

**Open Report on behalf of Debbie Barnes, Executive Councillor of Children's Services**

Report to:	<b>Councillor Mrs P A Bradwell, Executive Councillor for Adult Care, Health and Children's Services</b>
Date:	<b>19 March 2018</b>
Subject:	<b>Lincolnshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education</b>
Decision Reference:	<b>I015343</b>
Key decision?	<b>Yes</b>

**Summary:**

The report is to present the new Lincolnshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education and recommend to the Executive Councillor that she approves the new agreed syllabus on the basis that it fulfils the requirement of Section 375(3) and Schedule 31 of the Education Act 1996 - paragraph 10 (2) (b), i.e. it appears to the local authority that the syllabus, or as the case may be, the new syllabus, reflects the fact the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian while taking account of the teaching and practice of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain.

**Recommendation(s):**

That the Executive Councillor approves the adoption of the new revised syllabus attached at Appendix A in substitute for the existing syllabus.

**Alternatives Considered:**

1. Further amendments to the new revised syllabus  
The amendments set out in Appendix A have been developed by the Agreed Syllabus Conference with the involvement of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education and a teachers working party and is considered to be consistent with the statutory requirements and to form an improved basis for the teaching of Religious Education.

**Reasons for Recommendation:**

Lincolnshire County Council is required to review its locally agreed syllabus for Religious Education every 5 years by convening the Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC). The new syllabus is consistent with Section 375(3) of the Education Act 1996 and paragraph 10 (2) (b) of the Schedule 31 of the Education Act 1996 in that it reflects that the religious traditions of Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of

the other principal religions represented in Great Britain.

The new syllabus is clearer in structure; it is taught through themes that are revisited through the key stages allowing pupils to deepen their understanding. It also takes into account changes in patterns of belief e.g. an increase in non-religious world views.

## **1. Background**

All maintained schools in England must provide Religious Education (RE) for all registered pupils, including those in the sixth form and reception classes, unless withdrawn by their parents. Separate legislative provision for RE in maintained special schools requires them to ensure that, as far as practicable, pupils receive RE. Each Local Authority (LA) is required to review its locally Agreed Syllabus (AS) every five years.

The teaching of RE is the AS, determined by the LA. The AS must be consistent with *Section 375(3) of the Education Act 1996* which states that it must 'reflect that the religious traditions of Great Britain are in the main Christian, whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain.' The law does not define what these principal religions are.

RE should be provided for all registered pupils except for those withdrawn at the request of parents/carers.

### **Agreed Syllabus Conference**

- There are statutory duties on every LA to establish a Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education (SACRE) as well as an occasional body which must be convened to produce and recommend an agreed syllabus (AS) for RE – an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC).
- The ASC is a separate legal entity from SACRE and, although common membership is permissible, it must be separately convened.
- The role of a conference is to produce and recommend an AS for RE which meets fully the requirements of the various Acts and is educationally sound.
- Advice may be taken from other outside groups and/or individuals – Lincolnshire ASC agreed to establish a teachers' working party.
- The first meeting of the Lincolnshire ASC took place on 17 October 2016. The ASC unanimously recommended the new syllabus (attached at Appendix A) for adoption by Lincolnshire County Council on 29 September 2017. It was discussed with the full SACRE at every stage and agreement confirmed on 14 November 2017.

### **Content of the new agreed syllabus**

At the first meeting of the ASC it was agreed that some major changes needed to be made to the current syllabus which has remained virtually unchanged for over 10 years. During this time there have been significant changes in education and the RE world, for example:

1. Ofsted surveys/reports have highlighted the need for all round improvement in the teaching of RE and have emphasised the importance of religious literacy, backed up by national reports.
2. There has been an increase in the numbers of new types of schools such as academies and free schools.
3. There has been an increase in the amount of non-specialist teaching in RE.
4. There are ongoing concerns around ITT.
5. Changes in patterns of belief are reflected in the 2011 Census, e.g. an increase in non-religious world views.

### **New syllabus: changes**

The new agreed syllabus (2018) meets the statutory requirements, i.e. it reflects that the religious traditions of Great Britain 'are in the main Christian, whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain' (see above). Christianity is compulsory at each key stage. It can also be taught in the additional units and can be further supported by the use of the 'Understanding Christianity' resource currently used in many Lincolnshire schools.

The new syllabus has a clearer structure than previously and consists of compulsory and additional units. In addition to Christianity the compulsory units now include Islam at key stage 1, Hinduism and Islam at key stage 2 and either Islam or Hinduism at key stage 3. Teaching the compulsory units is expected to take about two thirds of RE curriculum time. The additional units provide teachers with the opportunity to choose from a number of topics so that they can introduce the study of a different faith/topic or deepen knowledge and understanding about aspects of work covered in the compulsory units, including Christianity. Teachers are also encouraged to include work on non-religious world-views.

The new syllabus will be introduced to schools through a series of training events and support for individual/groups of schools. Supplementary sections will be added to the agreed syllabus during 2018-19, e.g. on Judaism and assessment.

## **2. Legal Issues:**

### Equality Act 2010

Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- \* Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act
- \* Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- \* Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The relevant protected characteristics are age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation

Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity involves having due regard, in particular, to the need 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
- \* 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 steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.

Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to tackle prejudice, and promote understanding.

Compliance with the duties in section 149 may involve treating some persons more favourably than others.

The duty cannot be delegated and must be discharged by the decision-maker. To discharge the statutory duty the decision-maker must analyse all the relevant material with the specific statutory obligations in mind. If a risk of adverse impact is identified consideration must be given to measures to avoid that impact as part of the decision making process.

The new agreed syllabus for religious education in Lincolnshire takes into consideration the requirements of the Equality Act 2010). It does this by:

- recognising and respecting diversity by covering a range of faiths and beliefs and encouraging schools to provide pupils with first hand experiences of those faiths.
- fostering positive attitudes and relationships, and a shared sense of belonging.
- the process of consultation and involvement in the writing of the syllabus - the Agreed Syllabus Conference included members from different religious and cultural backgrounds.

It will have a positive impact in the way it represents minority faiths in Lincolnshire and encourages an inclusive curriculum in RE - in particular, it gives a positive message to pupils and families who belong to those faiths.

The new syllabus is neutral to age, gender and sexual orientation as it covers all school age children. The impact on religion and associated race has been explored through the nature of the syllabus. Informal consultations took place with Headteachers and the Religious Education teachers working group. Members of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) who represent a wide range of religions and cultures, were also consulted, minutes of meetings are available.

## Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS)

The Council must have regard to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and the Joint Health & Well Being Strategy (JHWS) in coming to a decision.

The new Lincolnshire RE syllabus contributes to ensuring that all children in Lincolnshire get the best possible start in life and achieve their potential. The syllabus teaches children from an early age about their own religion and lifestyle and that of others encouraging empathy and understanding as well as investigation, analysis and other transferrable skills. The revised approach contributes to the overall improvement of educational standards by supporting high quality teaching as well as helping to address any isolation and discrimination due to a lack of knowledge of the religious and associated culture of others.

## Crime and Disorder

Under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Council must exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area (including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment), the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in its area and re-offending in its area

As well as the section 17 considerations, Section 26 in conjunction with schedule 6 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a duty on the County Council and schools in the exercise of their functions to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. Through this prevent duty, schools are required to support young people to build resilience towards radicalisation and also gain a better understanding of the diverse identities within Great Britain including religion and culture. The new revised syllabus supports this by providing a framework for teachers to use to explore different religions and the impact belief in these religions have on people's choice of lifestyles. Its aim is to produce pupils who are religiously literate and able to hold balanced and informed conversations about religion and belief. This will contribute to the national and local aim to reduce radical and extreme views.

## **3. Conclusion**

In accordance with the requirements of Section 375 and Schedule 31 of the Education Act 1996 the ASC has been convened to reconsider the content of the ASC currently adopted by Lincolnshire County Council for the teaching of Religious Education. The ASC has unanimously recommended that Lincolnshire County Council adopt the revised syllabus attached at Appendix A on the basis that (as required by paragraph 10(2)(b) of the said Schedule 31) it reflects that the religious traditions of Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking into account the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain.

#### **4. Legal Comments:**

The council has the power to adopt the Agreed Syllabus recommended in the Report which has been developed in accordance with statutory process and meets the statutory test as set out in the Report.

The decision is consistent with the Policy Framework and within the remit of the Executive Councillor.

#### **5. Resource Comments:**

There are no financial implications arising from the recommendation in the report to approve the new syllabus for Religious Education.

Existing base budget funding has been used to support the revision of syllabus, and budget has been earmarked for its rollout to schools.

#### **6. Consultation**

##### **a) Has Local Member Been Consulted?**

No

##### **b) Has Executive Councillor Been Consulted?**

Yes

##### **c) Scrutiny Comments**

The decision will be considered by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 9 March 2018. The comments of the Committee will be reported to the Executive Councillor.

##### **d) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out?**

Yes

##### **e) Risks and Impact Analysis**

See main body of the report.

#### **7. Appendices**

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report

Appendix A	Lincolnshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2017-2022 draft
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## 8. Background Papers

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Lincolnshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2012 - 2017	<a href="http://www.community.lincolnshire.gov.uk/SACRE">www.community.lincolnshire.gov.uk/SACRE</a>
Report and Minutes of Meetings of SACRE and the Agreed Syllabus Conference	<a href="http://www.lincolnshire.moderngov.co.uk">www.lincolnshire.moderngov.co.uk</a>
Understanding Christianity	<a href="http://www.understandingchristianity.org.uk">www.understandingchristianity.org.uk</a>

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