

DECISION-MAKER:	CABINET
SUBJECT:	LOCALLY AGREED SYLLABUS FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
DATE OF DECISION:	17 JANUARY 2022
REPORT OF:	COUNCILLOR J BAILLIE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION

<u>CONTACT DETAILS</u>			
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STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY
None

BRIEF SUMMARY
<p>The Local Authority is required to revise its Locally Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education at least every five years. This is completed through an Agreed Syllabus Conference that Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) must convene. This has been carried out over the academic year 2020-2021, and at SACRE meeting on November 8th, 2021 there was unanimous approval to recommend the revised syllabus – called Living Difference IV to the Local Authority subject to additional information regarding an aspect of the syllabus called Golden Threads being provided to schools.</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS:	
(i)	To approve Living Difference IV for use in those schools who must follow it, and for it to be available to those who have autonomy to select their own syllabus to use.
(ii)	To delegate authority to the Executive Director for Education to provide additional information for teachers regarding the “Golden Threads” through a briefing for all head teachers, RE leaders; additional information included within the launch for the syllabus and CPD for teachers over the coming five-year cycle of the syllabus.

REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS	
1.	SACRE have voted unanimously to approve the document which is recommended to become the approved syllabus across Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton, with the caveat that additional information regarding golden thread concepts of Love, Special, Belonging and Community is provided.

2.	The other three SACREs (Hampshire, Isle of Wight and Portsmouth) have not requested any additional information be added therefore it is recommended that the professional adviser to the SACRE ensures that appropriate additional information is provided to Southampton teachers through briefing communications with schools, CPD for RE leads and teachers delivering the syllabus in schools.
ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED	
3.	Recommendation 2 is added to address a request by Southampton SACRE for the Local Authority to add an additional section providing more information about the “golden threads” into the syllabus. This request to amend the Syllabus by adding an additional section has been rejected due to sharing the syllabus with other Local Authorities who have already completed their processes. It would therefore not be cost or time effective when an alternative is available.
4.	The request to provide additional information can be met through the planned launch of the syllabus in 2022, and the CPD prior to the implementation of the syllabus in Spring and summer term 2022. Additional guidance can be issued to schools to ensure their understanding which will then be reviewed during SACRE monitoring visits to schools.
DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)	
5.	Consultation throughout 2020-2021 has been completed remotely via Teams, Zoom and email correspondence This has been with teachers, head teachers, RE leaders, faith and belief group representatives nationally and also academics in the field of Religious Education such as Girt Bister, Edinburgh University, the chair of the RE council and also with SACRE members.
6.	<p>Representatives from Primary, Secondary and Special Schools across Southampton, including representatives on the Agreed Syllabus Conference Group from The Polygon School, Newlands Primary School, Bassett Green Primary School, Bitterne CE Primary School, Townhill Junior school, Bitterne Park School have engaged in cross-authority meetings and working groups as well as providing feedback and piloting changes to long term plans to include the four golden threads as well as piloting pondering time. Hampshire Youth SACRE have also provided a youth voice, and Southampton SACRE monitoring visits have also ensured that themes that have been apparent from monitoring, and Ofsted subject reports, have been considered. Themes covered in consultation were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What aspects of the syllabus work well? • How clear is the intention of the syllabus? • Which aspects need attention or improvement? • Should A , B and C concepts (the groups of words moving from common everyday words, known in the syllabus as “A concepts”, to religion specific words and practices known as C concepts) be retained? • What is the challenge in RE for children who move schools e.g. Year 6-7? • How can the syllabus support the deepening of children’s learning over time in RE and enable them recall and reconnect with prior learning as a part of this?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has the impact of covid lockdown impacted children’s experiences and their ability to connect with learning in RE? • How do you reflect your own school context in your RE as well as the wider world and views children may not come across from their own families or community experiences? • How should we assess progress over time in RE?
7.	<p>All aspects raised in consultation groups of how to improve the syllabus have been taken forward into the revisions by the professional adviser in conjunction with the professional advisers for Hampshire, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight. The feedback has been implemented in Living Difference IV through teachers and professional advisers joining together in working groups to adapt and develop the content of the syllabus. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • greater connection of the curriculum across the transition points for children, e.g. Year 6 to 7 which has developed into the introduction into the syllabus of golden threads to be taught throughout different phases of education with increasing knowledge and understanding being brought to later learning (Page 10). The four golden threads are special, love, belonging and community. • Further feedback brought about the introduction of pondering time (page 36). This brings an optional element into the syllabus for those who are able to facilitate children to develop their own cycle of enquiry – enabling child-led enquiry to develop in an age-appropriate way, for up to 20% of the total RE time allocated over an academic year. It builds upon child-initiated learning in Early Years and allows greater opportunity for independence, self-enquiry skills and understanding of use of reliable sources of information to develop alongside knowledge.
8.	<p>Other additions or clarifications made in the syllabus are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarification of the educational position of the syllabus (appendix Living Difference IV and education p104) • The process of making a Religious Education curriculum (section 1) • Further clarification regarding the process of teaching of teaching Religious Education through the cycle of enquiry approach at the centre of the syllabus – to clarify to “Inquire” step so teachers are clear this step should be an investigation where substantive knowledge is taught • Further development from Living Difference III of the End of Year Expectations (EYE’s) to inform the curriculum made for each year group to enable progression across key stages. • Some changes are directly linked to changes external to Religious Education – such as taking account of the new Ofsted Framework, New Early Years Framework and statutory Relationships Education requirements.
9.	<p>In Living Difference I, II, III the cycle of enquiry approach to teaching has been a central aspect based upon sound educational principles and research. The revised syllabus has retained this but clarified certain aspects of the teaching process such as how to teach the Inquire and Contextualise step effectively.</p>
10.	<p>The End of Year expectations (EYE’s) have replaced the previous, more skills-based assessment framework in previous versions of the syllabus. Assessment practice has moved on, as have the expectations required of schools, such as a greater emphasis on enabling pupils to recall and apply</p>

	knowledge. As such the EYE's can connect what should have been taught previously to current learning with greater knowledge featuring.
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	
<u>Capital/Revenue</u>	
11.	There are no additional resource implications as the plans for the launch and CPD within the already agreed SACRE budget cover all aspects of these recommendations. Monitoring visits, CPD for RE leads are both already budgeted for.
<u>Property/Other</u>	
12.	None.
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	
<u>Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report: SACRE has a duty to require the Local Authority to review its Locally Agreed Syllabus at least every five years. Tis review is within timeframe.</u>	
13.	The Education Act 1996, School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and Education Act 2002 require that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • religious education should be taught to all children and young people other than those in nursery classes and except for those withdrawn at the wish of their parents. Teachers' rights are safeguarded, should they wish to withdraw from the teaching of religious education • religious education in all community, foundation and voluntary controlled schools should be taught in accordance with an Agreed Syllabus • an Agreed Syllabus should reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teachings and practices of the other principal religions in Great Britain • an Agreed Syllabus must not be designed to convert pupils, or to urge a particular religion or religious belief on pupils • an Agreed Syllabus Conference must be convened every five years to review the existing syllabus
14.	The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) (now the Department for Education) guidance, Religious Education in English Schools: Non-statutory Guidance 2010, states that: <p style="margin-left: 40px;">“Every maintained school in England must provide a basic curriculum (RE, sex education and the National Curriculum). This includes provision for RE for all registered pupils at the school (including those in the sixth form), except for those withdrawn by their parents (or withdrawing themselves if they are aged 18 or over) in accordance with Schedule 19 to the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998. The key document in determining the teaching of RE is the locally Agreed Syllabus within the LA concerned. ... Schools designated as having a religious character are free to make their own decisions in preparing their syllabuses. LA must, however, ensure that the Agreed Syllabus for their area is consistent with Section 375(3) of the Education Act 1996, which requires the syllabus to reflect that the religious traditions of Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst</p>

	<p>taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain.”</p> <p>www.gov.uk/government/publications/religious-education-guidance-in-english-schools-nonstatutory-guidance-2010</p>
<u>Other Legal Implications:</u>	
15.	The provision of religious education through a locally agreed syllabus is wholly in accordance with the Human Rights Act 1998 (freedom of thought , conscience and religion) and the Equalities Act 2010 (prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of a protected characteristic – religion).
16.	In the exercise of any delivery of the syllabus the state (and schools as emanations of the state) are required to respect the rights of parents to ensure education and teaching is in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions. That does not preclude the delivery of an RE syllabus as this is a qualified right and is subject to any requirements imposed under the national curriculum for state education. All parents have a right to opt out of religious education provision where they wish to do so on the grounds it conflicts with their own religious (or non-religious) beliefs.
RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS	
17.	The Parental right to withdraw from Religious Education exists nationally. This can be from all or some aspects of Religious Education as set out in “Religious education in English schools: Non-statutory guidance 2010 (see link in background papers). Schools are required to ensure that parent/carers know that they have this right and how to exercise it if they wish.
18.	In Southampton, rates of withdrawal as recorded through monitoring visits are very low, and are usually partial. In practice, it is recommended schools discuss with parents any request for withdrawal to explore if sufficient mitigation can be made in planning or delivery to overcome any parental concerns or decisions to withdraw. The syllabus is sufficiently flexible in that schools can make content decisions based upon context and local information so as to meet the intention that Religious Education in Southampton through this syllabus will enable children to speak, think and act in the world with understanding and to discern with others what is valuable to living a religious life or one informed by a non-religious or other perspective. It is an inclusive syllabus that will enable schools to take account of a wider range of world perspectives be they of faith, belief or no-religion. This has been strengthened in Living Difference IV from previous versions which recommended a set number of faiths together with humanism or other world views per key stage. Therefore risk for this aspect is also reduced
19.	Recent training between September and November has been commissioned for and attended by schools focussed on developing positive culture and ethos in schools which has a direct link to proactively tackling prejudicial language or behaviours in an age appropriate way in schools, this coupled with the city wide restorative practice approach will also mitigate the risk of any inappropriate behaviours or language linked to religion or belief or any protected characteristics being unchallenged or developing in the first place.
20.	It is not anticipated that this syllabus will increase any withdrawals from Religious Education as the syllabus retains the previous flexibility, but the teacher CPD and guidance also informs staff how to meet the requirements of

	the syllabus for those schools who must follow it or choose to (88% of schools in Southampton).
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POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS

21.	This syllabus (2021-2026) contributes to the under-consultation draft Children and Young People's plan 2022-2027 by enabling children from Year R (priority 1) to consider and develop the knowledge and understanding of how people can choose to live their lives by introducing through enquiry for example, the concepts of special, community, belonging and love and how they can mean different things to different people, families and communities. This enables children to be socially and emotionally healthy (priority 3). The syllabus also enables children and young people to develop substantive knowledge and skills that will equip them to learn through an enquiry based approach from their own starting points, and achieve well through ensuring progression through the syllabus whilst increasingly understand in a more sophisticated way how people can choose to live their lives differently and be respectful of differences whilst also recognising similarities in common values and concepts shared by many (priority 4) .
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KEY DECISION?	Yes
WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	All
<u>SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION</u>	
Appendices	
1.	Presentation to SACRE at the Agreed Conference in November
2.	Living Difference IV

Documents In Members' Rooms

1.	None
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Equality Impact Assessment

Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA) to be carried out.	Yes
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Data Protection Impact Assessment

Do the implications/subject of the report require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) to be carried out.	No
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Other Background Documents

Other Background documents available for inspection at:

Title of Background Paper(s)	Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)
1. Religious education in english schools: non statutory guidance 2010	Religious education in local-authority-maintained schools - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)