

**ROTHERHAM STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION –
AGREED SYLLABUS CONFERENCE (ASC) 18/11/25**

**ROTHERHAM STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
(SACRE)- AGREED SYLLABUS CONFERENCE (ASC)
TUESDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2025**

Present:-

Group 1

D. Homer
T. Williams
T. Griffin

Group 2

H. Lambert (Chair)

Group 3

S. Yasseen

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, L. Melvin, E. Nicholls and F. Radford.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest declared.

6. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no members of the public or representatives of media organisations present at the meeting and no questions had been received in respect of matters on the agenda.

7. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

There were no issues raised on the minutes of the previous meeting held on 4th September 2025 and it was resolved that the minutes be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

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8. UPDATE ON THE CURRENT REVIEW OF THE LOCAL AGREED RE SYLLABUS

The purpose of the ASC meetings was to plan and prepare for the new Local RE Agreed Syllabus (Syllabus) which was due to be released to schools in September 2026. This was the second meeting of the ASC for the 2025/2026 academic year.

The Chair explained that since the last meeting, she had met with the RE Advisor and they had gone through the current syllabus in detail and had identified areas where changes needed to be made. The Chair reminded members that it had been agreed that there would be no major changes to the syllabus in this review, and that smaller amendments and updates would be made. The Chair had completed a comparison exercise against the Religious Education Council's suggestions and recommendations, particularly in respect of including more of a "world view" approach.

The Chair shared the current Local RE Agreed Syllabus on screen and the group talked through the Chair and RE Advisor's comments and suggested changes and amendments. In the ensuing discussion, the following points were raised –

- It was suggested that the Syllabus could be sub-titled "Together for Tomorrow" as that programme had been well received and could continue. This would reflect the themes of diversity, respect, tolerance and sense of belonging in Rotherham. It was proposed that the Introduction section also be updated to include "Together for Tomorrow".
- In the Executive Summary at page 4 of the Syllabus, the Chair suggested amending wording slightly to reflect that the syllabus provides "guidance" for outcomes and that schools must implement "an appropriate scheme of work for RE which enhances their school context", to reflect that the demographic at each school may be different.
- There was discussion around the prescription of religions studied at each Key Stage – KS1 was currently set out as "Christianity & Judaism (some Islam can also be used)". One member of the group commented that given the demographic in some parts of Rotherham, it would be more appropriate to incorporate teaching on Islam from an earlier age to ensure that religions were better represented within schools. This was considered important for community cohesion. However, other members of the group expressed caution around grouping Christianity and Judaism together as whilst there was some overlap, they are separate faiths.

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- It was also suggested that the paragraph referring to non-religious views be expanded upon to fully recognise and include other world views within the Syllabus, including but not limited to, Atheism, Agnosticism and Humanism. Census and ONS data for Rotherham suggested that these were growing areas of belief. The group agreed with this suggested change and to increased reference to non-religious world views throughout the Syllabus.
- The diagrams illustrating the “Aims & Intentions of RE” at pages 7 and 8 of the Syllabus were considered and the Chair suggested swapping Aim B (Express ideas and insights about the nature, significance and impact of religions and world views) and Aim C (Gain and deploy the skills needed to engage seriously with religions and world views) around in order to align them with the priorities set out within the OFSTED “Deep and meaningful? Religious Education Subject report” (2024). The group discussed whether to keep both diagrams in the Syllabus as they included the same information and it was agreed to remove the table format on page 7 and keep the more pictorial diagram on page 8 as this better demonstrated the interconnectedness and flow of the three elements – Knowledge, Expression and Skills.
- The group considered page 8 of the Syllabus which covered the “Contribution of RE to whole school priorities”. The RE Advisor reflected that often, the Head of RE in a school is assumed to also be the lead person on “Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development” (SMSC) but that SMSC should be a whole school priority and considered as a separate thing. The RE Advisor felt that this should be made clear within the Syllabus. The SEND School representative suggested that more guidance for SMSC Leads within schools could be incorporated into the syllabus to help them embed it into the curriculum. The Chair agreed with this suggestion and confirmed she would look to make amendments to incorporate new SMSC guidance and reflect the OFSTED framework.
- The group discussed the pages of the Syllabus that covered Cultural Capital, which had previously been included to fit with the OFSTED framework. This was no longer such a priority, and it was questioned whether this section was still required. The group agreed that this section should be kept in but made more succinct. It was suggested that the “Together for Tomorrow” programme should now be the primary focus of this section of the Syllabus. One group member mentioned the current focus of the Rotherham Faith Leaders group – namely cohesion and shared values - and that inter-faith activities are being encouraged within schools. The Chair agreed that this could be encouraged within the new Syllabus but that there would not be the capacity to thread this through the whole document as this would require a significant

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rewrite.

- The group referred to the outcomes of the recent Curriculum and Assessment Review commissioned by the government, where it was recommended that RE be incorporated into the National Curriculum. The group welcomed this development but acknowledged that the timescale for this was as yet, undetermined. The Chair commented that it was wise to continue with the proposed work on the Syllabus whilst these recommendations were considered by the government, but that a full overhaul of the Syllabus would not be a good use of time. The Governance Advisor confirmed that this had also been the view of other SACREs who had attended a recent NASACRE Yorkshire Regional Hub meeting.
- The Chair confirmed that any recent updates in Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) would be incorporated into the relevant section of the Syllabus.
- The Census figures would need to be updated as the figures in the current Syllabus were from 2011. Tricia Williams agreed to obtain the updated census information and would also prepare some pie-charts to display the information in a different way. One member commented that pie-charts can have the effect of diminishing the size of some groups. It was agreed that the Census information should be presented in both tabular and pie-chart form and that the commentary text around what had changed would be updated.
- There was discussion around the six principal religions that are studied across all key stages. One member of the group commented that it seemed a shame that Judaism is studied at a very young age in KS1 and then not really picked up again later in a child's education. This led to a general discussion about the juxtaposition of religion with history, human geography and current affairs and the cross-curricular opportunities for teachers.
- One member of the group suggested that collective worship should be explicitly referred to in the Syllabus as this was a valuable way of linking RE to other subjects. The Chair suggested that the Rotherham SACRE's separate Guidance for Collective Worship could be updated. The RE Advisor agreed that this would be helpful to some schools at KS4 where there was not much curriculum time available for RE, but that collective worship should also be referred to in the Syllabus. The SEND School representative agreed and felt that it would be very useful to have some information on collective worship set out clearly within the Syllabus. The group agreed that a paragraph should be drafted on collective worship for inclusion at page 16 of the Syllabus.

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- The Chair suggested a re-draft of the suggestion as to how RE is delivered – change from flexible, possibly in blocks or themed days or weeks to a recommendation that it be taught via a consistent weekly lesson. This would encourage a high standard of teaching and that RE is not tokenistic. It was accepted that there needed to be some flexibility maintained in teaching across mixed age groups.
- It was agreed that the section entitled “Respect for All, Global Learning, British Values and Community Cohesion” would need re-drafting to reflect the Together for Tomorrow programme. This section could be cut down and the Chair agreed to insert the relevant hyperlinks to useful websites and resources.
- It was agreed that the section entitled “Fundamental British Values in RE” should be moved to sit with the SMSC section of the Syllabus.
- The Chair confirmed that the Syllabus would be checked against the new Early Years & Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum to ensure that it aligned.
- The Chair explained that it was proposed to keep the Program of Study for each Key Stage the same. The RE Advisor explained that for KS3, the recommendations as to when units were taught would be removed to allow schools flexibility as to when certain RE units could provide the best sequencing for their students. The RE Advisor commented that the ongoing challenge for KS4 and KS5 is the lack of curriculum time for RE and that it is often included within personal development lessons.
- In the section title “Learning outside the Classroom in RE” the RE Advisor commented that it would be useful to add in hyperlinks and a list of useful recommendations for RE visits with the relevant contact details.
- In the table headed “Personal Learning and Thinking Skills for RE” it was explained by the Chair and the RE Advisor that the Thinking Skills column would be removed along with the “Skillsbuilder” diagram later in the Syllabus as this was no longer used. The skills now encouraged by OFSTED within RE were the skills of being a theologian, a sociologist or a philosopher and schools should lead on incorporating these skills within their own pedagogy.
- A member of the group commented that it was becoming increasingly difficult to find school speakers on RE. It was commented that there could be better co-ordination between SACRE, the Rotherham Faith Leaders Group and RMBC. It was

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suggested that some information on where details of school speakers could be found/links to the RE Hub could be provided within the Syllabus to better signpost schools. There was discussion around compiling a list of known speakers with contact details and information about what faith/belief they could speak about. There were very few speakers listed for the South Yorkshire area on the RE Hub so it was agreed that some work needed to be done to encourage people to sign up to the RE Hub. It was suggested that this issue be added to the agenda at the next SACRE meeting to encourage other SACRE members to either sign up to become speakers themselves or to share details of known speakers. The Governance Advisor confirmed that this would be added to the agenda for the 4th December 2025 Rotherham SACRE meeting.

- A member of the group expressed concern around the threat of AI to the essential critical thinking and analysis skills that are necessary for RE. Failure to check sources and question the accuracy of information was more prevalent with the rise of social media and AI. The Chair agreed that a section encouraging critical engagement, personal reflection and world view analysis needed to be incorporated into the Syllabus.
- Regarding SEND and engagement, the new OFSTED framework placed a big emphasis on inclusion and the Chair confirmed that the section of the Syllabus on “RE for pupils with SEND; engagement and learning for all” would be re-worked to reflect this.
- The Chair confirmed that the section on differentiation in teaching would also be re-worded as the adaptive teaching model is now preferred, where all children complete the same learning/activity but with different scaffolding to support different needs.
- It was suggested that an acknowledgment list be included at the end which would recognise the various sources consulted in putting the Syllabus together.
- One member commented that the children’s artwork incorporated within the Syllabus was very impactful and suggested that more recent, artwork from local schools be incorporated into the revised Syllabus. The Chair agreed that this was important and suggested that the RE Awards could provide some good examples of local children’s work to include. The RE Advisor also suggested taking some photos at the Together for Tomorrow event in January.
- A member of the group commented on how inspirational Madam Mayor’s recent speech at the Religious Leader’s Group meeting had been. The group discussed asking Madam Mayor to speak

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again at the Together for Tomorrow event in January or whether she could record a speech for use. The Governance Advisor would seek the appropriate contact and check protocols for Madam Mayor's engagements.

9. NEXT STEPS FOR THE DRAFT LOCAL AGREED RE SYLLABUS

The next steps to progress the review of the Syllabus were agreed as follows:–

- The Chair and the RE Advisor would meet again to further progress the re-drafting of the Syllabus, based on the feedback and agreement on issues raised at this meeting.
- Tricia Williams would obtain up to date ONS data and create tables and pie-charts as agreed, to be provided to the Chair and RE Advisor to incorporate into their re-working of the Syllabus.
- The Governance Advisor confirmed that the next meeting of the ASC group was scheduled for 2nd March 2026 and that the Chair and RE Advisor would need to bring the amended Syllabus back to the group at that meeting for agreement. The Syllabus would then go before the main Rotherham SACRE meeting in June for formal approval, to enable it to be implemented in schools for September 2026. The group confirmed their agreement to this proposed schedule.
- Feedback from this meeting would be provided to the next SACRE meeting on 4th December 2025.

The Chair thanked all members of the group for their time and useful feedback.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no additional items of business requiring consideration at the meeting. The date and time of the next meeting of the ASC was confirmed to be Monday 2nd March 2026 at 4.00pm, via Teams.