

AGREED SYLLABUS REVIEW – Report for Southampton SACRE

The writing group met on Friday 15th January to revise material in the 'Living Difference' Agreed Syllabus in line with previous concerns raised by practitioners using the syllabus.

The following sections were added or updated in Friday's session:

- 1) **Why is 'contextualise' so important?** It was felt that this was an area of confusion for some teachers and that the updated syllabus would benefit from some further clarification of this stage of the cycle. The 'contextualise' element is crucially important in illustrating the concept. Two Hampshire Advanced Skills Teachers, (AST's), spent time writing this section with illustrations and examples. It was pointed out that 'contextualise' can be secular or religious but the context should stand up to scrutiny. The examples given included up to date news stories.
- 2) **Special Educational Needs amendment:** This was updated and amended by a Primary AST, and a SEN representative. They firstly clarified what is meant by special educational needs. The update recognized that some students will find it impossible to access some religious-specific abstract concepts. It is fine for teachers to use the methodology to help students engage with simpler concepts such as caring and belonging, and recognize that some may use these to build up to more complex ones. This is totally acceptable and illustrates how the syllabus can be used to achieve personalized learning. Some work was also done on unpacking the methodology and outlining teaching strategies for teachers of pupils with special educational needs, for example use of artifacts, music, visual and tactile resources.
- 3) **The cycle of enquiry and national strategies:** There are a number of national strategies and directives that have been introduced since the syllabus was originally written and it is important to highlight how following a cycle of enquiry clearly enables these to be met. A one page document on **Personal, Learning and Thinking Skills**, (PLTS – a secondary strategy), was drawn up explaining how these all these skills can be assessed and developed at any stage of the cycle but more specific explanation of each skill was also given in relation to RE and the cycle of enquiry. The 6 qualities and skills are creative thinkers, independent enquirers, team workers, self-managers, reflective learners and effective participators. **Community Cohesion** - all state schools have a duty to promote community cohesion, so a paragraph was also added to the syllabus explaining how the cycle of enquiry promotes this through encouraging students to question stereotypes and challenge assumptions. **Cross-curricular dimensions** – these are identity and cultural diversity, healthy lifestyles, community participation, enterprise, global dimension and sustainable development, technology and the media, and creativity and critical thinking. Another page was added, which outlines how 'communities of enquiry', through Living Difference, give many opportunities to develop these dimensions. For example, students familiar with using a cycle of enquiry are well placed to examine lifestyle choices within religious beliefs about relationships and ethical issues. Being in an open enquiry environment facilitates the growth of confident, emotionally-healthy individuals.

4) Original Templates – Time was spent considering the original statements regarding the values and purposes of RE, and statements about ‘Every Child Matters’ etc. These were clarified and updated as necessary.

Next Steps:

- 1) Assessment – to clarify and update where necessary. The syllabus uses one attainment target for each level and will continue to do so.
- 2) Revise humanist concepts and introduce Baha’i concepts.
- 3) Write a quick start-up guide – how to read and implement the guide.

Other points:

Some time was spent discussing the alignment of the syllabus with national requirements for RE. We want to ensure that the methodology stands up to scrutiny and that RE is not assimilated into the curriculum.

The updated syllabus is likely to be released on a disc due its volume.