

## Research Space

Journal article

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**Radical Reform in RE – a response to Mark Chater.**

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## **Abstract**

This article is a response to Mark Chater's argument that sectional interests are hampering reform in Religious Education in England and that radical structural reform is needed to correct this. The valid insights of Chater's article are identified, but a significant correction is made by arguing that the reform of mindset, not structures, is what is actually required. The mindset issues identified are, first, a sense of entitlement to control that the structures have nurtured in religious communities and, secondly, a sense of hostility to religious communities that has in turn resulted amongst RE professionals. The article concludes with a reflection on the characteristics of an alternative mindset.

## **Key Words**

Mark Chater, Religious Education, reform, sectional interests, religious communities and RE

## **Introduction**

In his provocative and engaging article, Mark Chater (2022) offers a detailed critique of the structures and interest groups that he believes are barriers to reform in Religious Education in state-funded schools in England and Wales. The reforms he is particularly concerned about are those recommended by the independent Commission on Religious Education in England (CoRE, 2018), set up by the Religious Education Council of England and Wales. Chater deploys two theoretical insights in making his critique, namely the politics of epistemology and the economics of producer capital. In a nutshell, his argument is that the current structures give certain religious and professional groups the power to block reforms that threaten their interests, which he describes as 'the self-interested behaviour of the producer class' (14). His article is a manifesto for change.

Chater provides a brief note of his own involvement in Religious Education (RE) and a declaration of interests. This is helpful in allowing the reader to judge the author's perspective (although he should perhaps have said more about his role as Director of a major trust with Church of England foundations that funded many initiatives in RE). I will follow suit. I have been professionally involved in RE since 1974 as a teacher, adviser, university lecturer, curriculum developer and academic working with both community and religious character schools<sup>1</sup>. For the last ten years I have been a Professor of Christian Education. Most relevant for this article, I have been involved with the RE Council since 1985, served for 14 years on its Board and was Chair from 2015 to 2021. Whilst I was Chair, the REC set up the Commission and, as a member of the REC Secretariat to CoRE, I attended all but one of its meetings. Along with Rudolf Elliott Lockhart, the then CEO of the REC, I was also involved in supporting Amira Tharani in her role as the independent consultant who authored the report under the direction of the commissioners. Following CoRE's publication, I co-led the project established by the REC to develop understanding of the significance and implications of the Commission (Benoit, Hutchings and Shillitoe, 2020 and Tharani 2020). I have also made my own contribution to the ongoing debate in my capacity as a university

academic (Cooling 2020, 2021 and Cooling, Bowie and Panjwani, 2020). Like Chater, I am committed to the reforms proposed by CoRE.

Chater is frustrated by the slowness of change following the publication of CoRE (5), as indeed am I. At present, it is charitable trusts, including the overseas Templeton World Charity Foundation, that are funding progress in the development of RE in England, rather than the British government who have so far turned a deaf ear to the call for a funded national plan for RE. Chater's article arises from his frustration and looks for scapegoats to blame in the form of vested interests (1).

In the rest of this article, I will undertake two tasks. The first will be to unpack the essence of Chater's arguments. The second will be to develop a new angle by challenging a key element of his position on the influence of faith and belief groups<sup>ii</sup>.

### **The Essence of Chater's Thesis**

Chater's analysis of the structures and interests influencing the development of RE is both innovative and significant. One of the key insights of the worldview paradigm proposed by CoRE as the way forward for RE is that all humans, as individuals and as members of communities and institutions, are embedded in ways of understanding the world which we can call their worldview<sup>iii</sup>. This worldview shapes people's understanding of life, their desires and, inevitably, what they believe to be in their own best interests. One thing that a shift to a worldview approach certainly does is to alert to the inevitability that peoples' worldview loyalties will shape their aspirations for RE.

Chater's particular concern appears to be with institutional interests. His proposal that these interests are reflected in the pursuit of financial benefit and/or in enhancing the cultural value and influence of their own community seems correct (2022,13). Seeking to expose the impact of this on RE policy is therefore an important task. The question is whether Chater has focused on the correct issue in his proposal that it is the structures of the RE community that are the root of the problem. Consideration of two of the structures that Chater discusses will assist in evaluating his proposal.

The first is the Standing Advisory Council on RE (SACRE). Every local authority in England and Wales is legally required to establish one. Each SACRE is responsible for the oversight of RE in the community schools maintained by their local authority. SACREs also have an important function to play in setting up the Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) every five years to review the RE syllabus for their local authority. Unlike other subjects, there is no national syllabus for RE. Community schools are legally required to teach the Agreed Syllabus of their local authority<sup>iv</sup>. This structure was established in the 1944 Education Act and was then deemed to be a mechanism for resolving disputes between the Christian denominations over the nature and content of the RE that should be taught. The theory was that this would be agreed by the denominational representatives of the Christian churches and that the required consensus would be achieved by making teaching of distinctive denominational features illegal. Although most religious character schools and academies are not covered by these arrangements and are free to teach RE according to their foundation character, many in fact do use or are influenced by their local authority agreed

syllabus. The SACRE/ASC structure and the aspiration for teaching the religious consensus that underpins it are therefore still highly influential.

The composition of both the SACRE and ASC are the same. There are four committees with representatives respectively from the Church of England, the Local Authority, Teachers and other Christian denominations. This latter committee has developed over the years to embrace other local religious communities represented in the local authority and, in some cases, Humanists. This structure embodies the aspiration that the local religious/belief communities should be the ones who determine what of and how their religion/belief is taught. The culture this structure has nurtured over many years was well expressed by Fr Michael Nazir Ali (2021), Chair of the Christian Coalition for Education, when he wrote in a *Spectator* article that “it is crucial that we retain the involvement of local faith communities in devising RE syllabuses *according to their own needs*” (emphasis mine). This expectation of control over the RE syllabus is also captured in this quote from one Christian organisation:

Recommendation 4 of the CoRE report would remove the requirement for local authorities to convene Agreed Syllabus conference. This would not only remove the statutory safeguards that entitle religious bodies to have veto over content in the curriculum, but severely weaken the contribution of the significant religious bodies in the locality..... This endangers the opportunity for the Christian voice in Religious Education to be heard. (Reid, 2021, 27)

Probably the most significant word in this quote is *veto*.

Chater (2022, 5-6) mocks this structure suggesting it would be ridiculous for subjects like design and technology to be determined by British DIY retailers<sup>v</sup> (presumably their local branch in each case) or for the English curriculum to be determined by campaigning interest groups such as the Plain English Campaign. His analysis raises important questions about the continuing appropriateness of this structure enacted nearly 80 years ago, particularly its apparent embodying of the interests of faith and belief groups as the main factor to be considered in designing an RE syllabus. I agree with Chater that this structure reifies sectional interests.

The second structure Chater discusses is that of the REC. As Chater points out, most members are faith and belief organisations whose interest in RE relates to the teaching of their tradition. Also, a proportion of the REC income does indeed come from religiously linked, grant-awarding bodies that have their own objectives. Significant amongst those are members of the Association of Church College trusts, including the one that Chater himself directed for many years. He is therefore correct to highlight consideration of the impact of what he calls “producer interests” on the REC. As with SACREs/ASCs, his particular concern is with the producer interests of faith and belief communities blocking reform. He cites examples of this influence following the publication of the CoRE report when member organisations of the REC successfully blocked government acceptance of its recommendations (14).

However, the minority members of the REC, namely the professional associations including those representing academics and advisers, do not escape his scrutiny. Chater also portrays

their involvement as problematic because he sees another conflict of interests, in their case in keeping curricular complex so that teachers are reliant on purchasing their professional expertise (12). He appears ambivalent about the RE teachers' organisation (NATRE), although he does comment on its connections to a Christian charity and maybe thereby hint that it has a possible conflict of interests (10).

All in all, he portrays the REC as an inefficient mechanism for securing reform in RE because it is disabled by the competing sectional interests of its member organisations and because it is financially dependent on a small number of grant-making trusts.

His solution to the structural problems he identifies is twofold:

1. He supports CoRE's recommendation that ASC's should be abolished and the plethora of statutory local Agreed Syllabuses should be replaced by a National Statement of Entitlement.
2. He argues for establishing a single Religion & Worldviews Association, although he gives no indication as to how this might be achieved (11).

As someone who has been involved in the politics of RE for much of my career, I agree with his identification of sectional interests as a key barrier to reform and also support the CoRE recommendation concerning the abolition of the legal requirement that every local authority must develop an Agreed Syllabus. However, I have two reservations about his analysis. First, I believe he overpaints the influence of faith and belief communities within both ASCs and the REC. In the former it is the influence of the professional advisers and consultants that largely prevails, and, in the latter, it is the Board of Directors that constitutionally holds the decision-making authority. Having said that, I agree that the interests of religious and belief groups have had significant political impact on national policy. Secondly, his suggestion of replacing the myriad organisations that constitute the REC membership with one reimagined Association feels like believing that there is a magic RE wand that can be waved to engineer change. Oh, that politics were that easy! No one has the authority to do that. It would be almost as hard as the US Federal Government trying to abolish the 50 States.

In contrast to Chater, my main reason for believing that reform is necessary is because these structures nurture a mindset in faith and belief communities and in RE professionals that is damaging to pupils' education in religion and worldviews. It creates a tug-of-war mentality between these two constituencies as they struggle for control of the RE curriculum. It is this mindset that should be a key concern and not just structural reform.

To summarise, at the heart then of Chater's lengthy discussions of the structures of the RE world is an important and legitimate concern about sectional interests and their negative impact on the progress of reform. He therefore asks: "Who controls the flow of subject knowledge for teachers?" (5). His conclusion is that the problem is that "the REC's leadership has been pulling against a drag anchor of sectional interests" (11). Chater's alternative is:

Piloting and evaluating some new structural models to replace the politics of epistemology and the economics of producer capture with an economics of a socialised market, in ways that protect the integrity and objectivity of the pilot from the influence of the current producers....in ways that place professional teachers at the centre, belief groups at the periphery, and commercial interests kept transparent and on a level playing field, all operating within a tight national definition of the subject – a socialised market. (15).

In Chater's view, choices made about curriculum should be made through "an objective, strategic consideration of what might be in the best interests of schools and children" (13).

Concluding, I agree that sectional interests are an issue in RE in England. It is helpful that Chater has turned the spotlight on them. The problem is that it is unclear what his proposed solution of a "socialised market" actually looks like or how it could be created. He does not explain how producer interests are to be managed. In contrast, my argument will be that structures are not the primary problem; rather, I suggest it is the mindset that they have nurtured. I will argue that Chater's treatment of sectional interests is dangerously flawed in one important respect, namely that it appears to reflect an unacceptable prejudice against religious people. The rest of this article will focus on this issue.

### **Evaluating Chater's Core Argument**

To recap, Chater's article is a treatise on the threat that sectional interests pose to progress in RE. His solution embraces two aspirations. First, that professional, objective judgments about curriculum should be made by teachers and other RE professionals in the interests of children and schools. Second that faith and belief communities should not be as influential in these decisions as they currently are, because they have producer interests that dominate their decision-making. He advocates reform of structures as the solution.

One surely cannot object to the principle that judgements should be made about the RE curriculum in the best interests of children's education<sup>vi</sup>. The CoRE recommendation that the overall vision for the subject should be defined at a national level would match the practice in other subjects. It also makes a lot of sense that the final say about the curriculum should rest with teachers, as is the case with other subjects, since they are the trained professionals. Whether their judgement can be described as "objective" is however a moot point, given that the key insight of a worldview approach is that everyone inhabits a worldview; no-one stands nowhere. Teachers are not exempt simply because they are professionals! They too will have producer interests. An essential element in professional training for RE teachers should, therefore, be handling their own producer interests in a professional manner. Teachers who are honest about their own worldview and who recognise both the benefits and dangers that their commitment brings to professional practice can be described as objective. The danger comes when teachers think they are free of worldview commitments and that their judgements are based on rationality or professional objectivity alone. Failing to take account of one's own producer interests is not objective. Rightly, there are legislative protections for pupils from unprofessional behaviour on the part of teachers in the parental right to withdraw pupils from RE and in the teachers'

standards, which form a robust code of conduct<sup>vii</sup>. Chater does not develop what he means by “objective, strategic consideration”, but, with the caveat just made, I agree that teachers are the people who should be the final decision-makers when it comes to RE syllabuses.

Turning then to the religion and belief communities, I again agree with Chater that there is an issue to be addressed. This is that the current arrangements embed in legal structures the notions that a) RE syllabuses should reflect the aspirations of each and every one of these communities for recognition and control of how they are represented and b) that decisions about RE syllabuses should not be made without the explicit agreement of religious communities. Setting aside for a moment the laudable aspiration of local community involvement in discussions of RE syllabuses, it has to be recognised that there are several damaging consequences that arise from these two notions, including:

1. RE syllabuses and teaching being constructed to fulfil the interests of these producer communities rather than the educational interests of the pupils. The syllabus is then seen as primarily a vehicle for gaining recognition and civic status by religious communities and now humanists, who have conducted a long-running campaign for inclusion in this process.
2. Over-anxiety on the part of teachers about whether their treatment of subject matter will cause offence to religious communities, which can lead to an uninspiring learning experience for pupils as teachers “play safe”.
3. Competition between communities for space on the curriculum as they dispute their relative importance in the community and seek to secure greater recognition.
4. An overloaded curriculum with far too much content and impossible expectations of what teachers can achieve.

This leads to a situation where minority communities feel entitled to attempt to veto educational innovations on the grounds that they threaten their producer interests. In the extreme, this veto mindset can even result in protests outside schools by religious groups offended by the content of an RE lesson, who demand the sacking of RE teachers. This actually happened at Batley Grammar School in May 2021; the teachers involved were suspended whilst their lesson was investigated and were forced into hiding out of fear for their own and their families’ safety.

CoRE challenged this mindset by offering a new approach to RE to replace the world religions paradigm that has been the bedrock of RE for 70+ years (Owen, 2011 and Tharani, 2020)). This paradigm underpins the current structures in RE, which, in turn, reinforces a culture where religion and belief communities assume that RE syllabi are there to serve their producer interests. CoRE offered a new paradigm, which it called the religion and worldviews approach. This recommendation has provoked considerable discussion within the REC and has stimulated subsequent project work to clarify its implications. In a nutshell, the world religions approach is premised on study of the religions and beliefs of the world as closed systems represented by institutions, whereas the religion and worldviews approach is premised on studying the interaction of persons with religions and beliefs and the impact of this interaction on how people form their personal worldviews. As CoRE (2018, 30) summed it up “everyone has a worldview” and the purpose of RE is to help pupils

understand the implications of this fundamental insight about being human through the academic study of religions and beliefs. The significance of this change is that it shifts the focus of RE from communities' producer interests to pupils' educational interests. To secure that shift ultimately requires change to the legislation governing the development of RE syllabuses as recommended by CoRE.

### **An Important Qualification to Chater's Thesis**

Although I agree with Chater that there is a producer interest issue to be resolved, there is one significant problem with his analysis; he seriously oversteps the mark by moving beyond making appropriate challenge to religious communities to adopting an apparently hostile attitude to the religions, both in his article and in his preceding book (Chater, 2020). I judge his approach to be a descent into what John Hull famously called religionism (Hull, 2000).

For example, in his article Chater discusses the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on RE (p. 8). He is correct in his description of what happened when MP Fiona Bruce, a high-profile evangelical Christian, sacked the REC as the Secretariat of the APPG that it had been instrumental in setting up with Stephen Lloyd MP in the preceding Parliament. (I was in the room with Rudolf Elliott Lockhart, the then CEO of the REC, and the two of us were on the receiving end of the perfunctory dismissal). Chater's criticism of Bruce's "producer interest" behaviour and that of those who colluded with her is warranted and fair. However, Chater's subsequent, generalised attack on evangelical Christians per se that follows is an example of religionism with its typecasting of a whole group of people by association with the act of one person. This seems designed to fuel resentment against an entire tradition. This is evidenced in such statements as: "Bruce's main support comes from evangelical Christians, but other religionists have given her solace" (8). Criticism of the evidenced bad behaviour of individuals like Bruce is of course justified, but such unevidenced and wholesale *othering* of an entire religious group is unacceptable and unworthy of an RE specialist. For a leading academic to ignore the literature on the complex nature of evangelicalism and the different traditions and approaches that claim loyalty to that designation is unacceptable (e.g. Stackhouse, 2000; Webber, 2002; Warner, 2007). In particular, he ignores the very different approaches some evangelicals (like me) take in direct contrast to Bruce's Christendom model for exercising influence in the public sphere (e.g. Williams, 2020). Fostering religionism in the name of RE in this manner is unacceptable.

The hostility to religious groups that emanates from this article is also exemplified in unevidenced comments like "RE professes some values which *many* of its religious stakeholders do not live by" (emphasis mine) and "only in religious organisations does abusive behaviour *stem from* sacred texts or doctrines of authority" (emphasis in original), (2020, 71 & 75) that appear in his book. This religionism undermines the important point that Chater makes about the need to reboot the relationship between religious/belief communities and the RE professionals. Such writing makes the choice of content for RE a battleground and creates a tug-of-war relationship between the faith and belief communities and the RE professionals where only one side can win.

This is not a new problem. There was a similar conversation following the production of the two model syllabuses for RE commissioned by the Government nearly 30 years ago (SCAA, 1994). These were developed on the world religions model and depended on six religious communities producing a map of the content they thought ought to be taught about their tradition. In what follows, I will draw briefly on a book chapter I wrote at that time (Cooling, 1996).

In this chapter, I commented on an influential, innovative resource called *The Gift to the Child*, produced under the auspices of the *Religion in the Service of the Child* Project based at the University of Birmingham (Hull, 1996). At its heart was the notion that in RE “nuggets of religious material” (Grove 1991, 32) are used in an instrumental fashion to serve the needs of the child that are identified on the basis of certain well-established theories of human development. The theoretical rationale behind the project was fundamentally different from that underpinning the Model Syllabuses. Thus, the project handbook says:

We are not so much concerned that young children should understand the religious materials...the kind [of understanding] we wish to develop is not understanding of the concept or the meaning, as if these were out there, nor the inner religious understanding which might be associated with religious faith and commitment (Grimmitt et al., 1991, 12).

In our current environment, where a world religions, knowledge rich curriculum is emphasised, this might seem an extraordinary approach. It certainly resolves the tug-of-war between the RE professionals and the religious communities firmly in favour of the former and was, therefore, a rejection of the mindset of entitlement reflected in the world religions approach and the structures that concretise it in law. The *Gift to the Child* appears to resonate with Chater’s position.

In my 1996 chapter I explore the implications of the Birmingham approach by discussing John Hull’s ideas on teaching the Bible in the secular classroom. Hull’s (1992) argument was that a critical mistake is made if we regard the right to interpret the Bible as belonging to Christians alone. This concern for religious integrity gives exclusive possession of the Bible to one group. Hull provocatively argues this gives Christians *squatters’ rights* (201). In contrast, he argues that treating the Bible as the property of Christians is of minimal educational value in the secular classroom. Rather, when seen as a book for all, it then releases its educational value by embracing a hermeneutic that values it for promoting the personal development of pupils who read it from the perspective of unbelief. Educational ends trump religious concerns.

Hull’s analysis raises many important and complex questions about the use and interpretation of religious and belief material in the classroom, but it perpetuates a fundamental problem in that it seems to engender the attitude amongst religious educators that it is legitimate to plunder religions and beliefs for *nuggets* that can then be used for educational ends that do not need to respect the integrity of that material in its home religious context. However, this flouts a fundamental principle of phenomenological RE, namely that the representation of a tradition should seek to be fair and accurate. This does

not of course mean that the adherents' perspective cannot be challenged and other perspectives taught. Nor does it mean that the only authentic Christian interpretation is the official, institutional position promulgated by religious leaders (Chater, 2021, 7). But it does make fair and accurate representation of the adherents' perspective a fundamental principle of good RE. The adoption of a generally hostile position as apparently exemplified in both the *Gift to the Child* and Chater's writings is not tenable. Contra Hull, it is then right that, when taught as a dimension of Christianity, a Christian interpretation of the Bible should be properly represented. What is wrong is for RE teachers to adopt a position of hostility per se to religion and belief traditions by dismissing the concerns of those communities as *squatters' rights*<sup>viii</sup>.

There are however two insights from the Birmingham Project that I suggest do provide an alternative mindset to that which nurtures both a sense of entitlement in religious communities and an attitude of hostility to those communities in RE professionals.

First, its title in itself offers an insight that could rescue the faith and belief communities from the entitlement mindset that is nurtured by the current structures. If these communities could think of themselves as the partners in the RE enterprise who offer gifts that serve the educational interests of the children, that would in itself undermine the temptation to prioritise their producer interests. Furthermore, if the RE professionals see themselves as respectful handlers of these gifts from partners, their use of and attitude towards them will be very different than if they simply regarded them as *nuggets* plundered for use in RE. CoRE emphasises the importance of studying the lived experience of adherents. There is therefore an opportunity to offer authentic case studies of religious/belief commitment that respects the integrity of the beliefs and practices of communities without those defining the educational benefits that pupils will draw. This is very different from the mutual hostility that Chater seems to assume, which perpetuates the tug-of-war mentality that is reified in the current structures. I do agree that structural change along the lines recommended by CoRE is needed, but it will be fruitless unless we radically reform the tug-of-war mindset that currently exists and reboot the relationship between the religious/belief communities and the RE professionals. In this regard, Marius Felderhof's description of the religious communities as "investors" (2022, 4-5) offers a potentially fruitful metaphor to explore as an alternative to "squatters".

Second, the *Gift to the Child* project highlights the important principle that in RE, religious material is used to achieve educational goals (remembering the proviso in the previous paragraph that this material should be treated as a gift and its integrity respected). The importance of the National Statement of Entitlement in the CoRE Report is that it seeks to enunciate a nationally applicable set of basic educational principles that govern how and why religious content is selected to be taught. These reflect the aspiration that in RE pupils learn how worldviews work in human life through the study of religion and belief. Syllabus writers will use these principles to provide the framework around which they design context appropriate syllabuses. The challenge for them will be that the array of content that they could reasonably choose to include is far too much for any sane curriculum. In 1994, the Model Syllabuses side-stepped this issue. Now the challenge is beginning to be recognised

with Ofsted (2021) suggesting that content choice should be governed by principles such as “collectively enough” and “cumulatively sufficient”. However, what these phrases mean is still unclear. There is still much work to be done in developing understanding of what is entailed in choosing content that both respects the integrity of the gift, but ensures that pupils are not overwhelmed by too much content and thereby lose sight of the educational purpose in learning it (Lewin, 2021).

## Conclusion

Chater’s article raises the important question of the distorting influence of producer interests on RE. His key question is: who controls the representation of the knowledge that teachers take into the classroom? He is very critical of the structures that embolden religion and belief communities. There is much helpful insight here. However, I have disagreed with Chater in two respects. First, I have argued that the problem is not with the structures per se, but with the entitlement mindset that those structures have reified. Second, I have argued that the hostility to religious communities that he has expressed, is not worthy of RE. It is understandable given the behaviour that has been engendered by the entitlement mindset, but, if succumbed to, it dishonours the vision of good RE based on fair representation.

The alternative strategy that I have proposed is to promote an alternative mindset that nurtures collaboration between the religion and belief communities and RE professionals. I argue that the notion of the former making a religious gift for the educational benefit of pupils is a way forward. CoRE made an important contribution to defining these educational benefits by proposing the idea of a national statement of entitlement focussed on understanding religion and worldviews. But this is the beginning rather than the end of a process that will result in a productive approach to RE syllabus design. There is still much work to be done and I am delighted that the REC and others are taking this project forward.

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<sup>i</sup> In England and Wales, state-maintained schools are either community schools or religious character schools. In the latter, the RE is taught according to the Trust Deed of the school, most of which reflect either Church of England or Catholic beliefs. In community schools the RE is determined either the local authority or by an academy trust, both of which are not religiously aligned.

<sup>ii</sup> Throughout this article I use the phrases faith and belief communities and religion and belief to capture the fact that both religious communities and humanist communities are part of this debate.

<sup>iii</sup> The word *worldview* is problematic since it is easily misunderstood as either being purely cognitive or as identifying only non-religious traditions (e.g. Barnes, 2021). Neither of these understandings are adopted in the CoRE Report. Subsequent REC documents seek to correct these misunderstandings (Benoit et al., 2020 and Tharani, 2020). It might have been less misleading to use a word other than worldview, but finding one that is recognisable for teachers proved to be impossible.

<sup>iv</sup> This is a simplification of a complex picture. The important point is that the nature of these syllabuses is very influential in shaping the understanding of RE adopted in many schools.

<sup>v</sup> Chater included the large-scale British DIY stores of B&Q and Wickes and the British supermarkets Sainsbury's, Waitrose, Tesco and Aldi. The latter might not be eligible as it is German owned!

<sup>vi</sup> I disagree with Chater in adding the interests of schools here, so have omitted that. In my experience schools can have financial, reputational and ideological interests that are not in the interests of children's education. I will therefore focus exclusively on children's educational interests.

<sup>vii</sup> See the REC Practice Code for teachers

<https://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/resources/documents/a-practice-code-for-teachers-of-re/>

<sup>viii</sup> It is important to note that there are limits to this tolerance when, for example, a religious position fosters hatred. Nor does it mean that challenges to religious perspectives should not be presented. The point is to honour the importance of fair representation.