

Meeting:	Standing advisory council for religious education (SACRE) – Agreed Syllabus Conference
Meeting date:	Friday 15 March 2019
Title of report:	Guidance for the agreed syllabus conference
Report by:	RE Consultant – RE Today

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose and summary

In accordance with Section 35 of the Education Act 1996 the council is obliged to establish an Agreed Syllabus Conference to produce and recommend to the council an agreed Religious Education Syllabus for Herefordshire.

This report informs the Conference of a number of issues relating to the role of an Agreed Syllabus Conference and seeks to agree the formulation of an Agreed Religious Education Syllabus.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- (a) The timetable for the review of the agreed syllabus, set out below and in Appendix 2, be agreed; and**
- (b) An option for an agreed syllabus, from those outlined in Appendix 2, be selected for review.**

Alternative options

1. There are no alternative options; this is a statutory requirement for SACRE and an Agreed Syllabus Conference must take place at least every five years. The options for the review of the agreed syllabus are presented in appendix 2.

Key considerations

2. At the meeting of the Herefordshire Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) held on 9 November 2018, it was noted that an agreed syllabus conference would take place on 1 March 2019 to review the religious education syllabus currently being used by Herefordshire schools. It is a requirement that the syllabus is reviewed, at least, every five years. The existing syllabus was last reviewed and approved in March 2015. Arrangements for the re-establishment of the Herefordshire Agreed Syllabus Conference were agreed by SACRE at its meeting on 9 November 2018.
3. SACRE must consider reviewing its RE agreed syllabus every five years. An Agreed Syllabus Conference can be set up to conduct the review. An agreed syllabus must *'reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are, in the main, Christian while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain.'*

Education Act (1996 Section 375 (3)) / School Standards and Framework Act (1998, Schedule 19, para.5.

4. The council is obliged to establish an agreed syllabus conference to produce and recommend to the council an agreed religious education syllabus for Herefordshire. In 2010 the Department for Education produced a document: 'Religious education in English schools: Non-statutory guidance 2010'. An extract from the 2010 guidance is attached at appendix 1. The representative committees, as outlined in appendix 1 shall each have a single vote. Only an Agreed Syllabus Conference may recommend an agreed syllabus and its recommendation must be unanimously agreed by the committees constituting the conference.
5. To ensure that the review meets the agreed syllabus implementation date of September 2020, the consultant for religious education has compiled a report containing a draft outline and timetable for consideration in appendix 2.
6. The proposed timetable for the Agreed Syllabus Conference review is provided below:

Timeline:

March 2019	Agreed Syllabus Conference set up and consider options
June 2019	Consultation with teachers (if required)
November 2019	ASC meeting. Results of consultation.
February 2020	ASC Final Syllabus agreed by ASC and recommended to SACRE and LA
June 2020	Syllabus launch conferences
September 2020	Syllabus implementation year in schools

7. The Agreed Syllabus Conference on 15 March 2019 will select an option for the review of the RE syllabus to follow the timeline above. The potential options for a review of the agreed syllabus are contained in detail in appendix 2 and are summarised below:
- a) **SACRE renews the licence with RE Today, which includes a supplement to insert into the 2015-2020 folder, delivered electronically.** This supplement includes updates on, for example, the Commission Report, tighter requirements at KS4 and 5, assessment, and some additional guidance. This relicensing would include a ‘relaunch’ conference, to support teachers with ideas and resources.
 - b) **SACRE could adopt RE Today’s more recent Syllabus Model B.** This syllabus shares some DNA with the current Worcestershire syllabus, but offers a more systematic approach, incorporating questions from the Understanding Christianity resource being used in many schools, and a revised assessment model.
 - c) **SACRE could commission a bespoke new syllabus from RE Today.** This could reflect the Commission on RE national report recommendations closely, exemplifying its new direction for Religion and Worldviews.

Community impact

8. The provision of religious education and collective worship seek to increase understanding and tolerance of all religions in all local communities. A stated aim in Herefordshire Council’s corporate plan is to ensure that there is access to excellent education and learning opportunities at all levels, including early years/schools, Further Education, Higher Education and adult learning.

Equality duty

9. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the ‘general duty’ on public authorities is set out as follows:
- A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -
- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
10. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires the council to consider how it can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that ‘due regard’ in decision making in the design of policies and the delivery of services. The provision of religious education seeks to contribute positively to the specific duty by increasing the understanding and tolerance of all religions in local communities.

Resource implications

11. Up to £5,000 has been allocated for the syllabus review. The costs of each of the options that the Agreed Syllabus Conference will consider are provided in appendix 2.

Legal implications

12. In accordance with Section 35, Schedule 31 of the Education Act 1996 the council is obliged to establish an Agreed Syllabus Conference to produce and recommend to the council an agreed education syllabus for Herefordshire.
13. SACREs must, every five years, review an agreed syllabus for the area. The Agreed Syllabus outlines the statutory requirements for schools in Herefordshire. It is a unique document as RE is the only subject where the local community determines the curriculum.
14. Local Authorities are required to provide a clear structure which highlights the contribution of RE, particularly taking into account local circumstances and characteristics. They must also ensure that there is continuity and progression, a clear statement about expected standards and appropriate pedagogy and levels of challenge for pupils of different ages and abilities. The syllabus must reflect curriculum developments to ensure RE is part of a coherent curriculum for all its pupils.

Risk management

15. During the production of this report there has been an assessment of the likely risk management implications. It is not considered that risk of any significance arises from the drafting or content of this report.

Consultees

16. No consultees have been consulted in the production of this report and its recommendations.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Extract from department for children, Schools and Families Religious education in English schools: Non-statutory Guidance 2009

Appendix 2 – Report from RE Consultant draft outline of options and timetable

Background papers

None identified.