

**STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AGREED SYLLABUS
CONFERENCE (ASC) - 04/09/25**

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Thursday 4 September 2025

Present:-

Group 1

D. Homer
T. Williams

Group 2

H. Lambert (Chair)

Group 3

L. Melvin

Group 4

N.Devlin.

Also in attendance were V. Gregory (RE Advisor to SACRE) and A.Duncan (SEND School representative).

Apologies were received from Councillor Ismail, T.Griffin, N.Choudry and S.Yasseen.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest declared.

**2. UPDATE ON THE REVISION OF THE
RE LOCAL AGREED SYLLABUS**

The purpose of the ASC meetings was to plan and prepare for the new Local RE Agreed Syllabus which was due to be released to schools in September 2026. The Chair asked members present to provide feedback on the current syllabus and provide potential suggestions for changes to the current agreed syllabus, during which the following was discussed and noted:

- The RE Advisor to SACRE felt that the sub-group needed to be careful and operate caution, it was felt that there was already a solid syllabus in place and associated units of work that followed the scheme of work for primary schools. Concerns were raised

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that although changes to the syllabus were required to ensure the syllabus was in line with RE changes, the curriculum had taken a long time to establish previously, and any drastic changes could prevent teachers from being unable to keep up with the changes.

- One member raised a concern around the lack of explanation and detail relating to world views, it was felt that more involvement was required in the work schemes, to ensure they would relate more to world views. During the last iteration of the curriculum review it was felt by members that world views were incorporated, however in reality the experience of members was that what was being taught, was not what would be expected when teaching from a world viewpoint. The Religious Council for England and Wales released information explaining how teaching world views should start with questions and not facts or information, it was felt that evidence of this had not been seen in schools.
- Teachers present advised that from an RE perspective, world views and teaching in that specific way was in its infancy, attempts to ensure teachers and specifically non-specialist teachers would understand the direction described, was on-going.
- SACRE wanted to ensure that the syllabus would include all world views and should highlight that all world views were important and valid. It was agreed that more context would be added to the syllabus relating to the world view approach, to assist teachers to make the required adjustment. Work schemes would also be clearer in relation to world views, including advising that the starting point should be the questioning.
- The SEND school representative advised that the current syllabus was viewed as good from a SEND perspective, specifically the inquiry-based approach and content that was provided to non-specialist teachers.
- Although SEND schools used the agreed syllabus, they had to adapt it to suit SEND children and young people, therefore they would look at RE in a sense setting and how they could use the current Rotherham agreed syllabus, to deliver the early years foundation stage to key stage two children with SEND requirements.
- SEND schools faced a challenge when relating the current

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agreed syllabus to the cognitive ability for SEND children and it could be difficult for SEND children to access the current syllabus. It was suggested that the agreed syllabus should have an early year's approach to assist with this. Examples were provided of thinking and deeper learning, more inquiry-based questions through early years to assist with bringing deeper learning and a disciplinary approach, more questioning and world views. It was advised that it was very hard for an autistic child to take on someone else's views and to understand those, however with an enhanced early years type of approach, it was felt that SEND schools would be supported to fully access the agreed syllabus.

- Further adaptation of the content within the agreed syllabus would assist SEND schools to use the agreed syllabus better, and the production of additional alternative schemes of work for SEND schools would be helpful.
- Members were keen to talk further to SEND school representatives to gain a better understanding of what SEND schools required resource wise, so SACRE could spend time assisting SEND schools in this area, rather than altering detailed resources for every school in the borough.
- The SEND representative advised that their school had changed the name of the schools RE lessons to morals and values, this had re-engaged children and led to a positive change.
- Members felt that it was important to complete research before beginning the review of the agreed syllabus and asked to find out the number of how many schools within the borough used the agreed syllabus. It was advised that SACRE had previously asked CYPs representatives to write out to all Head Teachers and Subject Leaders, to find out who used the agreed syllabus.
- It was felt by members that the nature of Rotherham's beliefs had changed significantly since the last review of the agreed syllabus. It was suggested that a review of the census would provide SACRE ASC members with a good idea of the current beliefs held across the borough and allow for an analysis of who the audience was for the agreed syllabus.
- Members present representing secondary schools advised that there were many secondary schools within the borough that followed the agreed syllabus.

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- It was felt that most primary schools did not use the agreed syllabus, however, the experience of primary school teachers present was that schools who did not opt to use the agreed syllabus and instead purchased schemes of work such as RE Today, aligned their purchased schemes as close as possible to the agreed syllabus.
- A concern was raised by a member as to why the agreed syllabus was being reviewed if there was potentially a low uptake by Rotherham schools. Members were advised that the review of the agreed syllabus within five years from the last syllabus revision, was a statutory requirement for the local authority.
- Some members felt that the content of the agreed syllabus was less important than tackling big world issues, an example was provided of misinformation and its importance in society.
- Members felt that the focus should be on what updates were required to the syllabus, or what further clarification was needed, such as a further focus on world views, rather than spending a large amount of money and time on detailed classroom resources.
- Rotherham had received funding following the disaster in August 2024 which had funded the Together for Tomorrow Project. The project related to RE and creating resources for RE, which may overlap with the agreed syllabus. Although the project was towards the end phase and the funds were already allocated, the resources developed may be able to be included within the review of the syllabus.
- It was felt that work needed to be undertaken to establish how much of a change would be required for the agreed syllabus.
- It was felt that members needed to reflect on how teachers could be made aware of the wealth of resources available, without being seen as endorsing or promoting an individual commercial product. The local authority was required to be careful to not endorse, promote or advertise a particular commercial product.

Agreed Actions: That SACRE ASC agree that-

- 1) More context be added to the agreed syllabus relating to the world view approach and that work schemes would be amended to be clearer on world views, ensuring questioning as a starting

point.

- 2) That further adaption of the content within the agreed syllabus be completed to assist SEND schools to use and access the agreed syllabus, and additional alternative schemes of work be produced specifically for SEND schools.
- 3) That the exact number of schools within the borough that use the agreed syllabus be established.
- 4) That the current census be reviewed in order to provide SACRE ASC members with a good idea of the current beliefs held across the borough.
- 5) That an update be provided to the sub-group on the activities of the Together for Tomorrow Project, to establish whether any resources developed as part of the project could be included within the review of the agreed syllabus.

3. UPCOMING PROCESS FOR THE REVISION OF THE RE LOCAL AGREED SYLLABUS

- In relation to the process of reviewing the agreed syllabus, it was felt by members that SACRE did not want to invest a great deal of time into renewing the agreed syllabus as it may not be widely used, although the statutory part of the agreed syllabus was required to be revised.
- The following members present at the meeting were happy to provide their expertise in the form of a further sub-group, which would focus on updating the statutory part of the agreed syllabus, identifying what changes were required, what could be kept and what further detail was required:
 - H. Lambert (*Chair of SACRE*)
 - T. Williams (*Bahá'í representative on SACRE*)
 - V. Gregory (*Specialist RE Advisor to SACRE*).
- The sub-group would meet face-to-face before the next SACRE ASC meeting in December, and an update from the sub-group would be presented into the next SACRE ASC meeting in December.
- It was felt that it was important that the sub-group seek and invite a representative of the Islamic faith to be part of the sub-group.

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- The Chair would contact a member of the group who was unable to be present at the meeting to inform them of the further sub-group and ask whether they would like to be involved.

Agreed Actions: That SACRE ASC agree that-

- 1) That SACRE ASC form a further sub-group to lead on the updating of the statutory part of the agreed syllabus and to identify what changes were required, what could be kept and what further detail was required to be included.
- 2) That the sub-group meet face-to-face before the next SACRE ASC meeting in December.
- 3) That an update from the sub-group be provided at the next SACRE ASC in December.
- 4) That the sub-group seek and invite a representative of the Islamic faith to be part of the sub-group.
- 5) That the Chair contact's the Humanist representative of the SACRE ASC to invite them to take part in the sub-group.
- 6) That the feedback from this meeting be provided to the next SACRE meeting on the 18 September 2025, and an invitation to join the further sub-group is extended to all SACRE members at the September meeting.

4. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business raised.