

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND EARLY HELP SERVICES

TO:	ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES & EDUCATION COMMITTEE		
DATE:	11 JULY 2018	AGENDA ITEM:	10
TITLE:	READING STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AGREED SYLLABUS 2018 - 2023		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	PEARCE	PORTFOLIO:	EDUCATION
SERVICE:	EDUCATION	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
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1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider and agree the new agreed syllabus for Religious Education 2018-2023 commissioned by the Reading SACRE (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education) for use in all Reading schools.
- 1.2 To provide a brief outline of the structure of the Reading Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2018 as attached at Appendix A. The full draft of the syllabus is available on request.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the new agreed syllabus for religious education 2018-2023, commissioned by the Reading SACRE for use in all Reading schools, be approved.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 As part of the curriculum provision, all local authority maintained schools, free schools and academies are required to teach religious education (RE) in accordance with a syllabus, locally agreed by the relevant Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE).
- 3.2 Every five years, according to the statutory requirement (1993 Education Act: DfE Circular 1/94, para 29), the SACRE for the local authority, has to revise the syllabus to both reflect the religious education needs of the pupils, and to respect the position of the principal faith communities in their area.

3.3 Jan Lever Education Consultancy and Training Ltd., national experts in Religious Education (RE), along with RE advisers to 4 of the 6 Berkshire SACREs, led the consultation on, and revision of the syllabus. They worked with teachers, SACREs and both faith and belief communities across the unitary authorities. The new agreed syllabus was accepted by the Reading SACRE at its meeting in June 2018. In keeping with the open and consultative nature of the creation of the syllabus, SACRE has requested that implementation of the syllabus is also approved by the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee (ACE).

4. THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 The Education Act (1996) requires that:

- RE should be taught to all pupils in full time education in schools except for those withdrawn at the request of their parents (details to be found in DCSF publication: RE in English schools: Non-statutory guidance 2010, p27-30).
- RE in community schools, *academies and free schools**, and foundation schools not of a religious character, should be taught in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus recommended by the Agreed Syllabus Conference to the Local Authority. In schools with a religious foundation, the RE curriculum offered is to be determined by the governing body in accordance with the trust deed. The governing body may recommend that the school follows the local authority's agreed syllabus.
- As part of the curriculum, RE should promote the 'spiritual, moral, social, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils'.
- An agreed syllabus should 'reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain' (Education Act, 1996)
- The Education Act (1944) requires that an agreed syllabus 'shall not include any catechism or formulary which is distinctive of any particular religious denomination' (The Education Act 1944 section 26(2)). This is understood to mean that an agreed syllabus should not be designed to convert pupils, or to urge a particular religion or religious belief on pupils.
- It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the governing body to ensure that sufficient time and resources are given to RE in schools to meet the statutory requirements.

** Academies and free schools were not in existence when the Education Act 1996 was introduced. However, they are similarly covered under the regulations for teaching religious education outlined in the Act.*

5. THE PROPOSAL

5.1 Current Position:

The 2018-23 syllabus, has been through a consultation process involving the key religious groups within Reading. Suggested changes to the syllabus have been

accepted by SACRE and, subject to approval by ACE, the syllabus is ready to be printed and distributed to all schools.

5.2 Options Proposed.

That the syllabus be approved for distribution.

5.3 Other Options Considered.

The requirement for local authorities to produce a syllabus for the teaching of religious education through SACRE is a statutory requirement. It is statutory that the Religious Education syllabus is reviewed every four years. There are, therefore no other options available to the local authority.

6. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 6.1 The syllabus reflects the representation of the principal religions and worldviews in Reading. It encompasses opportunities within its framework for harmony and understanding between peoples of all persuasions.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 7.1 Work has taken place with all 5 neighbouring Berkshire authorities, co-ordinated through the Pan-Berkshire SACRE Hub and agreed with SACRE.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no legal implications on the local authority. The legal implications are on schools to adopt and use the local syllabus to guide provision and teaching of religious education.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 A budget of £6,500 for the production of the syllabus has already been established within the wider Education and Children's Services budget. The creation, publication and distribution of the syllabus will be within that budget.

10. SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED AGREED SYLLABUS

10.1 The purpose and aim of RE in schools

The purpose of RE is to promote religious literacy. Religious literacy requires pupils to gain knowledge and understanding of a range of religions and worldviews and to use that knowledge to engage in informed and balanced conversations about religions and beliefs. In addition to learning about religions and worldviews, Religious Education offers students the chance to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally and to reflect on their own beliefs, being able to be discerning about the many attitudes and opinions they will encounter.

10.2 The non-statutory 2013 National Curriculum Framework for RE states that pupils should:

- Know about and understand a range of religions and worldviews
- Express ideas and insights about the nature, significance and impact of religions and worldviews
- Gain and deploy the skills needed to engage seriously with religions and worldviews.

10.3 To achieve these aims, Religious Education provokes challenging questions about meaning, purpose, beliefs about God, issues of right and wrong and what it means to be human. RE plays an important role in preparing pupils for life in the modern world, and should enable them to flourish as citizens in a pluralistic, global society. The Pan-Berkshire syllabus (2018-2023) is based on similar, but sometimes reworded, “big questions” to those found in the 2012-17 version of the syllabus; the links between the three strands of “Belonging, Believing and Behaving” are made more explicit and there are now expected outcomes to replace the Attainment Levels. The links between “learning about” and “learning from” are made more explicit and integrated into the expected outcomes, as they combine the need to demonstrate knowledge with an understanding of the impact, necessitating the deployment of specific skills. Teachers will need to ensure they cover each strand (*believing, behaving and belonging*) by addressing:

- all the key questions in the study of Christianity in the Primary and Secondary phases
- some of the questions for the other required religions (i.e. Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism in the Primary Phase (Key Stages 1&2) and Buddhism, Islam and a non-religious worldview e.g. Humanism in Key Stage 3).

10.4 The syllabus framework

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS, ages 3-4)

RE should be aligned to the most recent EYFS framework. During the Reception Year (ages 4-5), pupils MUST encounter Christianity PLUS at least one other religion from Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism. It is expected that learning will be experiential and thematic during the EYFS.

Key Stages 1-3

Key Stages 1-3 have been divided into the **Primary Phase** (Key Stages 1&2) and **Key Stage 3**. Within the Primary phase, Pupils must have studied Christianity in every year group plus Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism by the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6, age 11). Pupils study Christianity (each year), Buddhism, Islam and a non-religious worldview e.g. Humanism, by the end of Key Stage 3

Key Stage 4

All pupils must receive Religious Education and should follow an externally accredited course for Religious Studies e.g. GCSE, or an alternative, well-

structured and challenging programme of Religious Education. Schools are encouraged to facilitate examination entry for as many students as possible.

Post-16

All students must receive a programme of Religious Education. Students should have the opportunity to follow a course, or modules, which lead to external accreditation e.g. A level Religious Studies. Suggested modules will be set out in the supporting guidance material.

- 10.5 Schools will be supported to make the transition to using the new syllabus by termly teacher/SACRE member network meetings, led by SACRE advisers from Jan Lever Education consultancy and Training Ltd.
- 10.6 Once the syllabus is launched in July 2018, the role of the SACRE is to support and monitor the effective implementation of the syllabus.