

ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

28 November 2017

PRESENT: Councillor Richard Kellaway, Michael Gammage, Anne Andrews, Ceri Neil, Ravinder Singh Zandu, Hilary Harris, Ila Gangotra, Rev Rosie Webb, Louise Ceska and Chris Sayers

Officers in attendance: Andy Carswell

ACTION

1 Elect Chairman and Vice Chairman

Cllr Kellaway proposed Mike Gammage as Chairman; this was seconded by Louise Ceska and unanimously agreed by members. Mike Gammage proposed Karen Butler as Vice Chairman; this was seconded by Cllr Kellaway and unanimously agreed by members.

2 Context Setting

Anne Andrews introduced the item by explaining that the current agreed syllabus related to each local authority area in Berkshire. The purpose of the Agreed Syllabus Conference was to discuss if members were happy with the current setup, or whether amendments needed to be made.

By way of context Anne Andrews explained that she had gone through five years' worth of data that looked at how RE was taught. She made reference to a 2013 Ofsted report, the Making the Difference report from the Church of England, and an RE Council-funded review of the nationwide curriculum; all of which stated that RE teaching was generally not of a high standard, particularly with regards to teaching Christianity. Anne Andrews explained that there was now a greater public acknowledgement relating to concerns over RE teaching at the present time compared to when the last syllabus review was carried out in 2012. She stated that it was this background of change that members needed to take into consideration when deciding if any changes needed to be made to the syllabus.

3 Recommended Religions Studied At Each Key Stage

Anne Andrews explained that the syllabus currently stated that Christianity and Judaism should be taught as the core religions at Key Stage 1; Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism as the core religions at Key Stage 2; and Christianity, Buddhism and Islam as the core religions at Key Stage 3. She stated that this didn't mean other religions couldn't be covered in addition, but it was legally required that these should be studied at each Key Stage.

One change that had been proposed was that teachers would be provided with a list of religions to study by the end of Key Stage 2 and it would be for each school to decide how and when teaching of each religion should be delivered. It was noted, for example, that some pupils may not study Judaism again post Key Stage 1 and would not study Islam at all until Key Stage 3. It was felt that this approach would provide pupils in Key Stage 1 and 2 with a broader range of study before examining some religions in greater depth in Key Stage 3, and at the same time providing schools with a greater level of flexibility regarding which topics to cover. Members were reminded that it was a legal requirement

for Christianity to be taught to all year groups. It was felt that pupils should have learned about three religions by the end of Key Stage 2, and a further two by the end of Key Stage 4.

Members were asked to give their views on which religions should be studied. Hilary Harris said she believed Christianity, Islam and Judaism should be considered as the three core groups due to their level of influence, but also said that schools should be free to study other religions and suggested Hinduism and Sikhism, to reflect the number of people who observe those religions in the Royal Borough. Ceri Neil stated her belief that the core religions should be studied across all age groups. Cllr Kellaway asked if study of Christianity needed to be Bible-based. Anne Andrews replied that the syllabus did not dictate this, and teachers were free to choose how the subject was taught.

Mike Gammage asked if there had been any feedback from teachers about what, if anything, needed to be changed. Louise Ceska said the Head of RE at her school was happy with the syllabus. Anne Andrews said she had surveyed schools and feedback suggested teachers generally liked the Believing, Belonging and Behaving and Big Questions sections of the syllabus. Some teachers had indicated they wanted more freedom to choose which religions they studied, but others had said they wanted clearer guidelines on what should be taught. Anne Andrews added however that this feedback was based on just 49 responses to a survey sent to all schools across all six local authority areas in Berkshire.

Chris Sayers stated his belief that pupils should be taught about more than just the basic aspects of religion, and that the purpose of religion should be explored. Anne Andrews said this was covered by the Big Questions.

Members were reminded that a national RE syllabus could not be made without a change in the law, so local syllabuses would help to reflect the religious composition of each area of the country. Anne Andrews noted that in most parts of the Royal Borough the second largest religious group was Islam.

Ila Gangotra suggested that the Abrahamic religions could be taught as one study block and Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism could be studied as another group, in order for pupils to look at the commonalities between different religions.

After further discussions, members felt the approach that afforded the most flexibility while also giving teachers guidance on what should be taught would be for the syllabus to state that all religions needed to be explored; however a core group of further religions for further study would also be recommended. Members also felt that there was little that was fundamentally wrong with the syllabus as it stood. It was agreed that these comments would be fed back to Jan Lever.

4 Retaining AT1 (Learning About) and AT2 (Learning From)

Anne Andrews explained that the National Curriculum framework for RE had recommended moving away from the two attainment targets towards three strands of learning expectations. These were knowing about and understanding a range of religions and world views; expressing ideas and insights about the nature, significance and impact of religions; and gaining and deploying the skills needed to engage seriously with religions. Some local authorities had retained the two target system, some had made alterations to but broadly retained the current system, and others had moved to the three

strands as per the recommendation.

After some discussion, members were in agreement that adopting the three strand approach was the best way forward.

5 Religious Education Assessment

Anne Andrews informed members that by virtue of agreeing to take the three strand approach, the assessment framework would also need to be changed as a result. She said that she had a suitable updated framework that would fulfil this purpose.

6 Early Years

It was agreed that it was not necessary to discuss Early Years provision.

7 Key Questions

It was agreed that the Key Questions from the syllabus would be circulated to members. It was explained that amendments were needed to some of them and member input was invited.

8 Revised Syllabus Distribution

It was agreed that the syllabus should be an online resource, as it was accepted that SACRE would be unlikely to have the budget to produce printed copies.

9 Syllabus Appendices

It was agreed that the appendices should be reviewed, with a view to slimming them down in order to provide a better resource for teachers.

10 Syllabus Launch

Members were in agreement that a launch event solely for the Royal Borough should be held locally, with separate events to take place in the other local authority areas in Berkshire.

Anne Andrews informed members that she would be meeting with Jan Lever in January, and a draft version of the new syllabus would be provided at the next SACRE meeting.

The meeting, which began at 7.45 pm, ended at 8.49 pm

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