

A NEW SYLLABUS FOR THE TEACHING OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

To: **Children and Young People Committee**

Meeting Date: **22 May 2018**

From: **Executive Director: Wendi Ogle-Welbourn**

Electoral division(s): **All**

Forward Plan ref: **n/a** Key Decision? **No**

Purpose: **To consider the adoption of a new syllabus for the teaching of Religious Education in the county from September 2018.**

Recommendation: **To approve the adoption of a new syllabus for the teaching of Religious Education in Cambridgeshire from September 2018.**

Officer contact:	Member contacts:
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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 up held in the 1996 Education Act Section 375.
- 1.2** Although all schools are required to teach RE 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 2013 and ending in September 2018. To allow teachers sufficient time to incorporate the new syllabus into their plans for 2018-2019, the Council is requested to adopt the syllabus as soon as possible. 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.
- 1.3** 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.
- 1.4** 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

to teach an agreed syllabus but this does not have to be the one from Cambridgeshire.

1.5 On 5th December 2016, members from Cambridgeshire, Peterborough and Northamptonshire SACREs met in Northampton and convened as a joint Agreed Syllabus Conference (jASC) to co-produce a concise new syllabus. The timing of the convening of this jASC was due to Northamptonshire being at the five-year point and therefore overdue for review of its syllabus. The other SACREs joined in at the request of their local authorities to create a jASC which would develop innovative ways of working, reduce costs and increase efficiency. Rutland SACRE joined in April 2017. The four local authorities share the services of Amanda Fitton as Religious Education Advisor.

1.6 The jASC has written a new syllabus and recommends the Cambridgeshire County Council as Education Authority to adopt it for use in schools from September 2018. The jASC has considered national changes and developments, both in RE and in education in general and proposes changes which may seem radical because of the brevity of the document but which will allow many schools to continue as before with no need to change lesson content, whilst being free to plan learning in a more enquiring and learning-focused way. It will also allow individual schools to ensure that younger pupils acquire the foundation knowledge needed for GCSE and higher examinations which they may take in the subject. There is less focus on content, allowing schools the freedom to plan a curriculum which is appropriate for their pupils yet still maintaining the integrity of RE as a discrete subject and promoting religious literacy.

2. MAIN ISSUES

2.1 This is a locally determined syllabus for Religious Education for all schools in Cambridgeshire as required by legislation. The acts require a locally agreed statutory framework on what and how to teach Religious Education but do not dictate what it should contain save for the statement that 'Every agreed syllabus shall 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'. The jASC has noted the 2010 Department for Children Schools and Families' 'Religious Education in English schools: Non-statutory guidance 2010'

3. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

3.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

There are no significant implications for this priority.

3.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives

See wording under 3.1 above

3.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people

Amongst the many benefits of good Religious Literacy are its support for the teaching

and understanding of British Values, Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development and the PREVENT agenda.

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.

1. Staff - The services of the RE Advisor (who is also advisor to the other local authorities in the jASC) and of the SACRE Clerk (including clerks from other SACREs) were already in the budget.
2. Support materials - A great deal of the work, has been undertaken on a voluntary basis by SACRE members and teachers from across the county
3. Publication - The syllabus is to be published on line only, therefore there will be no printing costs. A SACRE member from Peterborough is formatting the syllabus for online publication at no cost.
4. The launch event will take the form of a training event for teachers. The cost of the day will be covered by the attendance fee.

4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

The five-year review cycle ends in September 2018. If the new syllabus is not adopted, then the Council is requested to confirm the continued use of the 2013 syllabus

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*

“RE is an important curriculum subject. It is important in its own right and it also makes a unique contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and supports wider community cohesion”. *Religious education in English schools: Non-statutory guidance 2010* Ref: DCSF-00114-2010

“At its best, it is intellectually challenging and personally enriching. It helps young people develop beliefs and values, and promotes the virtues of respect and empathy, which are important in our diverse society. It fosters civilised debate and reasoned argument, and helps pupils to understand the place of religion and belief in the modern world.” Ofsted 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 jASC has been working on. Please see the jASC Chair's report to SACREs dated 21st September 2017

- 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. A number of local schools began a trial of the new syllabus in September 2017 and are feeding back their views.
- See also 4.2 above

4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

See 4.5

4.7 Public Health Implications

None.

Implications	Officer Clearance
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 Finance?	Yes Name of Financial Officer: Paul White
Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by LGSS Law?	Yes or No Name of Legal Officer:
Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?	Yes Name of Officer: Rosemarie Sadler
Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?	Yes Name of Officer: Jo Dickson
Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact?	Yes Name of Officer: Rosemarie Sadler
Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health	Yes Name of Officer: Tess Campbell

Source Documents	Location
The New Religious Education Syllabus (draft)	Included with this document as Appendix 1.
Education Act 1996 Section 375	http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/pdfs/ukpga_19960056_en.pdf
School Standards and Framework Act 1998	http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/31/pdfs/ukpga_19980031_en.pdf
2010 Department for Children Schools 'Religious Education in English schools guidance 2010'	https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/190260/D-CSF-00114-2010.pdf
The existing syllabus – September 2013	https://ccc-live.storage.googleapis.com/upload/www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/working-together-children-families-and-adults/SACRE%20RE%20in%20Cambridgeshire%20agreed%20syllabus.pdf?inline=true
New non- statutory support material	Available from helen.manley@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Constitution of the SACRE for Cambridgeshire	Available from helen.manley@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
17.09.17 Report to SACRE from Chair of jASC	Available from helen.manley@cambridgeshire.gov.uk