

Minutes of the Agreed Syllabus Conference held on 12 February 2014

Present:

Sonia Andjelkovic
Sue Blackmore
Diana Cutler
Peter Davies
Jane Essex
Terry Finn
Dr Laow

Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf
Liz O'Brien
Muhammad Parekh
Sam Phillips
Liz Williams
Rosemary Woodward
Caroline Wood

Also in attendance: Emma Jardine and Helen Phillips

Apologies: Tricia Budd, Christine Chadwick, Mick Dwyer, Hifsa Haroon-Iqbal, Ann Hewetson, Colin Hopkins, Paul Lewis, Barrie Scott, Conor Wileman and David Williams

PART ONE

1. Agreed Syllabus Conference

The Education Act 1993 required the Local Authority (LA) to institute a review of its locally agreed syllabus every five years after the completion of its last review. The last revision of the Agreed Syllabus had been issued to schools in 2009 and at their meeting of 13 November 2013 SACRE resolved to write to the Cabinet Member, Learning and Skills, highlighting the need for a review and seeking approval to set up an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) to undertake this review.

SACRE had previously received a copy of this correspondence and the Cabinet Member's approval to convene the ASC.

Members had noted the high regard that the original Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus had. This had been produced in 1992/93, largely led by Paul Bellingham, and had remained in tact with slight adjustments for over twenty years, a testament to its quality.

Since the last syllabus revision in 2009 there had been a number of major changes in education which had a direct impact on Religious Education (RE). These included:

- a) from September 2013 a new curriculum would be introduced to all schools (Key Stages (KS) 1-4) with a clear focus on slimming down the curriculum to allow for more cross curriculum dimensions and inter-disciplinary studies and the removal of levels of attainment. RE needed to take account of these changes in order to play a full and active role in the new curriculum;
- b) in 2012 the REC completed a review of the current National Non-Statutory Framework for RE.

The Conference considered the level of review they wished to undertake and the cost implications. If undertaking a more radical review Members wished to ensure the syllabus had the flexibility to be purchased and used by other authorities whilst being

pertinent to Staffordshire. It was understood that Staffordshire teachers would welcome a syllabus that included more supportive materials to help support their teaching and work planning. This was particularly important for the non RE specialist teaches of RE.

If a more radical review was to be undertaken it would be necessary to have officer time and support to carry out the work needed. Lat Blaylock (a well respected expert in RE and part of the RE Today team) had been approached to give an estimate of cost and process should the Conference choose to use his expertise in reviewing the Staffordshire syllabus. Lat had a successful background in this field.

The funding required for this review would be between £15,000 and £20,000 in total. Whilst the SACRE budget could fund part of this there would be a significant shortfall and it was suggested that the Cabinet Member, Learning and Skills, be approached in the first instance. A business case would then be produced for Entrust for any further funding required.

The Conference agreed that Rev Preb Michael Metcalf, Chairman of the Staffordshire SACRE and current Chairman of the ASC, should write to the Cabinet Member, Learning and Skills, setting out the Conference thoughts on undertaking a more radical syllabus review and seeking possible funding for this work.

RESOLVED – That the Chairman write to the cabinet Member, Learning and Skills, on behalf of the ASC, setting out their wish for a more radical review of the Syllabus and seeking funding for this work.

Chairman

Documents referred to in these minutes as Schedules are not appended, but will be attached to the signed copy of the Minutes of the meeting. Copies, or specific information contained in them, may be available on request.