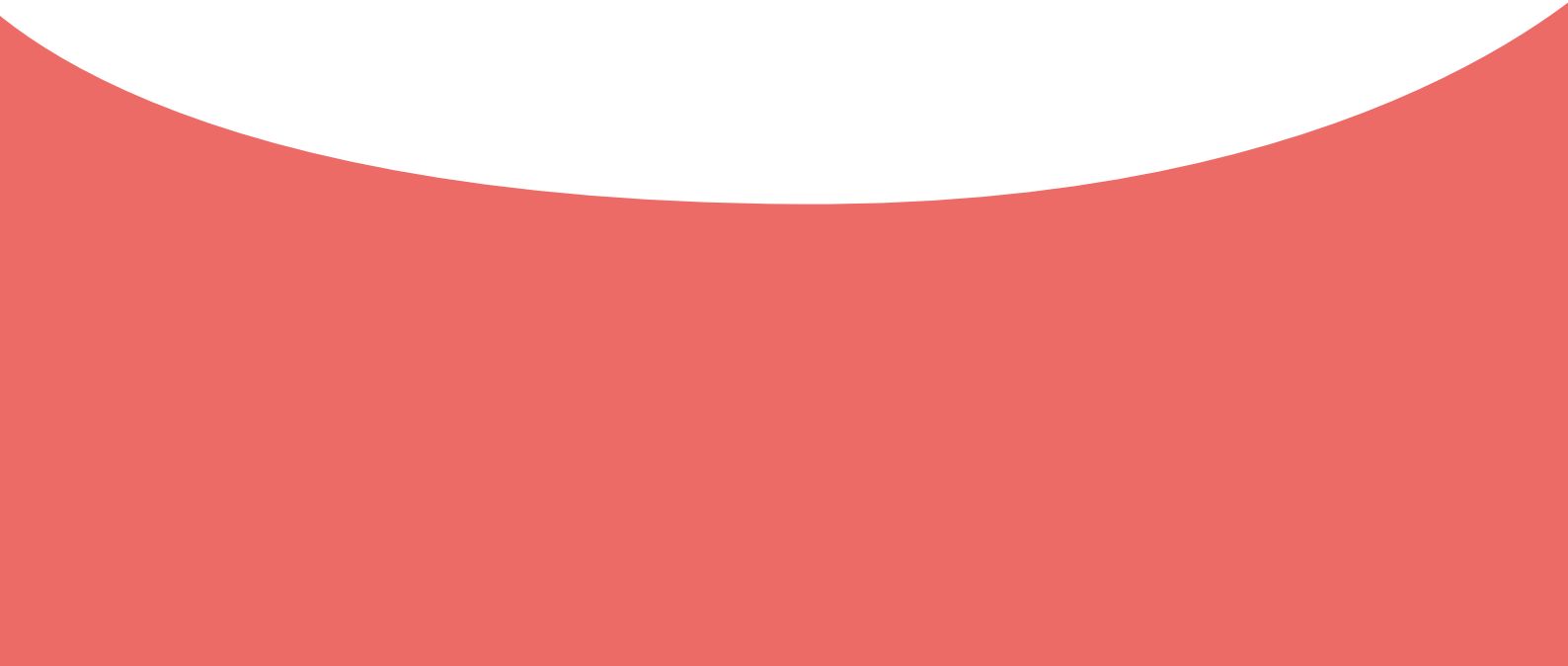
## Appendix 2:

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS from the 2021 survey of trainees completing their first year of teaching

1. A majority (39=87%) of the 45 students who had trained as RE teachers in 2020-21 had secured a teaching post by the end of their ITE course.
2. Of the six who did not, four secured alternative non-teaching jobs in schools (including cover supervisor, supply cover, teaching assistant and SEN-support work), and two have moved on to alternative employment.
3. 30 of the 39 who secured teaching posts (79%) were in positions designated as Religious Education posts, and a further four were teaching a significant element of RE.
4. The majority (31=80%) were pleased with the kind of school that they were working in, and most of them (29=76%) were happy with the kind of RE being taught.
5. The majority of trainees (28=62%) had secured a post after just 1-3 applications, and some did not even need to apply, being offered posts in their training schools.
6. Most of those with teaching jobs (31=80%) were teaching a majority of RE lessons (80% or more of timetable), often supplemented by some teaching of History, Geography, Citizenship or PSHE (Personal, Social, Health & Economics).
7. The majority (32=87%) felt adequately supported as early career teachers (ECTs), having received timetable reduction, provision of a named mentor, and appropriate ECT training.
8. However, only 11 (30%) received any specific training input for Religious Education.
9. Only 1 respondent was presently continuing a Masters-level course begun during their ITE year, although a further 20 (53%) intended to do so.
10. Most of the group (34=89%) considered that the academic part of their ITE course was helpful for teaching. A similar percentage rate their overall ITE experience as good preparation for teaching.
11. Most of the group make regular use of RE support networks, particularly NATRE membership (53%) and social media sites (84%).
12. Most of the respondents (27=71%) were enjoying teaching, but 29% were not sure or had mixed feelings. None said that they were not enjoying teaching at all.
13. 58% of the group said that teaching was proving to be what they had hoped for, but 34% were not so sure or experienced elements that were unanticipated, and a further 3 (=8%) said that the job was not as expected.
14. Half of the group were content with their salary, and half were not. Most had accepted the salary offered, but 2 (5%) had negotiated a salary with the school.
15. A third of the group (34%) feel OK about their work-life balance, but 18 (=47%) would like more 'me' time. 18% were feeling overwhelmed by the demands of the job.
16. Most of the group (33=89%) spend 8-12 hours on schoolwork each day (not including travel); two respondents spend 13+ hours per day on work, and another two, just 6-7 hours.
17. Most of the group (60%) hope to be in a departmental or other leadership position in five years' time, although 8 (=20%) are content to remain as a classroom teacher.

# Notes

A series of horizontal dashed lines for writing notes.





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