

15 October 2014	ITEM: 7
Thurrock Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education	
Review of the Thurrock Agreed Syllabus 2009	
Report of: Deborah Weston: Associate RE Adviser	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key
Accountable Head of Service: Vivien Cutler –Strategic Lead, School Improvement, Learning & Skills	
Accountable Director: Carmel Littleton, Director of Children’s Services	
This report is Public	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose of this report is to explain to SACRE members:

- the function of an ‘agreed syllabus conference’ (ASC);
- the legislative requirements for the make-up of an ASC
- how the Thurrock ASC fits into the overall process of revising the current Thurrock Agreed Syllabus.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS:

1.1 That SACRE advise the Council that the syllabus is due for review and resolve to discuss the budget required for such a review

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

2.1 Guidance on the role and operation of an ASC from the latest RE guidance “Religious Education in English Schools (2010)”

The role and responsibility of an ASC

2.2 Every LA is required to establish and support an occasional body called an agreed syllabus conference (ASC).

2.3 An ASC must:

- produce and recommend to the LA an agreed syllabus for RE which is educationally sound and meets legal requirements – as indicated earlier,

this process should take account of the illustrative primary programme of learning and secondary programme of study but is in no way bound by them

- with any sub-committee it may appoint, meet in public, subject to exceptions in relation to confidentiality
- 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 unanimous
- include on any sub-committee at least one member of each of its constituent committees.

2.4 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.

16 Section 391(3), Education Act 1996

17 Section 391(3), Education Act 1996

18 Section 390(3), Education Act 1996

19 Section 390(7) and Section 391(4), Education Act 1996

20 Schedule 31(6), Education Act 1996

21 Regulation 3, S1 1994/1304

22 Schedule 31(10), Education Act 1996

Membership of an ASC

2.5 An ASC is required to be made up of four committees

- 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 LA.

2.6 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.

The agreed syllabus

2.7 The locally agreed syllabus is a statutory syllabus of RE prepared under Schedule 31 to the Education Act 1996 and adopted by the LA under that schedule. It must be followed in maintained schools without a designated denomination.

2.8 Once adopted by the LA, the agreed syllabus sets out what pupils should be taught and can include the expected standards of pupils' performance at different stages.

- 2.9 Every locally agreed syllabus must reflect that the religious traditions of Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain. The law does not define what the principal religions represented in Great Britain are. ASCs can decide which are the principal religions represented in Great Britain, other than Christianity, to be included in their agreed syllabus.
- 2.10 Agreed syllabuses in any community school and any foundation, voluntary aided or voluntary-controlled school without a religious character cannot require RE to be provided by means of any catechism or formulary which is distinctive of a particular religious denomination.
- 2.11 This prohibition does not extend to the study of catechisms and formularies.

The make-up of the Thurrock Agreed Syllabus Conference

- 2.12 Given that the four committees of an ASC match exactly those of a SACRE, it is proposed that
- SACRE is reconvened as an ASC for the purpose of reviewing the local agreed syllabus;
 - SACRE considers whether additional co-opted members are required.
 - SACRE consider the implications of inviting representatives of local Academies to be involved in the review process

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

24 Section 375, Education Act 1996

25 Para 3 of Schedule 19 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998

- 2.13 Prior to the convening of the ASC, marking the formal' stage of agreed syllabus review, there will be an 'informal' stage during which a small 'Agreed Syllabus Review Group' (consisting of teachers, a consultant and SACRE members) that will review the current agreed syllabus in order to prepare recommendations and draft material for consideration by the ASC.
- 2.14 Once the ASC is convened and begins to review recommendations and draft material, the Agreed Syllabus Review Group will carry on working in order to prepare material to support the new agreed syllabus.

3. ISSUES, OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS:

- 3.1 Costs to be agreed with council. This process needs to take account of the level of support within the Academy Sector for continuing to follow this syllabus

4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION:

- 4.1 Legal requirements

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

5.1 Not applicable

6. IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

6.1 SACRE ensures that:

- 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.

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Kay Goodacre**
Telephone and email: **01375 652466**
kgoodacre@thurrock.gov.uk

Estimated costs of the review, in addition to standard costs of managing Religious Education in Thurrock, are in the region of £10,000 over two financial years. This includes 15 days additional consultancy work for the process at £7,500. The costs reported will be taken from agreed School Improvement Budgets.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lucinda Bell**
Telephone and email: **07971316599**
Lucinda.bell@BDTLegal.org.uk

The statutory framework is incorporated into the body of the report at section 2 above. The Council is under a duty by virtue of s149 of the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to

- The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the EqA 2010.
- The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. This involves having due regard to the needs to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it and
- encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
- The need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This includes having due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and to promote understanding.

This report concerns matters that relate to the protected characteristics of religion and belief and race.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Samson DeAlyn**
 Telephone and email: **sdealyn@thurrock.gov.uk**
01375 652472

The review and revision of the syllabus will take on board conclusions from last SACRE meeting about increased religious and ethnic diversity of Thurrock.

7.4 **Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental**

Not applicable

BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

The Religious Education Council website:
<http://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/appg>

APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:

- Appendix 1: Proposed timeline

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New Agreed Syllabus: Draft timeline for discussion

<p>Summer Term 2013</p>	<p>Initial discussions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deborah Weston and Ruth Brock agree an outline budget for the review of the Thurrock Agreed Syllabus • Estimate a budget of £10,000 over two financial years
<p>Autumn Term 2013</p>	<p>SACRE meeting Initial review stage</p> <p>Plan Pupil voice conference – for Autumn 2014</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SACRE to agree an outline programme of review for the syllabus • SACRE agree membership of small Agreed Syllabus Review Group • draft and execute questionnaire to consult with teachers about their views on the revision • Questionnaire to all schools – via ‘survey monkey’ – RE Today services will develop this. • consult students about Religious Education in Thurrock
<p>Spring Term 2014</p>	<p>Establishing review group</p> <p>First meeting of Review Group Initial drafting</p> <p>Report to SACRE summer term meeting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a group of 6-8 excellent Thurrock teachers of RE, including teachers from 4-11, 11-16 and SEN settings to join the AS Review Group • Identify dates for meetings, and call first meeting. • Consultants from RE Today propose a timeline, • Draft contents page for the syllabus in detail (this commissions the consultants writing and guides the process, via SACRE and the AS Review Group) • Agreed Syllabus Review Group considers questionnaire responses and other guidance documents to evaluate the possible directions and developments of the syllabus. • Making RE local – development of ways to do this more practically and for wide use, e.g. relating to faith trails in Thurrock, and the wide diversity of the LA area.
<p>Summer Term 2013</p>	<p>Second meeting of AS Review group</p> <p>First and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AS Review Group considers report from the National RE Review (to be published in September 2013 alongside final National Curriculum documents. Make recommendations to SACRE • Consultants to draft initial materials – possible

	second Autumn Term SACRE meetings	<p>contents page, sifting and merging of current requirements, working group commissions consultants to write requirements for KS 1, 2, 3, FS, SEN and 14-19 sections to be drafted and considered by working group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft assessment ideas that take account of APP, 8 levels and “I can...” work as new assessment and accountability processes to be finalised by the DfE • Discuss illustration of the syllabus: photography, pupils work, local religion • Support materials to be considered: how far down the road to creating a more helpful / detailed scheme of work can we get?
Spring Term 2014	Third meeting of AS Review group Spring Term SACRE meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupil voice conference to take place* (see below) • Agreeing texts for each section of the syllabus • Assessment issues: what support, guidance, instruction is needed? • 4-19 check • Keeping abreast of DfE policy and guidance
Summer Term 2014	Final meeting of AS review group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check all draft materials and agree final versions • Consider production issues and consider advantages and disadvantages of online versus hard copy –decide on budget allocation • Plan launch and implementation programme
July / September 2014	Syllabus approvals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SACRE / ASC to approve the syllabus • Senior education staff to approve – e.g. education cabinet member. • Production and printing
October / November 2014	Syllabus launch and implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan to maximise the impact of the syllabus on quality and standards • Event to launch the syllabus • CPD for primary and secondary colleagues • Guidance for SIPS, Governors, HTs and teachers of RE