

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
7th February 2018
Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and
Communities
Compliance at KS4

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 To consider any issues pertaining to compliance in RE at KS4.

2 Summary

2.1 The Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus requires all pupils in KS4 to follow an accredited examination syllabus in RE.

2.2 The 2017 examination results suggest a varied picture of compliance with this requirement at KS4 in maintained schools.

2.3 The DfE published its response to the consultation over the EBacc in July. In paragraph 72, there was a re-affirmation of the statutory nature of RE in all maintained schools. The SACRE, in fulfilling its monitoring role, can act when a school is not fulfilling its statutory duties with regard to RE.

3 Recommendation

3.1 That members consider the wording of the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus as it applies to KS4.

3.2 That members use a part of the SACRE budget to commission the RE consultant's time to visit Staffordshire's maintained Secondary schools to gather an accurate picture of compliance in RE.

3.3 That the findings of this research are presented at the summer meeting to enable members to determine what, if any, action is required to ensure that schools are fulfilling their statutory obligations with regards to RE.

4 Background

4.1 DfE response to the Ebacc consultation. Paragraph 72.

72. We have considered suggestions to include additional subjects or pillars within the EBacc but have decided that this could reduce pupil choice at GCSE to the point where no other subjects can be studied. Religious education must be taught to all pupils until the end of key stage 5, a qualification (such as GCSE religious studies) should be offered at the end of key stage 4 to accredit pupils' knowledge and understanding. The proportion of pupils in state funded mainstream schools entering a GCSE in religious studies remains high at 47% in 2015/16.

5 Equal Opportunities

5.1 This report has been prepared in accordance with the County Council's policies on equal opportunities.

6 Financial implications

6.1 There are no immediate financial implications

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Compliance at KS4: National statements about RE

The DfE published its response to the consultation over the EBacc in July. Many had hoped that RE might be included in an expanded list of EBacc subjects. This did not happen, but in paragraph 72, there was a re-affirmation of the statutory nature of RE in all maintained schools:

72. We have considered suggestions to include additional subjects or pillars within the EBacc but have decided that this could reduce pupil choice at GCSE to the point where no other subjects can be studied. Religious education must be taught to all pupils until the end of key stage 5, a qualification (such as GCSE religious studies) should be offered at the end of key stage 4 to accredit pupils' knowledge and understanding. The proportion of pupils in state funded mainstream schools entering a GCSE in religious studies remains high at 47% in 2015/16.

SACRE members may wish to examine the wording of the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus and ensure that it has sufficient provision for pupils at the latter key stages:

At Key Stage 4 all pupils should fulfil their entitlement by following as a basis an accredited specification (from a recognised examination board) in Religious Studies. Schools should provide reasonable time for pupils to complete this and if appropriate, to attain an external qualification. This may be Full Course, or Entry Level Religious Studies. Schools wishing to base this provision on any other specification, for example Humanities or Citizenship, must take advice from SACRE.

In keeping with the aims of religious education and the underlying principles of the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus pupils must have the opportunity to study Christianity and to draw examples from at least one other faith or secular world view. The decision to enter pupils for an examination at the end of the course is at the schools' discretion. (14)

- One option might be for the AS to state “*all pupils must*” follow an accredited course.
- If the AS suggests that all pupils should follow such a course, does it adequately outline a syllabus for those who do not? Is this necessary?
- Would it help to communicate the message from the DfE to your schools to help start a new dialogue about KS4 provision and compliance?
- Should Staffordshire SACRE use part of its remaining budget to commission the RE consultants time to visit Maintained Secondary schools to gather an accurate picture of compliance in RE to provide a clear basis for fulfilling its statutory monitoring role?