

**Title of meeting:** Cabinet Member Decision Meeting

**Date of meeting:** 9<sup>th</sup> December 2021

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

**Report by:** Debbie Anderson, Head of School Improvement & Early Years

**Report from:** Mike Stoneman, Deputy Director, Education

**Wards affected:** All

**Key decision:** No

**Full Council decision:** No

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**1. Purpose of report**

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

**2. Recommendations**

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

- **Formally adopts the new religious syllabus (Living Difference IV) 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 principal religions and beliefs in Britain in the 21st 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 advise the local authority on collective worship and the Religious Education to be given in accordance with the agreed



- syllabus including methods of teaching, advice on materials and the provision of training for teachers (this does not include Voluntary Aided Schools with a religious character);
- to consider whether to recommend to the local authority that its current agreed syllabus should be reviewed by convening an Agreed Syllabus Conference;
  - to consider whether the requirement that religious worship in a county school be 'broadly Christian in nature' should be varied (determinations);
  - to report to the local authority and the department for education (DfE) on its activities on an annual basis.
- 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. 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.
- 3.6 The locally agreed syllabus Living Difference III has been shared across the four local authorities of Portsmouth, Hampshire, the Isle of Wight and Southampton since December 2016. The current review of Living Difference III has comprised meetings with representatives from SACREs

for the four authorities in July 2020 and again in 2021. In between, many consultation meetings have taken place with teachers and other advisers and experts in the field. In light of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, all consultation meetings have taken place virtually. This is a significant time to be reviewing the locally agreed syllabus in the light of recommendations of the Commission on Religious Education (CoRE) report published in 2018. The review has taken the CoRE recommendations into account in developing Living Difference IV.

- 3.7 Portsmouth SACRE has been involved in all consultation processes and reports have been made at each meeting during the period of review and revision. The Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) for Portsmouth met again on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2021 where **Living Difference IV** was presented by Dr Patricia Hannam from Hampshire Inspection and Advisory Service (HIAS) who also acts as Religious Education professional adviser to Portsmouth Local Authority. The ASC approved the revised syllabus and resolved that the Local Authority be asked to adopt the new agreed syllabus **Living Difference IV** for Religious Education for Portsmouth.

#### 4. Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1 Living Difference IV is intended to provide the basis of good teaching and learning 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 Living Difference IV 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. The approach to enquiry has five key steps: **Communication, Apply, Inquire, Contextualise, and Evaluate**. At the Communication and Apply steps the teacher brings the child to attend their own and others' experience, the Inquire 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.
- 4.3 It is different from the December 2016 version in a number of ways:
- there is an improved link between primary and secondary teaching and the Religious Education curriculum;
  - the cycle of enquiry remains an open investigation but now the third key step of the approach is Inquire, rather than Enquire, as this is intended to be much more specific, with a focus on something distinct to find out;



- end of year (EYEs) expectations have been written to support teachers in making assessments, replacing age-related ones;
- golden thread concepts of Community, Belonging, Special and Love are woven through all key stages;
- 'pondering time' has been advocated whereby children are given opportunities for independent thinking and learning about concepts studied;
- The appendix explains the agreed syllabus in relation to world views.

4.4 Living Difference IV 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 and for those individuals and groups who do not have a particular faith or belief. Furthermore, it 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. Integrated impact assessment**

5.1 There is no requirement to complete an Integrated Impact Assessment as the new syllabus will not have any impact upon a particular equalities group. Living Difference IV takes into account the teaching and practices of all principal religions represented in Great Britain and for those individuals and groups who do not have a particular faith or belief.

## **6. Legal implications**

6.1 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.

6.2 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).

- 6.3 Local Authorities are required to review the agreed syllabus for Religious Education every 5 years through the establishment of an Agreed Syllabus Conference.
- 6.4 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.
- 6.5 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.
- 6.6 The syllabus referred to in this Report "Living Difference IV" 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.

**7. Director of Finance's comments**

- 7.1 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: Sally Hodges - Interim Director of Children, Families and Education

**Appendices:**

**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: