



Agenda

Notice of a public meeting of North Yorkshire Agreed Syllabus Conference

To: Councillors Alyson Baker (Chair), George Jabbour, Professor John Adams, Tara Askew, Tom Clayton, Jo Colledge, Chris Devanny, Sarah Hodgson, Abhijeet Kulkarni and Lee Talbot.

Date: Tuesday, 20th June, 2023

Time: 4.00 pm

Venue: County Hall, Northallerton

Members of the public are entitled to attend this meeting as observers for all those items taken in open session. Please contact the Democratic Services Officer, whose details are below, if you would like to find out more.

This meeting is being held as an in-person meeting. The meeting is also 'hybrid', which enables people to attend the meeting remotely using MS Teams. Please contact the Democratic Services Officer if you would like to find out more.

Recording is allowed at Council, committee and sub-committee meetings which are open to the public, please give due regard to the Council's protocol on audio/visual recording and photography at public meetings, a copy of which is available. Anyone wishing to record is asked to contact, prior to the start of the meeting, the Democratic Services Officer. We ask that any recording is clearly visible to anyone at the meeting and that it is non-disruptive.

Business

1. **Welcome by the Chair**
2. **Apologies for Absence**
3. **Minutes of the Meeting held on 28th March 2023** **(Pages 5 - 10)**
4. **Declarations of Interest**
All Members are invited to declare at this point any interests they have in items appearing on this agenda, including the nature of those interests.

5. Exclusion of the Public

Members are recommended to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of each of the items of business listed in Column 1 of the following table on the grounds that they each involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraph(s) specified in column 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to information)(Variation) Order 2006:-

Item number on the agenda	Paragraph Number
9	3

6. Public Participation

Members of the public may ask questions or make statements at this meeting if they have given notice to Patrick Duffy of Democratic and Scrutiny Services and supplied the text (contact details below) by midday on Thursday 15th June 2023, three working days before the day of the meeting. Each speaker should limit themselves to 3 minutes on any item. Members of the public who have given notice will be invited to speak:-

- at this point in the meeting if their questions/statements relate to matters which are not otherwise on the Agenda (subject to an overall time limit of 30 minutes);
- when the relevant Agenda item is being considered if they wish to speak on a matter which is on the Agenda for this meeting.

If you are exercising your right to speak at this meeting, but do not wish to be recorded, please inform the Chair who will instruct anyone who may be taking a recording to cease while you speak.

7. Recap from the last meeting - Verbal report by Adrian Clarke, Principal Education Adviser (Support)

8. Correspondence and information for Agreed Syllabus Conference (Pages 11 - 16) Members - Professional Religious Education Adviser, Olivia Seymour

9. North Yorkshire SACRE: Options for Agreed Syllabus Review (for Autumn 2024 implementation) - Professional Religious Education Adviser, Olivia Seymour (Pages 17 - 24)

10. Any Other Items

Any other items which the Chair agrees should be considered as a matter of urgency because of special circumstances

11. Date of Next Meeting

Members are reminded that in order to expedite business at the meeting and enable Officers to adapt their presentations to address areas causing difficulty, they are encouraged to contact Officers prior to the meeting with questions on technical issues in reports.

Contact Details:

For enquiries relating to this agenda please contact Patrick Duffy, Principal Democratic Services Scrutiny Officer. Tel: 01609 534546 Or email Patrick.Duffy@northyorks.gov.uk
Website: www.northyorks.gov.uk

Barry Khan
Assistant Chief Executive
(Legal and Democratic Services)

County Hall
Northallerton

Monday, 12 June 2023

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North Yorkshire County Council

North Yorkshire Agreed Syllabus Conference

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 28th March 2023 at 4.00 p.m.

Group A: Christian Denominations and such other religious denominations as, in the Authority's opinion, will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area: Professor John Adams (Humanist), Tom Clayton* (Methodist), Chris Devanny* (Catholic) and Abhijeet Kulkarni* (Hindu)

Group B: Church of England: Reverend Simone Bennett* (Diocese of Leeds)

Group C: Teachers Associations: Jo Colledge and Sarah Hodgson*

Group D: Local Authority: County Councillors Alyson Baker and George Jabbour

Officers present: Adrian Clarke (Principal Education Adviser - Support), Patrick Duffy (Principal Democratic Services Scrutiny Officer), Heather Russell (Senior Education Adviser) and Olivia Seymour* (Professional Religious Education Adviser)

In attendance: Anna Silver* (Judaism) and Owen Griffiths*, Corporate Governance Officer

*Denotes joined remotely

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

NOTE:

References to Agreed Syllabus, throughout these Minutes, refer to the Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education

1. Election of Chair

The Clerk to SACRE, Patrick Duffy, introduced the meeting and stated that the Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) is a body which people have to actively indicate that they wish to be a Member of; membership cannot be assumed. Therefore, he thanked Members for having agreed to be a part of the ASC.

With being a separate body from SACRE, the ASC needed to appoint a Chair. He asked if Members would be agreeable to the Chair of SACRE, Councillor Alyson Baker, chairing the ASC. Members concurred with this suggestion and, therefore, it was

Resolved –

That Councillor Alyson Baker be elected Chair of the Agreed Syllabus Conference.

Councillor Alyson Baker in the Chair.

Councillor Baker thanked Members for electing her as Chair. She welcomed Dr. Abhijeet Kulkarni, who had joined the Committee as the Hindu Representative and Anna Silver, from the Jewish Faith. Anna is seeking a representative from the Jewish Community, as Brian Berry is no longer their representative but, in the meantime, she would be part of the discussion in a non-voting capacity.

The Chair also welcomed Owen Griffiths, who would shortly become part of the Democratic Services Team at the new North Yorkshire Council and who was observing today, to raise his awareness of SACRE.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Tara Askew.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved –

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the Item Agreed Syllabus, Options Paper (See Minute No. 9, below), on the grounds that it would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

5. Budget for the Agreed Syllabus Conference

Considered –

A verbal report by the Principal Education Adviser (Support), Adrian Clarke.

He stated that:-

- By way of context, the Agreed Syllabus covers a five-year period. In 2019 the cost had been £15,000 and it had been launched prior to the Pandemic.
- The Local Authority has a responsibility to fund the ASC.
- The Schools White Papers states that Schools should become Academies, or be in the process of becoming one, by 2030. So far, 32% of Schools have academised.
- The new North Yorkshire Council (which comes into operation on 1st April 2023) has proposed a budget of £25,000. This is a significant increase of £10,000 on the previous figure and will enable some resource development, as well as launch costs – it is anticipated that not as many Launch Events will be held this time.

In response to questions from Members, the Principal Education Officer (Support) advised that:-

- the previous budget split had been £10,000 for the Agreed Syllabus and £5,000 for the launch;
- attendance at Launch Events had been highest in Harrogate; and
- it should be possible to make a video, outlining the Agreed Syllabus (when it has been determined) and make it available to Schools online.

In response to further questions from Members, the Professional Religious Education Adviser, Olivia Seymour, commented that:-

- Should the ASC decide upon an Agreed Syllabus similar to the current one, then a single Launch Day would suffice. If a new Agreed Syllabus was introduced the Launch Day would, effectively, mark the beginning of training to plan for the new Agreed Syllabus. It is difficult to say with certainty, however, until a decision has been made.
- If it were decided to use another Local Authority's Agreed Syllabus, North Yorkshire Council would need to ascertain from them the costs required to use the licence and there would be the costs of training.

NOTED.

6. **Setting the Scene**

Considered –

A presentation by the Professional Religious Education Adviser, that had been produced by NASACRE - the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education.

You can view the presentation [here](#).

The presentation provided information on the ASC and, in particular,

- what it is;
- the statutory requirements; and
- the questions that should concern it

The Professional Religious Education Adviser highlighted that, legally, the ASC must be convened every five years and should comprise representatives from each of the four Groups that comprise SACRE.

NOTED.

7. **North Yorkshire SACRE: Timeline for Agreed Syllabus Review (for Autumn 2024 implementation)**

Considered –

A report by the Professional Religious Education Adviser, which provided the key dates, leading to a new Agreed Syllabus in 2024, together with time implications and a commentary on the likely tasks involved, according to the various options.

The timeline is available to view [here](#)

The Professional Religious Education Adviser stressed that the timeline and commitment required from SACRE Members will be determined by which option is chosen. She will adjust the timeline accordingly, depending on the decision made.

In response to a question, the Professional Religious Education Adviser confirmed that the timescales were indicative, in order to give context to the discussion. She reiterated that the timescales would be shaped by the decisions taken as to the Agreed Syllabus.

NOTED.

8. Teacher Consultation on Review of the Agreed Syllabus

Considered –

Two documents produced by the Professional Religious Education Adviser, Olivia Seymour, which summarised the consultation undertaken with Teachers on the review of the Locally Agreed Syllabus.

The first document concerned the consultation through the Autumn and Spring Primary Religious Education Networks. The second contained the results of an online consultation.

Both of the documents are available [here](#)

The Chair commented that she had not found any comments in the documents which indicated Teachers are not happy with the current Agreed Syllabus.

The Professional Religious Education Adviser said it is important to be mindful of what is a statutory requirement for Schools and what is not. For example, additional support on curriculum development is not statutory. The Chair commented that it might be worth providing support to Schools on this aspect.

A Member commented that the feedback is what she would have expected. She felt that, on a day-to-day basis, the educational system is creaking. Due to COVID-19 (i.e. Schools had been closed for several periods of time), the current Agreed Syllabus still feels relatively new. Therefore, would it be appropriate to do something radically different? The ASC needs to be mindful of the enormous challenges faced by Schools.

In response to questions, the Professional Religious Education Adviser confirmed that:-

- Currently, the Agreed Syllabus is a mix between thematic and systematic units of study. In Religious Education Networks, a Religious or non-religious World View has been looked at in depth, with substantive knowledge and resources for the classroom being explored to support the outworking of the syllabus in the classroom.
- A long-term plan and knowledge organisers have not been written for Schools, as it is preferable for Schools to ensure this is bespoke to the needs of pupils and class structures in individual Schools.
- Curriculum, Assessment and Early Years Foundation Stage Guidance will be updated to take into account national changes.

NOTED.

9. North Yorkshire SACRE: Options for Agreed Syllabus Review (for Autumn 2024 implementation)

NOTE: The Clerk confirmed that the press and public are excluded for this Item of business, as resolved by the Committee at Minute No. 4, above.

Considered –

A report by the Professional Religious Education Adviser which informed Members of:-

- the legal requirements;
- the need for a high-quality syllabus;
- implications of the new OFSTED Framework and OFSTED Research Review;
- the current situation; and
- implications for SACRE

The report set out the four main options and outlined the advantages and disadvantages of each.

The options are:-

- a) Renew the licence with RE Today, which includes updating the 2019-2024 folder
- b) Adopt RE Today's more recent Syllabus Model B
- c) Adopt a syllabus from another local authority
- d) Commission a bespoke new syllabus

A Member questioned whether the four options are based on content and quality or on operational feedback.

A Teacher representative stressed that that Teachers are very happy with the current Agreed Syllabus and are getting to grips with it. Assessment is not such a high priority. Knowledge organisation has been greatly appreciated – more so than assessment.

The Senior Education Adviser informed Members that, from a School Improvement perspective, Schools are still implementing the Agreed Syllabus.

A Member felt that, in an ideal World, an Agreed Syllabus could be bespoke – but we are not in that position and must be mindful of the context.

A Member stated that he has been a long-term critic of the current Agreed Syllabus. Some of these criticisms can be addressed. However, there remain issues with the Agreed Syllabus and he would like to explore these. For example, it includes no mention of locality.

The sense of the meeting was that a decision should not be made at this stage but, instead, be taken at the next meeting. The Chair sought confirmation from the Local Authority that the timescale for implementation would not be affected by this. The Principal Education Adviser (Support) confirmed that the Local Authority can work within a timeline of a decision not being taken until the next meeting.

The Chair stated that comments made today by Members can, alongside census information and the level of support materials required to reflect the local context, be considered further at the next meeting. At that meeting, the ASC should seek to arrive at a decision on the option to be adopted.

10. Next Meeting/Next Steps

Resolved –

That the next meeting be held at 4.00 p.m. on Tuesday 20th June (with the SACRE meeting scheduled at that time being put back one hour to 5.00 p.m.)

The meeting concluded at 5.05 p.m.

PD

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Correspondence via email from Hindu Representative Abhijeet Kulkarni to clerk and professional RE adviser in advance of June ASC meeting

My comments regarding the Teaching of Hinduism / Hindu People in the current syllabus are as below

1. Hinduism needs to be taught **from an earlier stage**, including Early Learning Stage and KS1. Currently there seems to be no inclusion of Hinduism in Key Stage 1 and patchy inclusion thereafter.
2. If the current approach of 'Key Questions' to broaden pupils 'field of enquiry' regarding 'religion and world views', is to be continued, Hinduism aspects needs to be included in more of the relevant key questions.
3. **I would particularly like to request review and inclusive changes to Section B2 (Page 13)** of the North Yorkshire Agreed Syllabus for 2019-2024. This is particularly in respect of the '**minimum requirements**' of which 'religious traditions are to be studied in depth', in each Key Stage of learning.
4. With regards to point 3 above, I note that apart from KS2 and Reception years, there appears to be **NO requirement to teach Hinduism**. This does **NOT** appear to be **equitable**, considering that Hinduism is one of the 3 major religions practiced locally, nationally and globally. Including Hinduism in each Key Stage, will help to make the Syllabus '**Broad and Balanced**'.

What changes are being requested

1. **More balanced, broad and equitable inclusion** of the '**big six**' major religions, keeping a **balance between 'Abrahamic' and 'Dharmic'** religions, to enable ALL pupils to develop an inquisitive enquiry of Worldviews on religious and non-religious beliefs.
2. **Include Hinduism in All Key stages of learning, as a minimum requirement.** The breadth and depth of Hinduism taught could ofcourse be decided by individual schools and teachers, based on local factors. However it is essential that the basics of Hindu beliefs and traditions are taught from a very early stage, and continued throughout School years. *(The detrimental effects of a narrow and imbalanced worldview among pupils has recently come to light and has been widely reported, <https://henryjacksonsociety.org/publications/anti-hindu-hate-in-schools/>, following a report by the Henry Jackson Foundation, **copy of which I attach**)*
3. **West Yorkshire SACRE** have recently revised their RE syllabus, particularly aspects related to Hinduism. **I attach a copy** of the same with a request to include aspects of Hinduism taught in North Yorkshire, as deemed fit from an educational standpoint.

How we can help

1. There are several Organisations, like the Hindu Education Board etc which can provide high quality teaching and learning resource material, with regards Hinduism in RE in Schools. I can liaise with the Hindu Education Board or any other Hinduism RE resource entity.
2. Specific help / resources for Teachers covering Hinduism as part of RE in Schools.
3. Liaise with RE Today or any other RE Syllabus writers/providers to provide any help or contributions with revision of syllabus where appropriate, concerning Hinduism.

I would be grateful if you could consider the above points with a view to provide a response, Local Schools. It will also help me to put forth my views at the upcoming Agreed Syllabus Conference in June 2023.

Information to support the ASC in considering its response

The focus of the information provided is in response if option A of updating the current syllabus is chosen. If option B, C or D were chosen these requests would need to be considered when seeking information about syllabuses to review.

1. Request to change the syllabus to have equitable inclusion of the 'big six'

The ASC would need to take in to account current national curriculum advice from Ofsted and national developments in RE when considering this request.

Ofsted Research review

High-quality RE prepares pupils to engage in a complex multi-religious and multi-secular world. To reach this goal, leaders and teachers might think about the overall conception of religion and non-religion that pupils build through the RE curriculum. To consider the overall concept of religion and non-religion that pupils build through the curriculum is perhaps more useful than thinking about the quantity and weighting of traditions to include.

However, much of the debate about RE content has not focused on the idea of cumulative sufficiency. Instead, the focus has been on the quantity and weighting of traditions to include in the RE curriculum. This focus might be due to the wording of the most recent legal prescription for RE,^[footnote 52] which states that locally agreed syllabuses should:

reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain.

Although this prescription is a starting point, it is not a full statement of the substantive knowledge that pupils should learn in high-quality RE. It only explicitly identifies substantive knowledge of Christianity. It alludes to but does not specify precisely what those other traditions are. There are different ways in which the content of high-quality RE might reflect this legislation.

Unfortunately, some leaders interpret the legislation in percentage terms, for example by devoting 51% of RE to the study of Christianity and 49% to 'other religions'. Commentators have noted for some time that this approach does not guarantee a quality RE curriculum.^[footnote 53] In fact, it can generate problems. For example, it can unintentionally cause tensions by devoting more time to some religious or non-religious traditions. It can also prevent pupils from exploring the connections between traditions or even imply that there are no connections.^[footnote 54]

Equally, simply covering a greater number of religious and non-religious traditions (as inclusive as that sounds) is no guarantee of a high-quality RE curriculum. This overloads the curriculum and might lead to superficial caricatures of religious and non-religious traditions.^[footnote 55] Generally speaking, the issue of what might be enough content to constitute a high-quality RE curriculum has been given little consideration in the RE community.^[footnote 56]

Syllabus A

In syllabus A the table of range of religions and worldviews is the **minimum requirement**. Many schools may wish to go beyond the minimum.

Learning from four religions across a key stage is demanding: the syllabus does not recommend tackling six religions in a key stage. Depth is more important than overstretched breadth. Schools are encouraged to teach less but teach it better. Key questions in this syllabus allow schools to draw in different traditions where they fit the theme and question, and where there are representatives of those traditions in the school and local community.

2. Request to include Hinduism in all Key stages

I have liaised with RE Today to explore enhancing representation within Syllabus A if this is the option the ASC adopts. A systematic study unit plan for Hinduism in KS1 can be provided in addition to the systematic study unit already present in KS2. It is also possible to add an additional unit in KS2. The costs of these unit plans are £750 per plan

In addition to this work with RE Today, there is scope for resource documents including subject knowledge and vocabulary documents to be written with support from SACRE members to enhance representation of all the religions and worldviews represented within the syllabus.

The place of non-religious worldviews in the Syllabus

2021 Census Data

You can look at the detail of north Yorkshire data on the ONS website here: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/maps/choropleth/identity/religion/religion-tb/no-religion?lad=E07000163> and I have provided a summary below

Lower Tier Local Authorities	Religion (10 categories)	%
Craven	No religion	38.50%
	Christian	53.80%
	Buddhist	0.20%
	Hindu	0.20%
	Jewish	0.10%
	Muslim	1.10%
	Sikh	0.10%
	Other religion	0.40%
	Not answered	5.60%
	Hambleton	No religion
Christian		59.40%
Buddhist		0.20%
Hindu		0.10%
Jewish		0.10%
Muslim		0.30%

	Sikh	0%
	Other religion	0.40%
	Not answered	5.50%
Harrogate	No religion	36.20%
	Christian	55.50%
	Buddhist	0.30%
	Hindu	0.30%
	Jewish	0.20%
	Muslim	0.60%
	Sikh	0.10%
	Other religion	0.40%
	Not answered	6.30%
Richmondshire	No religion	35.80%
	Christian	55.70%
	Buddhist	1%
	Hindu	1.50%
	Jewish	0%
	Muslim	0.20%
	Sikh	0%
	Other religion	0.70%
	Not answered	5%
Ryedale	No religion	34.20%
	Christian	58.70%
	Buddhist	0.20%
	Hindu	0.10%
	Jewish	0.10%
	Muslim	0.30%
	Sikh	0%
	Other religion	0.40%
	Not answered	6%

Scarborough	No religion	39.40%
	Christian	52.80%
	Buddhist	0.30%
	Hindu	0.10%
	Jewish	0.10%
	Muslim	0.70%
	Sikh	0%
	Other religion	0.50%
	Not answered	6.10%
Selby	No religion	38.80%
	Christian	54.70%
	Buddhist	0.20%
	Hindu	0.10%
	Jewish	0.10%
	Muslim	0.20%
	Sikh	0.10%
	Other religion	0.40%
	Not answered	5.30%

Enhancing non-religious worldviews in syllabus A

The updated syllabus includes the following text:

Page 13 of the syllabus notes:

The agreed syllabus has a duty 'to take care that information or knowledge included in the curriculum is conveyed in a pluralistic manner' and 'must accord equal respect to different religious convictions, and to non-religious belief'.⁸ Note that the term 'religion' encompasses both religious and non-religious beliefs.⁹

Page 14 of the syllabus states:

Non-religious worldviews. Good practice in RE, as well as European and domestic legislation, has established the principle that RE in schools without a religious character should be inclusive of both religions and non-religious worldviews. Schools should ensure that the content and delivery of the RE curriculum are inclusive in this respect.

This syllabus requires that, in addition to the religions required for study at each key stage, nonreligious worldviews should also be explored in such a way as to ensure that pupils develop mutual respect and tolerance of those with different worldviews. This is enabled through the following key questions: L2.6, L2.9, U2.1, U2.5, U2.7, 3.1, 3.4, 3.9, 3.10 and 3.12

Further enhancement

I have also liaised with RE Today to explore enhancing representation within Syllabus A if this is the option the ASC adopts. This can be provided through a KS1 and KS2 non-

religious worldview unit with examples from Humanism. This would be reflective of the new national resource written in partnership with Humanists UK and reflecting the national website developed by Humanists UK. The costs of these unit plans are £750 per plan

In addition to this work with RE Today, there is scope for resource documents including subject knowledge and vocabulary documents to be written with support from SACRE members to enhance representation of all the religions and worldviews represented within the syllabus. In the context of Humanism this should include the core knowledge document produced by Humanists UK.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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