

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO SCHOOL CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT RE SYLLABUS AND PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAFT BY THE SYLLABUS CONFERENCE WORKING GROUP

Report By: Consultant for Religious Education

Purpose

1. To report the responses made by schools to the draft Herefordshire Agreed Syllabus for RE and consider amendments to the draft Syllabus suggested by the Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASG) Working Group in light of the school responses.

Background

2. At its meeting on 28th November, 2005, the Syllabus Conference agreed a draft Syllabus for consultation with all schools in the County and invited comments by way of a questionnaire.

Schools Responding

3. The following schools responded to the questionnaire:

High Schools: 5 (Bishops/Aylestone/Wigmore/Minster College/Fairfield)

Primary: 24 (Ashfield Pk/Bredenbury/Brilley/Broadlands/Brockhampton/Burghill/Colwall CE/Dilwyn CE/ Eastnor/ Hunderton/Kingsland CE/Leominster Junior/Little Dewchurch/Llangrove CE/ Lord Scudamore/ Much Marcle/Peterchurch/ Pembridge/ St James/ St Peter's/Shobden/Sutton/Whitbourne CE/ Whitchurch CE)

Summary of responses as at 8 February 2006

4. The responses received from schools have been summarised by the Consultant for RE. This summary, reproduced below, together with detailed comments from a school by letter, was considered by the Agreed Syllabus Conference Working Group on 8th February 2006. Their response and subsequent suggested amendment to the draft Syllabus are detailed later.

Overall responses to the syllabus

All except one high school broadly in agreement with the proposed changes as set out in the draft Agreed Syllabus.

All found the syllabus sufficiently clear overall.

7 schools added comments – 4 congratulatory/ 2 asking if there was to be non-statutory guidance / 1 High School did not agree that KS4 RE should require accreditation / 1 query about whether reference to Gifted and Talented was included.

1. Expectations

Attainment targets: all agreed these are clear.

Expectations: all agreed these are clear.

Learning outcomes in the form of 'so that they can....' All found these are clear and helpful – many positive comments. Only one school made a negative comment – preferring the structure in the 2001 syllabus that included non-statutory examples of learning tasks.

Level descriptions: all agreed these are clear and helpful.

Pupil friendly versions of level descriptions in the form of sample 'I can...' statements all agreed that these are clear and helpful- many positive comments welcoming these – some asking for more examples to be provided.

All agreed that the syllabus provides teachers with a sufficiently clear picture against which to assess pupils' progress.

2 Programmes of study organised around key questions

All agreed with the use of key questions as the focus for planning teaching units.

Most agreed that the overview grid was helpful in making continuity and progression in RE from 3-19 clear. Comments indicated it was important to keep this as a complete page.

All agreed that amendments to programmes of study improved their clarity – many positive comments:

E.g. 'I felt everything seemed a lot clearer than before and I found it easier to use them than in the previous document'.

'Format easier to follow'.

'Staff agree that the amendments make the programmes of study more concise and relevant to children's lives'.

3 schools raised issues relating to planning and time:

KS2 – 'I thought they were clear and useful already – obviously always room for improvement – my concern is time. Time for me to reassess and amend our school plans, time to encourage and guide staff and time for them to amend lesson plans and assessment strategies'.

'Previous 9 units were easily 'shared' between 3 classes in KS1 – now its 7 units between 2 classes, but Judaism covered in Yr 2 – this could lead to planning difficulties and will certainly involve alot of work in reorganising'

9 units at KS2 is never an easy number to plan between 4 year groups. Help with this would be welcome.

(These concerns will be addressed through the non-statutory guidance to be issued with the syllabus)

2c. Key stage details:

All primary responses agreed that the Key Stage programmes of study are clear.

All secondary responses agreed that the key stage programmes of study are clear.

One primary school asked whether KS1 unit 1b should be 'and how are these important to Christians and Jews today?'

Many positive responses to Foundation Stage section e.g.

'clear and helpful' and 'much better'

'Very clear, detailed and helpful'

Additional comments about Foundation stage in response to Q4:

'A fantastic addition!

'Reception teachers said the FS syllabus was clear, easy to follow. A lot of time would be needed to resource it properly e.g. funding and purchasing the books listed'

'Love the format for Reception e.g. Learning activities. It would be useful if KS1 & KS2 was set out in same way'

Points for ASC to consider:

Item 1: Response to the High School's objection to the requirement to provide accredited courses for pupils in KS4

Item 2: Pie chart representations for AT1 & At2 e.g. pg 13 – one school asked for the words 'Their own' to be added into At2 – to read *How learners express their own responses and insights in relation to questions and issues of...*

Item 3: Should pg 44 (summary of questions) go before the overview grid on pg 43?

Item 4: Does the wording of the heading of the column for FS – Working towards the following ELG – the wording 'in order to differentiate...' need to be amended – one teacher commented that this was 'a bit fuzzy'.

Item 5 Does the wording of the key question for KS1 unit 1b need amending – a school asked whether it should be *'and how are these important to Christians and Jews today?'*

2d Planning

All agreed that the syllabus was sufficiently clear that schools need to make a decision about how they are going to work with the units in the programme of study.

Several replies stressed the need for:

'opportunities /courses available in which we can discuss how best to incorporate them into our long term plans?'

'the more detailed guidance that they have had before'.

'examples of whole school planners as before. Suggestions on which year group teach which programmes of study so that there is good coverage & progression'

3. Religions and beliefs broadened

3 High /12 PRIMARY agreed that the requirements relating to religions and beliefs are clear but 1 High + 12 primary didn't respond to this (only question with no yes/no response – comment only).

Primary school question:

'What is the percentage weighting for religions?

KS1 50% Judaism 50% Christianity?

KS2 25% each of 4 religions or 50% Christianity + 50% other 3 religions? '

Primary school issue:

'Syllabus reminded us to draw on 'beliefs viewpoints and ideas of children and their families' – in context of the community very few have regular experience of church or any other religion meetings – so we are reminded that the onus is on the school to provide these experience based on little other experiences.

We questioned the inclusion of Judaism at KS1 – express a strong preference for an emphasis on knowing OT stories and other events from Christian Calendar. Questioned if KS1 was an appropriate time to explore beliefs and practices of Judaism when children have a very shaky understanding of Christianity. We think it is more appropriate to explore Judaism/Christianity in Yr 5/6. '

High school comment:

'Just my concern that the two religions chosen along with Christianity that have to be studied in KS3 Buddhism and Judaism have much fewer followers in the UK than Islam Hinduism Sikhism'

Points for ASC to consider:

Item 6: Does the wording of pg 17 of the syllabus need amending to clarify question about % time for different religions?

Item 7: Does the statement on Religions and beliefs at KS1 (pg 61) and KS2 (pg 73) need amending to stress the legal requirement that Christianity should predominate over each key stage but sufficient time is given to other key beliefs as required to ensure the outcomes of the syllabus are met?

Further comments relating to key stage requirements

14-16 All 5 High schools agreed the amended requirements for 14-16 were clear

1 High school does not agree with the requirement for accreditation at KS4

16-19 Only one school responded- and agreed that the requirements were clear but added the comment:

'Except that I had to confirm the new stipulation about schools with a sixth form having to offer 'the option of at least one course in religious education' which hadn't been the case in the previous syllabus'

Further comments received about the syllabus revisions/draft in general:

'Feel this is excellent!'

An excellent document, thank you for making it so easy to follow and understand

Thanks to all for all the hard work.

I found the whole document useful and informative.

There is some anxiety about further changes at this time when all we see is change. This is bound to impact on teacher stress levels as they try to assimilate new information and to accommodate necessary changes in practice. Will confidence erode further?

The revised syllabus is going to be very useful. Thank you.

Will we be having non-statutory guidance as before? Learning activities for FS are super – they would be useful for KS1 & 2

A well thought out, constructive and useful document. Thank you for your hard work.

A detailed response by letter was received from one school – which the ASC Working Group much appreciated.

Amendments proposed by Agreed Syllabus Conference Working Group

5. Having given due consideration to the responses by schools to the consultation the Working Group made the following comments or suggestions:

Item 1: Response to one High School's objection to the requirement to provide accredited courses for pupils in KS4

This issue was fully discussed and the ASC Working Group recommended that the requirement be retained for the following reasons:

- County advice is that students taking courses in KS4 should be following an accredited course.
- The 2006 Agreed Syllabus draft is putting into place the strong recommendation of the national framework that all students should follow an accredited course in RE.
- All schools have had the opportunity to comment; only one school has raised this concern.
- The ASC recognise that for some schools it may be challenging to implement this in the short term – but all high schools should be moving towards providing appropriate accredited courses in RE as soon as possible.

Item 2: Suggestion that the wording of the diagram relating to AT2 (e.g. pg 13) be amended to include 'their own' to read *How learners express their own responses and insights in relation to questions and issues of...*

This was agreed.

Item 3: Suggestion that the summary of questions on pg 44 should precede the overview grid on pg 43

This was not agreed – it was felt that this acted as a summary and should therefore follow the main grid.

Item 4: Suggestion that the wording of the heading in the Foundation Stage programmes of study be amended to aid clarity.

This was not agreed – the Agreed Syllabus Conference Working Group felt that it was better to leave the wording as recommended by the Early Years consultants.

Item 5 Suggestion that the wording of the key question for KS1 unit 1b be amended to put more focus on ‘how’ Jesus and Moses are important to Christians and Jews today rather than ‘why’

This was not agreed. The ASC Working Group reviewed the wording and recommended that the wording should remain as in the draft.

Item 6 & 7: Suggestions that greater clarification was needed about the requirement for Christianity to predominate and about percentages of time given to each required religion

The ASC felt that the statement in the KS1 and KS2 programme of study ‘*ensuring that across the key stage the majority of this time is spent on a study of Christianity*’ was sufficient and allowed schools flexibility.

They decided that the phrase ‘*with enough time for other faiths to be studied at sufficient depth.*’ should be added to avoid other faiths being dealt with in a tokenistic fashion. This wording is drawn from the non-statutory national framework. It is recommended that this wording be added to KS1 (pg 61) KS 2 (pg 73 + pg 17).

The second draft Syllabus

Arising from the deliberations of the Working Group the Consultant for RE has been tasked to amend where necessary the draft Syllabus to reflect the above suggestions and present the resultant second draft to the Syllabus Conference meeting on 20th March for consideration.

Acknowledgements

The Agreed Syllabus Conference Working Group expressed their gratitude to all the schools who took time to respond to this consultation. They also recommended that the hard work by members of the teachers’ working parties should be recognised and thanks conveyed.