

Thursday 27 February 2025

Nottingham City & Nottinghamshire County SACREs: Consideration of a Joint Syllabus for Religious Education

Background

1. This paper sets out the responsibilities of the City and County SACRE in their consideration of a syllabus beyond 2026. The current joint syllabus: *Religious Education for All: The Agreed Syllabus for Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire, Intentions, Implementation and Impact 2021-2026* will need to be revised or replaced, ready for schools and academies to use from the start of the 2026/2027 academic year.
2. The locally agreed syllabus is the statutory document for Religious Education in the Local Authority. It sets out the content across all key stages and the learning expectations for pupils. It has to be reviewed at least every five years and its production is a key SACRE task in supporting high-quality Religious Education.
3. It is produced and overseen by an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC). This is a statutory body, convened by the Local Authority to direct this work. The Agreed Syllabus Conference is a separate legal entity from a SACRE but can be comprised of SACRE members, or not. It has the same group structure as the SACRE but these are called committees; Co-opted members of SACRE cannot however participate in an ASC. The ASC should include on any sub-committee at least one member of each of its constituent committees. It should also be made up of representatives from the same interest groups as the SACRE, who may or may not be the same people; The Chair can be appointed by the Local Authority or agreed by ASC members. The Local Authority does have a legal duty to fund and support the ASC, including the provision of constitutional and legal advice if required.
4. As separate legal entities the City and County SACREs will need to convene their own ASC, even if there is a decision to collaborate on the work plan and costs.
5. Whilst it is not the role of an ASC to specify the amount of curriculum time allocated to RE, it can give estimates of the time needed to deliver the Syllabus to assist in timetable planning. The following are all legitimate concerns for consideration, and it is appropriate for an ASC to draw on sector expertise and feedback from stakeholders (educators, pupils, parents, faith leaders) to inform a locally agreed syllabus.

❖ How is the agreed syllabus best delivered to each age group?

- ❖ What mixture should there be of formal content, thematic work, group work, personal discovery, visits to specified buildings or events, and visitors?
 - ❖ What is the relationship of RE to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and other whole-school priorities?
 - ❖ What is the impact on RE of new curricular developments?
 - ❖ How will local faith and belief be reflected in the locally agreed syllabus?
 - ❖ What should pupils learn at each key stage?
 - ❖ What should be statutory within the agreed syllabus, and what should be non-statutory guidance, to be placed in appendices?
6. An agreed syllabus must 'reflect the fact that the religious traditions of Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain.' (Section 375, Education Act 1996). Consideration needs to be given to which other religious traditions and world views are included, whether any are to be added, or removed.
7. The work on an Agreed Syllabus would also need to take in to account recent research and policy which informs the sector. This includes:
- ❖ [Commission on Religious Education – REC Religion & Worldviews: the way forward for RE. A National Plan for RE.](#) (September 2018)
 - ❖ [Research review series: religious education - GOV.UK](#) (May 2021)
 - ❖ [Deep and meaningful? The religious education subject report - GOV.UK](#) (April 2024)
 - ❖ [Religion And Worldviews Approach to RE: Resource Page – REC](#) (May 2024)
 - ❖ [Government launches Curriculum and Assessment Review - GOV.UK](#) (July 2024)
8. On any question to be decided by the ASC, the representative committees shall each have a single vote. Only an ASC may recommend an agreed syllabus, and its recommendation must be unanimously agreed by the committees constituting the conference.
9. It is therefore advisable that the ASC members are fully conversant with the plans and progress of any appointed working groups and have opportunity to contribute at an early stage. The Agreed Syllabus is owned by the Local Authority, not SACRE. It is usual for the Agreed Syllabus to be presented to SACRE prior to presentation to the Local Authority for adoption.
10. Both Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire SACRE need to decide a course of action. There are three options:
- (1) Keep the current Agreed Syllabus for a further 5 years
 - (2) Revise the existing Agreed Syllabus in light of new research and educational or other changes

- (3) Purchase/commission a completely new Syllabus from a different Local Authority/provider
11. The most recent joint syllabus was created with the commissioned support of RE Today, principally Lat Blacklock, National RE Advisor author and editor of RE Today.
 12. **Option 2** : Revision of the existing Agreed Syllabus in light of new research and educational or other changes: **Appendix A** outlines a proposal from RE Today to again lead the production of a joint Agreed Syllabus for Nottingham City/Nottinghamshire. This will be presented by Lat Blaylock at the joint meeting on 27 February 2025. The total contract price of £9,600 represents 16 days of consultancy at £600 per day.
 13. : Option 1 & 3 do not take sufficient account of the changing Religious Education policy landscape over the past five years and the need to respond to local needs and context. Therefore:
RECOMMENDATION Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City SACRE Chairs recommend that both SACRE’s adopt Option 2.
 14. However, following the presentation and questions, both SACREs will meet separately to consider:
 - Options 1-3 and the recommendation above (para 13).
 - Recommend members for working parties, if required.
 - Cover any individual SACRE business.
 15. In parallel, and to support the proposal of Option 2 if adopted, a joint City/County working consultation group would need to be established to advise, inform and review the work. Educators will be key to this process and meetings will usually be in school settings during the school day. SACRE/ASC members are encouraged to be part of this group to ensure some continuity.
 16. Each SACRE will need to meet the cover and travel costs of educators involved in the working groups as part of an overall budget: see **Appendix B Overall Budget**
 17. Timeline.

Date	Activity	Notes
February 2025	Joint City & County SACRE Meeting	Working/ Consultation groups to be agreed
Summer Term 2025	Working parties & consultation group meet Consultation with stakeholders re current Syllabus	RE Today to lead

Summer Term 2025	Review of current syllabus with reference to government curriculum review, Ofsted Deep & Meaningful and National Entitlement	*ASC meetings to update progress
Autumn Term 2025	Working parties meet to inform and review (between now and Spring 2026)	RE Today to lead
Spring 1 2026	Research and other work collated, and new syllabus written.	*ASC meetings to review draft new syllabus at an early stage.
Spring 2 2026	New Agreed Syllabus presented to Notts County & City SACRE & ASC	*ASC meeting to confirm new Agreed Syllabus
Summer 2026	New Syllabus launch events and CPD	RE Today
SEPT 2026	New Agreed Syllabus operational 2026-2031	

18. SACRE members are encouraged to come to the joint SACRE meeting with any questions about the process for creating an Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education, and to consider whether they would be willing to be members of the ASC and/or working parties if required. Where possible ASC meetings will take place before/after usual SACRE meetings.

Appendix A: Proposal from RE Today

Appendix B: Budget overview

Heidi Shewell-Cooper Nottingham City SACRE Officer
Sally MacDonald Nottinghamshire SACRE Secretary
January 2025