

Joint SACREs Conference 2011

Reviewing our RE syllabus

We set out to answer 4 questions:

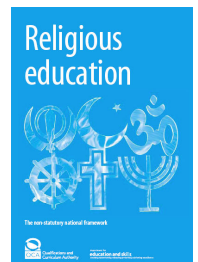
- Are we properly familiar with the syllabus we have and will be reviewing?
- What are some of the factors influencing our syllabus review?
- Do we fully understand our responsibility?
- How are we going to undertake this review?

The syllabus:

It is based tightly on the 2004 Non-statutory National Framework for RE (NSNFRE).

A full version of this document can be downloaded as a pdf from:

http://betterre.reonline.org.uk/good_re/Non-Statutory_National_Framework_for_RE_0410.pdf



A copy of the 2006 Pan-Berkshire syllabus can be found at:

<http://www.westberks.org/GroupWorkspaces.asp?GroupId=610&WorkpaceId=90142>

The introduction section of the syllabus contains:

- Legal requirements
- Aims and attainment targets ('learning about' and 'learning from' religion)
- Contribution of RE to the wider curriculum
- Attitudes to be developed in RE
- Links with SMSC, Citizenship, PSHE, Key skills, language, ICT and inclusion
- Planning and assessment and level descriptions
- Key questions, which form the heart of the syllabus, across the key stages (KSs)

Guidance on RE programmes:

- The allocation of religions to KSs is as it has been in the previous two local syllabuses in line with teachers' requests not to change this (largely because of the resourcing implications)
- The themes set out in the NSNFRE for each KS were turned into key questions which form the backbone of the syllabus

Foundation Stage:

RE is seen here as working towards Early Learning Goals ie RE in the service of the FS aims and learning. There is a discrete section which outlines requirements:

- p20 RE statutory for all preKS1 pupils registered on school roll
- p21 Christianity + at least one other religion
- p22 Explored through religious: figures, stories, times, places, objects

KS1-3

Each of these key stages is summarised in a diagram which sets out the religions required at each stage and the themes (key questions) to be addressed ie:

KS1: At least Christianity and Judaism through

- What do people believe about God, people and the natural world?
- How and why are some stories and books sacred and important in religion?
- Why am I special?
- What does it mean to belong?
- What can people learn from religious leaders and teachers?
- How and why are religious celebrations important to people?
- How and why do symbols express religious meaning?

KS2: At least Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism through

- How do people's beliefs about God, the world and others impact on their lives?
- How do sacred texts and other sources help people to understand God, the world and human life?
- Why and how are people influenced and inspired by others?
- What is expected of a person in following a religion or belief?
- How do religious families and communities practise their faith, and what contributions do they make to local life?
- How do religions and beliefs respond to global issues of human rights, fairness, social justice and the importance of the environment?
- Why, where and how do people worship?
- Why are some occasions sacred to believers?
- How do people's beliefs about life after death influence the way they live?
- How and why are religious and spiritual ideas expressed and in the ways they are?

KS3: At least Christianity, Buddhism and Islam through

- How do religions and, where appropriate, secular philosophies understand God, the world and the purpose/nature of human life?
- How do religions help believers decide what is right and wrong?
- Why do concepts and developments in science often present challenges to people with different religious and secular beliefs?
- How do religions understand one another?
- How do people live as believers in the modern world applying their beliefs to everyday life and relationships?
- How do religions and, where appropriate, secular philosophies promote a balance between rights and responsibilities?
- Why and how might believers accept they have responsibilities to care for the world in which they live?
- How and why do people of different faiths engage together in activities to help the wider community and sometimes come into conflict?
- How and why is spirituality expressed in different ways by people who hold a variety of religious and secular beliefs?

In each KS the key questions are grouped and colour coded into three bigger areas of focus:

- Key beliefs and teachings
- How key beliefs and teachings are applied in everyday life
- How key beliefs and teachings are expressed in worship, symbolism and art

Schools are required to address each of the key questions in a key stage in relation to Christianity and at least some questions from each colour coded section for the other compulsory religions. Other religions may be explored without insistence on this balance. No guidance is provided about the relative amounts of time or attention to be given to different faith traditions in any of the key stages. Choices can be made in response to the nature of school communities.

14-19:

- Examinable courses compulsory at KS4
- Examinable courses encouraged for Post 16
- Minimum time stipulation for Post 16

Appendix

There is an appendix outlining an approach to the Baha'i faith. During this review and subsequently other faiths could be added in the same format later eg Humanism.

Developments we need to consider:

- NSNFRE – is this still what we want to use as the basis for our syllabus
- RE in English schools: Non-statutory guidance 2010 – do we need to consider any advice found in this document?
- Assessment in RE – there is a national working party currently reviewing the level descriptions and the nature of assessment in RE. We will need to keep this in our sights as the review progresses
- Review of the NC – to what extent do we aspire to develop a syllabus that will sit comfortably alongside the National Curriculum. At present we don't know what a review of the NC will result in so this is something else to try to be informed about as the two reviews go forward
- EBacc – will RE's omission or inclusion influence what we require in KS4

Teachers responses and suggestions – summarised below and found in full, by LA, at:

<http://www.westberks.org/GroupWorkspaces.asp?GroupId=610&WorkpaceId=90142>

What teachers say:

Responses were received from: 21 secondary schools, 2 middle schools, 54 primary schools, 2 special schools

Of those responding, 6/54 primary schools and 1/21 secondary school said they were not confident with the syllabus. All others were either reasonably or very confident with it.

Few had made use of the supplementary guidance on planning published to schools in some LAs but those who had used it found it helpful.

Most schools use the syllabus creatively and flexibly to create their own questions based on those in the syllabus

Schools identified the following as strengths of the current syllabus:

- Questions
- Breadth
- Flexibility
- Detail
- Exemplar expectations
- Colour coding
- Clearly set out, good clear structure

Schools/teachers included amongst the things they want:

- More flexibility
- Less content, more explanation of content
- Less repetition
- More skills based

- More concise
- More for EYFS
- More guidance eg what, when, how etc
- More thematic approach
- Separate out for each year group
- More guidance on Christianity
- More cross curricular links
- Links with PLTS
- More ideas and suggested activities
- Levelled assessment tasks
- More on assessment
- Exemplification of levels
- Pupil friendly level descriptions
- Exemplar plans
- Resource suggestions including websites and contact details for places of worship
- Resources – eg DVD
- More training including in questioning skills
- Make it more child friendly
- Recognise many children don't have a religious faith
- DON'T MAKE MUCH CHANGE

The statutory responsibilities involved in a syllabus review:

Each LA must establish an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) which comprises 4 groups exactly as a SACRE. There is no facility for co-options on an ASC but it can seek and take advice as needed. Members of each group have particular areas of expertise and influence to bring to the review process:

- Groups A and B- valued advice on presentation of each religion
- Group C – valued advice on what will work in schools
- Group D – ensure no hiccups at the final stage when the syllabus has to be approved and published by the council in each LA
- Each group has one vote and all groups must approve the revised syllabus

The process:

- Joint SACREs Conference 2011 – 28th June @ Easthampstead Park Conference Centre
- September (date to be confirmed) a meeting for Chairs and LA officers, together with other SACRE members who would like to be involved. This meeting will consider the big key principles on which the shared syllabus will be based
- KS working groups meet during October
- First ideas to ASCs in November
- Faith groups meet to ensure representation of their religions are acceptable in early spring
- Refinement and first draft for ASCs in Feb
- Support material and final draft by late May
- Council approvals by end of June
- Publication July 2012
- (website sharing throughout the process)

This timetable is very tight and is dependent on no major disagreements. With more debate, timings might need to be amended. A review can take as long as is needed. This timetable is proposed just so a new syllabus might be in place for September 2012 and also takes account of when money has been scheduled to be available.

Key issues:

- Dates of ASC meetings – these need to be co-ordinated into the first two weeks of November and February
- Selection of teachers from each KS by early September ready for working group meetings in October
- Teachers' responses and requests – what could each SACRE do? Could SACREs share out work on the development of support material so that cost and effort might be spread realistically reflecting budgets and capacity
- Publication – each SACRE/ASC needs to consider how it wants the syllabus published eg hard copy, CD, web. Funding requests need to be made in plenty of time for a July 2012 publication date
- Dissemination/launch – how will the syllabus get to schools? Will there be a launch? In each LA? Will it be combined with some training for teachers?
- Training – initial and on-going. What commitments might/can be made?

Suggestions/questions arising from discussion groups:

- Cross-SACRE co-operation to share resources, expertise, the development of support materials and the provision of training is to be welcomed.
- It would be good to raise awareness of what each SACRE identifies it can best offer any shared initiatives.
- Chairs and LA officers with responsibility for the six SACREs should consider meeting maybe twice a year to facilitate such sharing.
- Training in relation to a revised syllabus is important especially for those who are nervous about change or new to the syllabus altogether.
- There should be a brief sheet which sets out the differences between the 2006 syllabus and the new one when it is available.
- Delegates were in favour of a launch for the syllabus to raise the profile and status of RE. Perhaps Headteachers as well as RE subject leaders should be invited. Governors?
- NQTs should have access to good RE CPD.