

Report to:	East Sussex SACRE
Date of meeting:	2 March 2023
By:	Barry Blakelock ESCC Children's Service Representative bblakelock@ryecollege.co.uk
Title:	Implementation of the new Agreed Syllabus in Special Schools
Purpose:	To advise the East Sussex SACRE on Special School Inclusion

Context

Special Schools are not required to teach Religious Education in accordance with the Local Agreed Syllabus but work with an understanding that "so far as is practicable, every pupil should receive religious education".

Kirsty Eydmann, Executive Principal at the Southfield Trust, has joined SACRE as Special Schools' Representative to give SACRE Members insight into the sector; share the views of Special School teachers and promote use of the new Agreed Syllabus, where practicable. There are 14 Special Schools across East Sussex, of which, 4 were represented at the launch of the new Agreed Syllabus.

Special School Groupings

In relation to Religious Education, East Sussex Special schools broadly fall into three groups: schools engaged with the delivery of religious education; schools where it is not yet practicable; schools where it may be practicable.

Special Schools engaged with the delivery of Religious Education

- **Summerdown School** (Southfield Trust) is a new school and will educate up to 84 learners aged 5 to 16 who have a diagnosis of autism. It will also include a separate centre called 'The Southfield Centre' which will educate up to 51 learners with complex learning and medical needs.
- **The Lindfield School** (Southfield Trust) takes pupils aged 11 to 16 who are identified as having a range of special educational needs, and primarily learning difficulties, including autism.
- **Hazel Court School** (Southfield Trust) is on two sites and caters for secondary and tertiary learners aged 11 to 19 with a range of special educational needs.

Special Schools where it is not yet practicable to deliver Religious Education

- **The South Downs School** (Southfield Trust) is based on two sites in Eastbourne and provides education for pupils aged 3 to 11 years who have a wide range of complex learning difficulties and special educational needs.
- **Torfield School** (Torfield and Saxon Mount Trust) caters for learners who have a range of educational needs particularly autism and moderate learning difficulties.
- **Glyne Gap School** makes provision for pupils aged 2 to 19 with complex needs and autism. Most pupils have severe or profound learning difficulties: many have additional needs and disabilities (such as a sensory or physical impairment).
- **St Mary's School** (Sabden Trust) is a rural school in Heathfield for learners with social, emotional and mental health difficulties.

- **Cuckmere House School** (Sabden Trust) is an outstanding special school that makes provision for learners with social, emotional & mental health needs aged 5 to 16.
- **New Horizons School** (Sabden Trust) is a Special School that supports pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan with social, emotional & mental health needs. The school is located in St Leonards on Sea and has two sites a mile apart.

Special Schools where it may be practicable to deliver Religious Education

- **The Flagship School** (Ropemakers) is a special school for pupils aged 8 to 16 who have the capacity to reach age related expectation yet whose neuro-diverse profiles alongside social, emotional and mental health result in barriers to learning.
- **The Workplace** (Sabden Trust) is aimed at vocationally minded pupils aged 14 to 16 from across East Sussex who are struggling with a mainstream curriculum and are at risk of disengagement and exclusion.
- **The Ropemakers Academy** offers a nurture-based education to learners who have been identified as having social, emotional and mental health needs.
- **Grove Park School** meets the complex needs of learners including those with profound, severe and moderate learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders and sensory needs.
- **Saxon Mount School** (Torfield and Saxon Mount Trust) caters for learners who have a range of Special Educational Needs particularly autism and moderate learning difficulties.

Current arrangements and barriers

Special Schools deliver Religious Education in many different ways in order to meet the individual needs of the children and young people in attendance. Teaching is often tailored to individuals or very small groups. Some schools may deliver discrete subject-specific lessons whilst others may combine Religious Education with Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) and/or Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) delivered through daily tutor sessions each morning.

Alongside tradition teaching approaches, more experiential activities can be incorporated including the use of artefacts, objects, smells and imagery. Some school include worship which can reference people with whom the learners are familiar as well as re-enforcing the importance of relationships and school values.

Whilst the new Agreed Syllabus is well structured, it can be overwhelming for Special School teachers who need to take it back to the essence of each lesson and find ways into teaching that make it accessible to their learners. Examples of this might include using sign language during the celebration of Diwali or visits to places of worship emphasising the sensory experience.

Recommendations for next steps

- Further facilitate the work of Kirsty Eydmann through recognition of an informal Special School network to promote engagement with Religious Education and the Agreed Syllabus.
- Use the network to develop a simplified version of the programme of study alongside a bank of resources that Special Schools may draw on.
- Consider the specific training needs of teachers in Special Schools and the extent to which SACRE might be able to support their development.