

Agreed Syllabus Conference

2006

Report on consultation process.

Background:

Five consultations have been held this term: three with primary co-ordinators, one with secondary co-ordinators and one with sixth form students. These sessions were attended by 91 primary, 14 secondary colleagues and 25 students from schools across the District.

The teachers were asked to comment on:

- Overall satisfaction with the syllabus
- The philosophy of RE set out in the syllabus
- The religions to be studied
- The study units
- Assessment, expectations and levels of attainment (Primary) RE in the foundation stage.

The sixth form students were asked to comment on:

- Overall satisfaction of their RE experience so far in Bradford schools
- The content of the subject
- The curriculum for sixth form students.

Summary of consultation:

Question	Teachers		Sixth formers
	Primary	Secondary	
Should we have major change to the syllabus?	No	No	
Should we continue to teach all six major religions in both phases?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Should we determine/recommend which religions and study units should be taught when?	Suggest order	'Suggest' order	n/a
Should we teach 'minority religions'?	No	Yes, but not in detail	Yes, but not in detail
Should we include Humanism	No	Yes	Yes
Should we identify links to other curriculum areas?	Yes	Yes	n/a
Should we develop more guidance on assessment?	Yes	Yes	n/a

Primary Consultation

Primary co-ordinators were adamant that the review of the syllabus should not recommend major changes. Both they and their (non-specialist) colleagues are now using the 2001 with greater confidence and any changes recommended should enhance and facilitate the existing syllabus.

The following questions and comments were raised:

- How can teachers explain 'faith' to young pupils who have little personal experience of religions?
- Are all the study units long enough to last a term?
- Can we explain AT2 more simply so that all teachers can understand it?
- The need to retain freedom to respond to their own school's circumstances
- Identify which religions fit with which study units to help long term planning
- Suggest the order in which the study units should be taught
- Provide long and medium term planning pro formas
- Ensure that agnostic and atheist viewpoints are treated with respect
- Provide more support with choosing resources
- Create an optional inter-faith study unit at the end of KS2
- Provide an assessment pro forma for each study unit, based on expectations
- Provide a summative assessment task for each study unit based on
- Provide 'I can....' versions of the levels for pupil use
- Are the links between expectations and attainment targets sufficiently clear?
- More guidance on teaching and learning activities
- More on festivals, stories and active learning.

Secondary consultation:

Like their primary colleagues, secondary RE co-ordinators did not want major change to the content or layout of the syllabus but again wanted refinements to enable them to do their job more effectively.

The following comments and questions were raised:

- The need for freedom to begin GCSE courses in year 9
- The possibility of having a small number of core study units from the existing syllabus – the introductory unit on *Religions in the Locality*, the two systematic study units on Judaism/Christianity and Islam in Year 7 and Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism in Year 8 and the study unit on *Beliefs*.
- All other study units from both key stages would be optional and teachers could use them in either key stage 3 or 4.
- An optional investigation unit that could explore other worldviews
- Teachers wanted more on philosophy and ethics and on religion and science
- There should be more focus on gifted and talented and SEN
- Support for teachers on resources
- Need for marks schemes linked to assessment for each study unit, linked to level descriptors.

Sixth form students:

The sixth form students engaged with the set tasks with great enthusiasm and commitment. Their comments demonstrate that some secondary schools are non-compliant and that the balance of religions being taught is not yet appropriate. The main recommendations of the students were very close to what SACRE members would hope they would say! They valued learning about different religions and were clearly keen to know more. Most wanted to do more philosophy and ethics. They liked the fact that RE is linked to real life and the issues they care about. They are pleased that their opinions are sought and respected in their RE classrooms. The changes they wanted included:

- More visits and speakers so that they have first hand experience of religions
- Teaching and learning strategies should be interactive and participative
- There should be a better balance between learning 'about' and learning 'from' religions – the former is still too dominant in schools
- There should be a better balance so that all major religions are studied in depth. Currently there is too much focus on Christianity and Islam
- There is a need to address prejudice and discrimination in all key stages
- They wanted more in-depth study of religions and a better balance between religion and morality
- They wanted more focus on similarities between religions

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Membership List

Chair of SACRE Don Hassall

Committee A

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Cover Design

Bradford Cityscape' Alex Cook, aged 17, Parkside School