

Cabinet

11 April 2024

Coventry and Warwickshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education

Recommendation

That Cabinet approves the Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education for use in all of Warwickshire's Schools without a religious character over the next five years (2024-2029).

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Local Authorities (LA's) have a statutory duty to set up and maintain a 'Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education' (SACRE) whose duties include giving advice to the LA on the Religious Education (RE) given under the Agreed Syllabus, and to monitor the provision and quality of Religious Education provided by the Agreed RE syllabus in the Local Authority's Community Schools (LA maintained schools that do not have a religious character).
- 1.2 The LA also has a statutory duty to set up and appoint members to an occasional body that is required to review the locally Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education every five years known as the Agreed Syllabus Conference. Academies and schools which do have a religious character may also use the locally agreed syllabus.
- 1.3 The previous Agreed Syllabus for Coventry and Warwickshire was due to run until 2022 but this was extended due to the impact of the pandemic. It was also agreed that working with Coventry had been beneficial for both Local Authorities, and that this would continue for the next Agreed Syllabus. The Agreed Syllabus Conference on 30 November 2023 agreed to recommend the final draft of the new Agreed Syllabus to Cabinet.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 The Local Authority has a duty to set up and maintain SACRE/ASC (Agreed Syllabus Conference). This is funded from the Central School Services block (CSSB) of the Dedicated Schools Grant with the agreement of Schools Forum. The annual funding dedicated to this work is £13,300.

2.2 The duties and timing of expenditure is below:

- National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (NASACRE) membership (an annual cost)
- Reviewing and renewing the Agreed Syllabus (an annual cost)
- Writing units of work to accompany the Agreed Syllabus (an annual cost)
- Clerking/support services to SACRE/ASC meetings (an annual cost)
- Launching the new Agreed Syllabus into schools (a cost incurred every 5 years)

2.3 The majority of the cost for the Agreed Syllabus is a contribution towards the secondment of the RE Co-ordinator for Coventry and Warwickshire, who has focused on reviewing and renewing the syllabus since 2021.

3. Environmental Implications

None.

4. Supporting Information

Warwickshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education

4.1 All schools in Warwickshire, other than academies, voluntary aided schools or schools with a religious character must follow the Agreed Syllabus. Academies and those schools which do have a religious character may use the syllabus but are under no obligation to do so.

4.2 Warwickshire has a SACRE (Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education) which meets once per term.

4.3 Warwickshire SACRE is a statutory body made up of four groups of members representing:

- Christian denominations and other religions that appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions of the area (this currently includes representatives from religious backgrounds of Baha'i, Buddhism, Christianity (Roman Catholic and Non-Conformist), Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism)
- the Church of England (Christianity)
- Teachers' Associations
- WCC Councillors

4.4 In addition, members are co-opted to the group to include people with particular expertise in the area of Religious Education or to represent other groups.

4.5 The Local Authority has a duty to set up and appoint members to an occasional body known as the Agreed Syllabus Conference, which is

responsible for reviewing the locally adopted Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education every five years.

- 4.6 The Agreed Syllabus Conference has the same membership as Warwickshire SACRE and is convened at SACRE meetings.

Options considered and recommended proposal

- 4.7 The previous Agreed Syllabus for Coventry and Warwickshire was due to run until 2022. However, due to the impact of the pandemic it was agreed with RE Today ([RE Today supporting Religious Education in schools](#)) to extend the existing license until the end of the 23/24 academic year to provide stability for schools. It was also agreed that working with Coventry had been beneficial for both Local Authorities, and that this would continue for the next Agreed Syllabus.
- 4.8 Coventry and Warwickshire Agreed Syllabus Conference considered the below options for the 2024 – 2029 Agreed Syllabus:
- Commission a fully bespoke syllabus
 - Extend the existing license with RE Today and re-issue the existing syllabus
- 4.9 In 2018 the Commission on RE published its final report which recommended a new approach to RE based on worldviews, rather than the existing world religions paradigm. Coventry and Warwickshire Agreed Syllabus Conference agreed that the new Agreed Syllabus should reflect this shift and also include more of a local flavour, both of which could be achieved by commissioning a fully bespoke syllabus.
- 4.10 Coventry and Warwickshire Local Authorities jointly employ an RE Facilitator who led this project. A group of 10 Primary and Secondary teachers from schools across both areas also worked on the main syllabus structure and the accompanying units of work.
- 4.11 The Agreed Syllabus has been funded by Coventry and Warwickshire Local Authorities as well as Farmington Institute, who awarded scholarships to two members of the teacher writing group. In addition, the syllabus structure forms part of a national project for the Religious Education Council.
- 4.12 Schools will be given access to the Agreed Syllabus through a password-protected website, which was also the arrangement for the 2017 – 2022 Agreed Syllabus.
- 4.13 The Agreed Syllabus Conference on 30 November 2023 agreed to recommend the final draft of the new Agreed Syllabus to Cabinet.

Results of consultation undertaken

- 4.14 This syllabus has been prepared in consultation with the Religious Education Council, members of both Coventry and Warwickshire SACREs and practising teachers in Coventry and Warwickshire.

Summary and Overview of the Curriculum

- 4.15 The syllabus contains a strong statutory framework, operating spirally to introduce and re-introduce, through the education system's Key Stages, the seven core concepts relevant to all and any worldviews - for example, Wisdom and Guidance and Personal Responsibility. Whenever a concept encounters one of the three main disciplines of RE - theology, philosophy, and the human and social sciences - an enquiry question may be raised. This technique has given rise to 31 enquiry questions engendering units of work.
- 4.16 The teacher is then free to use the non-statutory elements: sub-questions; worldviews case studies; individual lesson plans; and 'layover' units to provide extra material when relevant to the local situation. One aim has been to ensure that pupils encounter 'people in real life' who are inhabiting their religion or worldview through a diverse range of lived experience and expression.
- 4.17 The proposed Coventry and Warwickshire Agreed Syllabus will foster in pupils a deeper understanding of the panorama of religion and worldviews, along with a greater self-understanding, and enhance the general reputation of the subject as interesting and deeply significant for the future of humankind.
- 4.18 The minimum allocated curriculum time for RE is set out in the table below, and based on the most recent Ofsted guidance.

Key Stage	Minimum Allocated Curriculum Time
EYFS (4-5 years)	36 hours of RE (e.g. weekly 50-60 minute lessons or some short sessions implemented through continuous provision)
KS1 (5-7 years)	36 hours of tuition per year (e.g. weekly hour-long lessons, or less than an hour a week plus a series of RE days)
KS2 (7-11 years)	45 hours of tuition per year (e.g. weekly 60-75 minute lessons, or a series of RE days or weeks that cumulatively amount to 45+ hours of RE in the year)
KS3 (11-14 years)	At least 45 hours of tuition per year (e.g. weekly hour-long lessons)

- 4.19 At Key Stage Four (KS4) the advice of the Coventry and Warwickshire SACREs is that students follow a GCSE course for RE as much as is possible. It is advised that at Key Stage Five (KS5) A-level RE is offered to students.

4.20 Regardless of what provision is made, these are the recommended minimum allocated curriculum times for KS4 and KS5:

Key Stage	Minimum Allocated Curriculum Time
KS4 (14-16 years)	At least 5% of curriculum time, or 70 hours of tuition spread across the key stage (e.g. an hour a week for 5 terms, or weekly 50 minute lessons, supplemented with off-timetable RE days)
KS5 (16-18 years)	Allocation of time for RE for all should be clearly identifiable on the sixth form timetable. This might be weekly lessons or in the form of a series of conferences allowing students the opportunity to look in depth at controversial topics related to RE.

4.21 Statutory and non-statutory elements of the syllabus are:

Statutory elements of the syllabus	Non-statutory elements of the syllabus
<p>Spiral coverage of the seven core concepts.</p> <p>The main enquiry questions (which also serve as unit titles).</p> <p>The lead disciplines (theology, philosophy, human & social sciences and history) indicated in each unit.</p> <p>The assessment model outlined in this syllabus.</p>	<p>The sub-questions that provide a suggested outline for the enquiry established by the main enquiry question.</p> <p>The suggested worldviews case studies within the unit- these are what SACRE have determined to be the most relevant for the question(s) posed but local context may suggest another worldview case study is relevant for that particular school.</p>

The Agreed Syllabus' Approach

4.22 The Worldviews, syllabus works within a broader understanding of 'worldview' as not just being about seeing but also about experiencing and living in a very bodily sense. Through engaging with the units of work, pupils will come to a realisation that worldviews, including religions, are not simply about how individuals and groups 'see' the world but are also embodied and involve real people making decisions about what to do with their bodies, the places and spaces they want to practise and engage in ritual, and the importance that artefacts and objects might hold within a worldview. We also regard worldviews as holding spiritual significance and that, for many, beliefs in the transcendent and something supernatural and beyond themselves are of utmost importance.

How is our syllabus structured?

4.23 The syllabus is structured around seven core concepts, repeatedly countered as part of a spiral curriculum where these concepts are revisited from the different angles provided by a) case studies from a range of

religions and worldviews, b) different ‘ways of knowing’ about religion and worldviews through the methods and tools of disciplines of study, c) the additional perspectives that come with age and maturity as pupils move through the education system. These seven concepts are relevant to all worldviews, including individual, communal and organised worldviews.

4.24 These are the seven core concepts, the icons and the associated disciplines for units within each concept:

- Belonging and Believing
- Wisdom and Guidance
- Personal Responsibility
- Living Well
- Authority and Power
- Changes
- Grand Narratives

5. Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

5.1 The syllabus will be introduced for use from September 2024, with support provided to schools during implementation.

5.2 The launch date for the new syllabus is at an RE Conference on 22nd April 2024.

Appendices

None.

Background Papers

Other useful documents

Ofsted research review series: religious education

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-review-series-religious-education/research-review-series-religious-education>

Religious Education Council – Religion and Worldviews in Religious Education

<https://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/our-work/worldviews/>

	Name	Contact Information
Report Author	Leah Adams Head of Early Years and School Effectiveness,	leahadams@warwickshire.gov.uk
Director	Director for Education,	johnnykyriacou@warwickshire.gov.uk

	Johnny Kyriacou	
Executive Director	Executive Director for Children and Young People, Nigel Minns	nigelminns@warwickshire.gov.uk
Portfolio Holder	Portfolio Holder for Education, Cllr Kaur	kamkaur@warwickshire.gov.uk

The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): None – this is a County wide report

Other members: Councillors Brown, M Humphreys and Roodhouse.