

Report to: SACRE Agreed Syllabus Conference

Date of meeting: 21 September 2021

By: Carrie Beech - East Sussex Adviser to SACRE

Title: Feedback from Schools' Working Groups

Purpose: To outline the views of the East Sussex teaching staff with regards the review of the East Sussex Agreed Syllabus

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) The recommendation based on the feedback and engagement with school leaders and teachers is that the East Sussex SACRE Agreed Syllabus Conference works with RE Today to support the review of the East Sussex Agreed Syllabus for RE based on the RE Today Model B syllabus,**
 - 2) It is also recommended that the Agreed Syllabus Conference agree some adaptations to the Syllabus for the East Sussex context.**
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1. Background

1.1 The SACRE Schools' Working Group were charged with running a consultation process around the options for revising the East Sussex Agreed Syllabus. A background paper was sent out via the Virtual School Bag to all schools and two focus group meetings were arranged for schools on the 28 April and the 13 May 2021. Members of SACRE were invited to join one of the meetings if they wished.

1.2 Between the two events there were 92 attendees. Notably no colleagues from Special Schools attended.

1.3 During the event there was an opportunity for colleagues to join discussion groups and feedback their initial thoughts. At the end of the event colleagues were invited to follow a link to a MS Form to complete a small number of questions giving feedback on the options and their thoughts as we move forward in ES.

2. Supporting Information

2.1 Of the questions asked below is a summary of the comments received from the 64 completed forms.

The questions included:

- Does your school make use of the current ES Agreed Syllabus?
89% said they did fully or partially
- If you use the current Agreed Syllabus what works well?
responses included positive comments about the overview the syllabus provides, the resource and vocabulary sections
- The questionnaire asked about the features schools would like to see in a revised/new Agreed Syllabus

the top features included an enquiry based pedagogical approach, integrating Understanding Christianity resource that church schools already use, relevance to 21st Century lived experience of religions, access to support through CPD

- Rank the options
78% ranked the option of working with RE Today and the model B syllabus first
- When asked about a core curriculum option at KS4
45% said they would like a core curriculum offer (this figure reflects the fact that there were only a small number of secondary teachers involved in the consultation events and many of the primary teachers and leaders said no to this question)

2.2 Other comments included:

- The new syllabus needs to be engaging and relevant to life in multi-cultural Britain and the global context.
- It needs to have breadth and encompass non-religious world views
- Schemes of work to support the teaching and non-specialists in particular
- Clear provision for all Key Stages, being conscious of the constraints and opportunities that schools are working within

2.3 As well as the consultation events the background paper was shared with both the Primary and Secondary Boards and consultation discussions took place at EIPs, (Education Improvement Partnerships) and Area Groups.

3. Primary EIP Feedback

- Most primary schools map their curriculum onto the ES Agreed Syllabus and make use of the resources.
- Diocesan schools are subject to an additional inspection for their Christian Ethos SIAMS (Statutory Inspection for Anglican and Methodist Schools). Roman Catholic Schools are subject to their own inspection CSI (Catholic Schools Inspection).
- Most Anglican and Methodist schools make use of the Understanding Christianity resource.
- The feedback from colleagues in the Primary RE Network and EIPs has been that their preference is to opt for Model B RE Today.
- This has been predominantly as a result of the excellent professional development Lat Blaylock has provided for the group and the inclusion of the 'Understanding Christianity' resource in the schemes of work.

4. Secondary Area Group Feedback

4.1 On the current Agreed Syllabus:

- Most schools successfully map their KS3 programme of study onto the Agreed Syllabus;
- Most schools included additional areas such as Worldviews, Humanism, Philosophy, Ethics;
- When a KS4 qualification route is used, outcomes don't always equate to 'success';
- Some schools refer to it as "dry".

4.2 On reflection, an improved course needs to:

- Inspire students throughout particularly when transitioning into KS4;
- Address issues relating to diversity and inclusion rather than being scripture-based.
- Engage students through issues rather than festivals and events;
- Be reflective of society beyond East Sussex.

4.3 On what schools want from a new Agreed Syllabus:

- A programme of study at KS4 that offers a viable alternative to a qualification route;
- Greater support needed for non-examined Key Stage 4 especially for non-specialists;
- Any non-examined KS4 course should offer possible progression onto KS5 courses;
- Preference for thematic teaching rather than unitised by religion;
- Focus on skills that build coherently throughout the programme of study.

4.4 On a preference from the options:

- A fairly even split between RE Today and Hampshire.
- Hampshire seemed to equate to more support for non-specialists, possibly due to the fact that a KS4 core curriculum already exists in this model.

5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

5.1 The recommendation of the Schools' Working Group, based on the feedback and engagement with school leaders and teachers is that the East Sussex SACRE works with RE Today to support the review of the ES Agreed Syllabus based on the RE Today Model B syllabus.

5.2 It is recommended the Agreed Syllabus Conference agrees some adaptations of the Syllabus for the East Sussex context.

Contact

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