

Adoption of the 2023-2028 Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education

To: Children and Young People Committee

Meeting Date: 8 March 2023

From: Executive Director: Children's Services

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: No

Forward Plan ref: N/A

Outcome: The updated locally agreed syllabus is approved and made available for all schools.

Recommendation: Approve the Locally Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education (RE) 2023 - 2028

Voting arrangements: Co-opted members of the Committee are eligible to vote on these items.

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1. Background

- 1.1 Religious Education (RE) is a statutory part of the basic curriculum for all schools as set out in the 1944 Education Act Section 25 and upheld in the 1996 Education Act Section 375.
- 1.2 All schools are required to teach RE although there is no national syllabus. Instead the syllabus is produced locally and must be formally adopted by each local authority. The legal basis for RE in Cambridgeshire is the existing 'Agreed Syllabus' which was adopted for use for a five-year period from September 2018 to September 2023.
- 1.3 To allow teachers sufficient time to incorporate the new syllabus into their plans for 2023-2028, the Council is requested to adopt the syllabus as soon as possible.
- 1.4 Under the Education Act 1996 (Sections 375 and 390 to 392 and Schedule 31) as amended by the School Standards and framework Act 1998, every Local Education Authority has a duty to establish a permanent body known as the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education ("SACRE") and at least every five years to establish a body known as an Agreed Syllabus Conference ("ASC") to review an Agreed Syllabus for the teaching of RE in its area. The broad role of the ASC is to produce and recommend an Agreed Syllabus for RE which meets legal requirements and is educationally sound.
- 1.5 RE is an important curriculum subject. It is important in its own right and also makes a unique contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and supports wider community cohesion. The Government is keen to ensure all pupils receive high-quality RE. Although there is not a National Curriculum for RE, all maintained schools must follow the National Curriculum requirements to teach a broad and balanced curriculum, which includes RE. All maintained schools therefore have a statutory duty to teach RE. Academies and free schools are contractually required, through the terms of their funding agreement, to make provision for the teaching of RE.
- 1.6 Legislation requires that:
 - in maintained community, foundation or voluntary schools without a religious character, RE is taught in accordance with the local Agreed Syllabus;
 - academies and free schools must teach RE within the requirements for a locally agreed syllabus, set out in section 375 (3) of the Education Act 1996 and paragraph (5) of Schedule 19 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. The requirements are that a 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';
 - for foundation and voluntary controlled schools with a religious character, RE must be taught according to the Agreed Syllabus unless, parents request RE in accordance with the trust deed of the school; and
 - in voluntary aided schools RE must be taught in accordance with the trust deed. In essence, this means that maintained, community, foundation or voluntary schools in Cambridgeshire are required to teach the local Agreed Syllabus (that is, the one being presented to the Committee with this report); academies and free schools are required 1.5 1.6 to teach an agreed syllabus but this does not have to be the one from Cambridgeshire.

2. Main Issues

- 2.1 Section 375 and schedule 31 of the Education act 1996 requires the establishment of an Agreed Syllabus Conference to oversee the Syllabus review. Members of the Agreed Syllabus Conference comprises of members of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) which includes representatives of local faith groups, teacher representatives and elected Members. The review and resultant renewal involved teachers and representatives of the faith groups. The final draft report was agreed by the Syllabus Conference held on 11 January 2023.
- 2.2 An agreed syllabus must reviewed every five years by law so syllabus reviews go in a five-year cycle. In order to have a new syllabus ready for teachers to read absorb and incorporate into their curriculum it has to be ready at least one term before the beginning of the school year. The last syllabus was 2018/23. Work on the new began syllabus almost two years ago to be ready for summer term 2023 and for it to be used from September 2023.
- 2.3 Subject to the agreement, the new Syllabus will be formally launched on the 15th June 2023 and will become effective from 1 September 2023. Further events to support the introduction of the Syllabus in schools will take place during the academic years 2023-2025 for all schools in Cambridgeshire. SACRE will monitor and support the implementation of the Agreed Syllabus over the next 5 years.
- 2.4 Since the last syllabus was launched in May 2018, there have been developments in RE from both the academic world and Ofsted. The Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) reviewed the research and recommendations from the Religious Education Council and Ofsted about taking a 'Worldviews Approach' and a more academic approach to RE and added these recommendations to the new syllabus. The ASC also updated the primary assessment criteria, moving away from using targets to assess pupils to pupils showing progression through Key Stage 1 to the end of Key Stage 2. A review of the previous syllabus highlighted teachers would like more resources, so the ASC agreed to add some units of work for Key Stages 1 and 2, with lists of suitable units for Key Stages 1, 2 and 3.
- 2.5 There is currently a trial being run in three local authorities to see how well the ideas in Commission in Religious Education's 'Religion and Worldviews: The Way Forward Report' can be incorporated into the curriculum. In phase 1 a handbook was written. The trial has reached phase 2, in which three school-based teams will road test the first draft of the Resource. They will develop their own syllabus/curriculum framework and units of work. This process of testing, will lead to a revised version of the Resource, scheduled to be published in the Spring of 2024.

3. Alignment with corporate priorities

- 3.1 Environment and Sustainability
There are no significant implications for this priority.
- 3.2 Health and Care
There are no significant implications for this priority.

3.3 Places and Communities

There are no significant implications for this priority.

3.4 Children and Young People

Amongst the many benefits of good Religious Literacy is its support for the teaching and understanding of British Values, Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development and the PREVENT agenda.

3.5 Transport

There are no significant implications for this priority.

4. Significant Implications

4.1 Resource Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

The cost of the preparation of the new syllabus has been minimal.

- Staff - The services of the SACRE and RE Advisor (who is also advisor to the other local authorities in the ASC) are already budgeted for and is a permanent staff member of Cambs CC.
- Support materials - A great deal of the work has been undertaken on a voluntary basis by SACRE members and teachers from across the county.
- The launch event will take the form of a training event for teachers. The cost of the day will be covered by attendance fees.
- The cost of publishing and circulating the revised Syllabus will be met from the existing budget across the three counties. In addition, there will be costs in respect of launching the Syllabus into schools and supporting schools with the implementation of the Syllabus. The overall proposed cost for the syllabus and launch events taking account of attendance fees is £7,380. The estimated cost to Cambridgeshire (73%) is £5,388.
- Any procurement activity will be compliant with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

The five-year review cycle ends in September 2023. If the new syllabus is not adopted, then the Council will be in breach of its statutory duties.

4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

The good teaching of RE is a vital part of education generally. "Every child and young person who goes to school is entitled to an experience of religious education (RE) that is both academically challenging and personally inspiring". A Curriculum Framework for Religious Education in England -The Religious Education Council of England and Wales - October 2013.

4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

The constitution of the SACRE ensures the involvement of a wide group of local faiths and world views. SACREs have been kept up to date with what the ASC has been working on. The new shorter syllabus gives much more flexibility within each school on what to teach allowing the school cohort and local circumstances to influence the lessons without losing sight of the aim of religious literacy. Representatives of local faith groups and world views,

together with teachers in local schools, have assisted in the writing of support materials including progression documents and assessment tools.

4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement
See wording under 4.5

4.7 Public Health Implications
There are no implications.

4.8 Environment and Climate Change Implications on Priority Areas

4.8.1 Implication 1: Energy efficient, low carbon buildings.
Positive/neutral/negative Status: neutral
Explanation:

4.8.2 Implication 2: Low carbon transport.
Positive/neutral/negative Status: neutral
Explanation:

4.8.3 Implication 3: Green spaces, peatland, afforestation, habitats and land management.
Positive/neutral/negative Status: neutral
Explanation:

4.8.4 Implication 4: Waste Management and Tackling Plastic Pollution.
Positive/neutral/negative Status: neutral
Explanation:

4.8.5 Implication 5: Water use, availability and management:
Positive/neutral/negative Status: neutral
Explanation:

4.8.6 Implication 6: Air Pollution.
Positive/neutral/negative Status: neutral
Explanation:

4.8.7 Implication 7: Resilience of our services and infrastructure, and supporting vulnerable people to cope with climate change.
Positive/neutral/negative Status: neutral
Explanation:

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance? Yes
Name of Financial Officer: Martin Wade

Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the Head of Procurement and Commercial? Yes
Name of Officer: Clare Ellis

Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or Pathfinder Legal? Yes
Name of Legal Officer: Linda Walker

Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your EqlA Super User?

Yes

Name of Officer: Faye McCarthy

Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?

Yes

Name of Officer: Simon Cobby

Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact? Yes

Name of Officer: Jonathan Lewis

Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health?

Yes

Name of Officer: Raj Lakshman

If a Key decision, have any Environment and Climate Change implications been cleared by the Climate Change Officer?

Yes

Name of Officer: Emily Bolton

5. Source documents guidance

5.1 Source documents and Location

The New Religious Education Syllabus (draft) Included with this document as Appendix 1.

Education Act 1996 Section 375

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/pdfs/ukpga_19960056_en.pdf

2010 Department for Children Schools and Families 'Religious Education in English schools: Non-statutory guidance 2010'[untitled \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

The existing syllabus – September 2018[Agreed Syllabus 2018 -2023-2 \(cambridgeshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

Existing Non- statutory support material[Agreed Syllabus 2018 -2023-2 \(cambridgeshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

Constitution of the SACRE for Cambridgeshire [Cambridgeshire SACRE Constitution and Membership](#)

Minutes of ASC[Cambridgeshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education - Cambridgeshire County Council](#)