

5 January 2022		ITEM: 7
Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education		
Agreeing the Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key	
Report of: Deborah Weston, Associate Adviser for Religious Education		
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director Learning Inclusion and Skills		
Accountable Director: Shelia Murphy, Corporate Director of Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report proposes that SACRE make the decision to renew its license with RE Today to use its model syllabus A as the Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education.

- 1. Recommendation(s) that SACRE:**
 - 1.1 Reconvene an Agreed Syllabus Conference (first meeting June 2021)**
 - 1.2 Consider the results of the survey of teachers**
 - 1.3 Confirm option A from the options set out in Appendix 1 from RE Today**

2. Introduction and Background

Every Local Authority is required to establish and support an occasional body called an agreed syllabus conference (ASC)

An ASC must:

- Produce and recommend to the LA an agreed syllabus for RE which is educationally sound and meets legal requirements.
- Institute a review of its locally agreed syllabus within five years of the last review, and subsequently every five years after the completion of each further review
- with any sub-committee it may appoint, 1 meet in public, subject to exceptions in relation to confidentiality²

¹ Schedule 31(6), Education Act 1996

² Regulation 3, S1 1994/1304

- Unanimously recommend a syllabus for adoption by the LA (each committee having a single vote) - there are provisions for the Secretary of State to become involved where an ASC is not unanimous³
- Include on any sub-committee at least one member of each of its constituent committees.
- An ASC may specify what must be taught through the locally agreed syllabus. In recommending a syllabus the ASC may not specify the amount of curriculum time that must be allocated to RE by schools, but they may provide an estimate of how much time their syllabus would require, to help schools to plan their timetable.

Membership of an ASC

An ASC is required to be made up of four committees⁴

- Committee A – Christian denominations and such other religions and religious denominations as, in the opinion of the LA, will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area;
- Committee B - the Church of England
- Committee C - teacher associations
- Committee D - the Local Authority

There is no legal provision for an ASC to include co-opted members, but it can seek the advice it considers appropriate from those it considers appropriate, to inform the development of effective RE provision in its area.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The current Agreed Syllabus for Thurrock was implemented in schools in September 2016. It is now due for review.
- 3.2 The Agreed Syllabus conference was convened at the June meeting and three options were discussed from those in appendix A. The consensus was that option A was the preferred option but SACRE wanted:
- (a) to consider the views of teachers and senior leaders before making a decision
 - (b) to receive a formal quotation from RE Today
 - (c) to consult with the finance team regarding the budget

before reaching a final decision

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The steps recommended are required in order that SACRE carry out its statutory functions.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 Not applicable

³ Schedule 31(10), Education Act 1996

⁴ Section 390(2) Education Act 1996; Schedule 31, para 4, Education Act 1996

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

6.1 The Local Authority reviews its Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education on a regular basis;

- Publishes an Annual Report of its work;
- Offers guidance on resources and methods of teaching and in consultation with Thurrock Schools;
- Monitors the quality of provision for RE and Collective Acts of Worship in Thurrock.

This exercise falls under the first element of this programme.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **David May**
Strategic Lead Finance, Corporate Finance

Funding to produce an agreed syllabus is provided by Department for Education through the Dedicated Schools Grant, Central Schools Services Block.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Deputy Head of Law

The legal requirements:

- SACRE must review its RE Agreed Syllabus every five years.
- An Agreed Syllabus Conference is to be convened to conduct that 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)

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement and Project
Monitoring Officer

SACRE will continue to dedicate time for the discussion of the way in which religious education can help improve the level of community cohesion in Thurrock. The current Agreed Syllabus is specific about the expected outcomes of teaching of religious education in this respect. The teaching of RE should help schools to fulfil their statutory duty to promote community cohesion and to encourage better respect and tolerance for those with different religions and beliefs.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

- Not applicable

8. Appendices to the Report

- Appendix 1 - Thurrock Agreed Syllabus: options from RE Today
- Appendix 2 – Thurrock Agreed Syllabus Review

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