

NAME OF COMMITTEE:	STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
DATE OF MEETING:	22nd November 2016
SUBJECT:	Notes of Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) meeting, 17.10.16
REPORT BY:	Religious Education Adviser
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IS THE REPORT EXEMPT?	No
IS THE REPORT CONFIDENTIAL?	No

SUMMARY: The report summarises the initial meeting of the ASC, set up to oversee the review of the Lincolnshire Agreed Syllabus for RE.

DISCUSSION: Circular 1/94 requires that all RE syllabuses are reviewed every 5 years. The Local Authority is required to set up an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) for this purpose. The full SACRE will receive regular reports from the ASC.

RECOMMENDATION: That the report be noted and that the views of SACRE be sought.

APPENDICES – Appendix A

BACKGROUND PAPERS: The following background papers, as defined in the Local Government Act 1972, were relied upon in writing this report.

PAPER TYPE	TITLE	DATE	ACCESSIBILITY
OFSTED Inspection Reports		Various	School Improvement Service County Offices

Review of Lincolnshire Agreed syllabus

**First meeting of Agreed Syllabus conference: 17.10.16, 10.00am –2.30pm
County Offices, Newland.**

Present

Committee A: Christina Dring, Swathi Sreenivasan, Neville McFarlane

Committee B:

Committee C: Catherine Williamson

Committee D:

Also in attendance: Gillian Georgiou (Diocesan RE Adviser), Wendy Harrison (RE Adviser, LCC), Mark Plater (Bishop Grosseteste University)

Apologies: Tanweer Ahmad (Committee A), Jill Chandar-Nair (LA), Lynette Gaylard (Committee A)

The meeting was chaired by Wendy Harrison

Background information

WH provided the context for the setting up of the Agreed Syllabus Conference, referring to Circular 1/94, p.26-31, which states:

- There are statutory duties on every LA to establish a 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 1988 Act and is educationally sound.
- The task of producing a syllabus cannot be delegated *except to a sub-committee which must include at least one member of each of the committees constituting the conference.*
- Advice may be taken from other outside groups and/or individuals – we have established a teachers' working party.
- The aim is to have the AS in schools by the autumn term 2017.

For discussion

- Would the ASC benefit from having councillor representation? To be discussed at full SACRE meeting.
- Frequency of meetings – it was agreed that there should be a maximum of two meetings during both the spring and summer terms 2017.
- The group is happy to receive recommendations from teachers but will have the final say on what is included in the AS.

- LA support – the LA has a statutory duty to fund the review of the syllabus but it is hoped that the proposed slimmed down version will keep costs down. A budget has been provided but it is limited. WH also outlined the constraints of time, for her and Gill Georgiou.
- It was agreed that an official launch of the AS would include training for teachers. This might be the means whereby the AS is distributed to all schools.

Why change is needed

The present AS has remained virtually unchanged for over 10 years – during this time there have been significant changes in education and RE, for example:

1. Arrangements for Ofsted inspections – a move away from inspecting compliance, greater emphasis on SMSC and the introduction of British values.
2. Emphasis on the importance of religious literacy, backed up by national reports, e.g. Improving Religious Literacy (July 2016), REforREal (November 2015)
3. Increase in numbers of new types of schools such as academies and free schools.
4. Increase in number of non-specialist teaching in RE.
5. Increasing issues around ITT.
6. Changes in patterns of belief reflected in the 2011 Census –religion and belief in Lincolnshire – increase of non-religious world views.
7. Ofsted surveys/reports highlighting the needs for all round improvement in teaching of RE.
8. The removal of levels for assessment purposes.
9. Changes to GCSE requirements.
10. Changes to EYFS requirements.

Although the present AS has served us well it is not now supporting teaching and learning as effectively as we would like and is not providing a rigorous enough structure to increase pupils' religious literacy or prepare them for life in modern Britain. Many schools are over-reliant on the non-statutory schemes of work which do not necessarily represent the way we would like to see RE being taught now.

Proposed changes – these were outlined in detail by Gillian Georgiou

- The present AS requires schools to focus on Christianity throughout the key stages (this is a legal requirement) with one other religion at key stage 1 and two at key stage 2. It is largely up to schools to decide which religions they will study. The new AS would have a tighter structure, with more compulsory units.
- It is proposed that schools are provided with a clearer structure for planning. As well as Christianity schools would follow compulsory units on Islam and Hinduism at key stages 1 and 2 and 3, with one other

religion at key stage 3. New 'optional' units would also form part of the structure as well as units on religion/belief in Lincolnshire.

- The new AS will not contain as much detailed content as the present one – teachers will have more freedom to decide *how* they approach the different units and will be provided with training to help them to do this – with an emphasis upon planning for progression and deeper learning. It may be possible at a later date to produce additional support/guidance materials to help with planning.
- There would be one over-riding aim for RE: *To produce pupils who are religiously literate and able to hold balanced and informed conversations about religions and beliefs.*
- The compulsory options would be studied under the headings of God, Being Human, Community and Life Journey. These may be amended as work progresses.

Summary of response from ASC

Overall, members were in favour of the new aim for RE and the basic construction of the new AS. Many members made very positive comments about the structure, believing it to be more current in its approach and having the potential to produce more rigour in teaching and learning. The following points were raised:-

- No mention of Judaism in compulsory elements – but could still be referred to and taken up in detail in the optional elements.
- SACRE members would be able to make a positive contribution to studies of religion in the locality.
- The inclusion of Islam as a compulsory element is necessary to deepen pupils' understanding about a faith that is often mis-represented, e.g. in the media and about which the majority of pupils have no first hand knowledge. The new AS includes a section on places of worship in the locality, including mosques.
- Time allocation – how would teachers manage to plan for both compulsory and optional elements? It was explained that over a school, year there would be flexibility in how the units were covered. The teachers' working party would be looking at this in more detail.
- WH and GG acknowledge that good CPD will need to be in place to support teachers as they introduce and implement the new AS.

Next steps

- Teachers' working party meets on November 18th. They will be doing more detailed work on the structure and thinking about what the compulsory units might look like.
- WH to continue working on other sections of the AS – i.e. the statutory requirements and appendices – these will be presented to the ASC at the next meeting – date TBC.

W Harrison

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