

**Decision maker:** Cabinet Member for Education

**Subject:** Living Difference III: the agreed religious education syllabus for Portsmouth

**Date:** 15 December 2016

**Report from:** Alison Jeffery, Director of Children's Services

**Report by:** Mike Stoneman, Deputy Director for Children's Services - Education

**Wards affected:** All

**Key decision:** No

**Full Council decision:** No

---

**1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to set out the details of the new religious education syllabus 'Living Difference III and seek Cabinet Member approval to formally adopt the syllabus. A copy of the syllabus is attached as an Appendix.

**2. Recommendation**

**2.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet Member for Education:**

- **Formally adopts the new religious education syllabus (Living Difference III) for Portsmouth**

**3. Background**

- 3.1 Whilst Religious Education is not part of the national curriculum it is a statutory part of the school curriculum and should therefore be taught in all maintained schools, academies and free schools. Christianity should be taught across all years and phases alongside the other principle religions and beliefs in Britain in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.
- 3.2 Each local authority must establish a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education ("SACRE") under s.390 of the Education Act 1996. The duties of SACRE include to provide advice to the local authority on all aspects of its provision for Religious Education in its maintained schools (this does not include Voluntary Aided Schools with a religious

character) and the content of Religious Education to be taught using an Agreed Syllabus. Refer to section 8 for further details.

- 3.3 The agreed syllabus must 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. Further, the agreed syllabus must be reviewed once every five years
- 3.4 **Living Difference** was introduced in 2004 as the Agreed Syllabus for the Portsmouth, Hampshire and Southampton Local Authorities and showed local creativity to be very much alive and well. Its 800 pages comprising a distinctive learning model, extensive guidance and numerous worked up examples of schemes and lessons were to be a significant influence on the review and writing of new syllabuses<sup>1</sup>. It was revised in 2011 building on the original syllabus and its conceptual enquiry based approach to Religious Education enriched by philosophical enquiry. The revised syllabus underlined the commitment of the Local Authorities to an education that values religious and cultural differences.
- 3.5 In June 2015, the Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) for Portsmouth SACRE met and, in line with its statutory duty to review the agreed syllabus every five years, resolved that Portsmouth agreed to the joint arrangements with Hampshire and Southampton and started the planned review process. This review process involved teachers from Portsmouth schools and aimed to ensure the syllabus retains all the strengths of the Living Difference approach to Religious Education and was securely based on current educational and religious educational research as well as being coherent with the National Curriculum. The ASC met again in October 2016 where **Living Difference III** was presented by Dr Patricia Hannam from Hampshire Inspection and Advisory Service (HIAS). The ASC approved the revised syllabus and resolved that the Local Authority be asked to adopt the new agreed syllabus for Religious Education for Portsmouth.

#### 4. **Living Difference III**

- 4.1 Living Difference III is intended to provide the basis of good teaching in Religious Education and be open to the plurality of ways in which people live within local, national and global communities. It gives guidance to teachers with regard to what religious education should aim to achieve in a pluralist society and open educative environments where children and young people can become better able to discern that which is desirable for themselves and the wider world.
- 4.2 It is different from the January 2011 version in four ways: Firstly, the significance of the enquiry beginning from children and young people's

---

<sup>1</sup> The SHAP Working Party on Education in Religions, John Hammond, 2008/9

experience is further clarified and the religious education teacher's role clearly identified. Secondly, the meaning of 'religion' in religious education has been articulated allowing acknowledgement of the difference between the Abrahamic and Dharmic traditions. Thirdly, the planning of a sequence of enquiries into concepts has been clarified and the understanding of 'concept' is given clear explanation. Finally, age-related expectations to inform progress and achievement have been established.

- 4.3 Living Difference III is an approach to enquiry in Religious Education. It is a process of enquiry into concepts where a concept is understood as the name for, or referring to, something like an idea that exists or has the possibility of existing in a particular kind of way under particular conditions. For example: love; hope; community; or justice. The syllabus explores three groups of concepts:
- A. Concepts common to all people such as remembering, specialness, rights
  - B. Concepts shared by many religions such as God, worship, symbolism, discipleship, the sacred
  - C. Concepts which are distinctive to particular religions or non-religious traditions such as Trinity, dukkha, redemption, rationalism, Torah.
- 4.4 The approach to enquiry has five key steps: **Communication, Apply, Enquire, Contextualise, and Evaluate**. At the Communication and Apply steps the teacher brings the child to attend their own and others' experience, The Enquire and Contextualise steps encourage the child to engage intellectually and at the Evaluate step, the child is led to discern value for others and themselves in a way which is dependent upon the context of the enquiry. Where enquiry is placed at the heart of learning, this has led to the most effective Religious Education teaching.<sup>2</sup> Living Difference III very much congruent with this conclusion from Ofsted
- 4.5 The syllabus details examples of medium and long-term planning using Christianity and another religion through all the key stages and gives many examples of the different groups of concepts. The appendices to the syllabus include a guide to the assessment of the progress of children in Religious Education using Age-Related Expectations; how religious education can contribute to the whole school curriculum; how spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted through Religious Education; the relationship of religious education to personal, social and health education and citizenship education.
- 4.6 Living Difference III is to be commended to maintained schools of Portsmouth Local Authority as it fulfils their statutory duty to teach Religious Education which reflects that the religious traditions in Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions in Britain. Furthermore, it

---

<sup>2</sup> Religious Education: Realising the Potential Ofsted Report October 2013, Para 60

provides a pedagogical approach which is recognised by Ofsted as leading to the most effective teaching in Religious Education. The agreed syllabus could also be used by academies and free schools to enable them to fulfil their statutory obligation to provide such Religious Education.

## **5. Communication to schools**

- 5.1 Schools and academies have been invited to attend the launch of Living Difference III on 8<sup>th</sup> December at the Castle, Winchester. Following adoption of the syllabus by the Cabinet Member, it is planned to ensure all LA Maintained schools and academies receive a copy of the syllabus by email and by providing access on SSE (Schools Secure Environment). Updates will also go in the Schools Bulletin and on the SACRE Newsletter.

## **6. Monitoring**

- 6.1 In order to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of Living Difference III visits will be organised to Portsmouth LA maintained schools (excluding Catholic schools). One of the functions of the SACRE is to monitor that the syllabus is being implemented and embedded and evaluate the impact it is having on standards and achievement in Religious Education through analysis of appropriate data. This will be carried out on a rolling basis to ensure all maintained schools will have been monitored.

## **7. Equality impact assessment**

- 7.1 There is no requirement to complete an Equality Impact Assessment as the new syllabus will not have any impact upon a particular equalities group. Living Difference III takes into account the teaching and practices of all principal religions represented in Great Britain

## **8. Legal Services' comments**

- 8.1 Every maintained school in England must make provision for Religious Education in its basic curriculum in accordance with s.80 of the Education Act 2002, and s.69 and Schedule 19 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 ("SSFA 1998"). Local authorities are required to determine the content of the teaching within its locally agreed syllabus in accordance with s.375 of and Schedule 31 of the Education Act 1996. Academies and free schools are contractually required through the terms of their funding agreements to also make provision for the teaching of Religious Education in accordance with s.375 of the Education Act 1996 and Schedule 19 of the SSFA 1998.
- 8.2 Each local authority must establish a standing advisory council on religious education ("SACRE") under s.390 of the Education Act 1996. The duties of SACRE include to provide advice to the local authority on

all aspects of its provision for Religious Education in its maintained schools (this does not include Voluntary Aided Schools with a religious character).

- 8.3 Local Authorities are required to review the agreed syllabus for Religious Education every 5 years through the establishment of an Agreed Syllabus Conference.
- 8.4 Following the High Court ruling in R (Fox) v Secretary of State for Education [2015], the syllabus must ensure that equal respect is given to different religious convictions and to non-religious beliefs.
- 8.5 The approval of the recommendation proposed in this Report will ensure that the local authority complies with its statutory obligations referred to within this Report.
- 8.6 The syllabus referred to in this Report "Living Difference III" has been developed by and for the use of schools in Portsmouth (including Academies and Free Schools). Any other school, or Multi Academy Trust wishing to use the syllabus in their schools, outside of Hampshire or Portsmouth or Southampton or the Isle of Wight must apply for a licence to use it from Hampshire County Council who own the copyright.

## **9. Finance comments**

- 9.1 There are no financial implications anticipated from this curriculum proposal and the report recommendations. Curriculum funding is provided through school delegated budgets, and SACRE monitoring requirements are met within existing budget arrangements

Signed by: Alison Jeffery, Director of Children's Services

## **Appendices:**

### **Appendix 1 - Living Differences III**

**Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972**

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by ..... on .....

.....  
Signed by: