

A précis of

“Religious Education in English Schools: Non-statutory guidance 2009”

Preface

Purpose

- to support RE by giving clear non-statutory guidance about its position within the curriculum – and the roles of all those involved - LAs, SACREs, ASCs, Governors, HT, teachers, ITT and CPD trainers , representatives of religion and belief communities.

Introduction

1.1 Why now?

- As since Circular 1/94 issued in 1994 – there have been many social , educational and legal changes.

1.2 What changes?

- Legal – Human Rights Act 1998, Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 and Equality Act 2006
- Educational – Academies – 6th Form colleges (changed Governance)-Early Years provision – bigger vision - education until 19 1997 new faith schools – Muslim Sikh , Hindu and Jewish VA
- Curriculum –Citizenship, Every Child Matters, Children’s Plan emphasis on inclusion – Community Cohesion, Well-being, web-based curriculum
- Religion and Belief – more visible in public life nationally and internationally. Development of scientific and medical technologies, the environmental debate. Greater media coverage and the use of the internet. 2001 census reveals greater diversity and secularisation.

2. Religious Education – the Legal Framework

2.1 The Legal Basis

The curriculum of every maintained school in England – Basic curriculum = RE, SRE and the National Curriculum.

All schools must include provision for ALL registered pupils at the school (including those in the 6th form) – except the right to withdrawal.

Does not apply to those under compulsory school age – or maintained special schools – separate legislation.

RE is NOT part of the National Curriculum – not subject to prescribed POS , attainment targets or assessment arrangements.

2.2 The role and responsibility of the LA – must have a SACRE and must convene an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) within 5 years.

2.3 The agreed syllabus

This sets out what pupils should be taught – Christianity in the main and other principal religions represented in GB – ASC can decide which religions based on their locality.

2.4 RE and Early Years Foundation Stage

The non-statutory guidance outlines the many requirements which will prepare children for KS1 RE in relation to Personal Emotional and Social Development and Knowledge and Understanding of the World.

2.4 RE in different types of schools

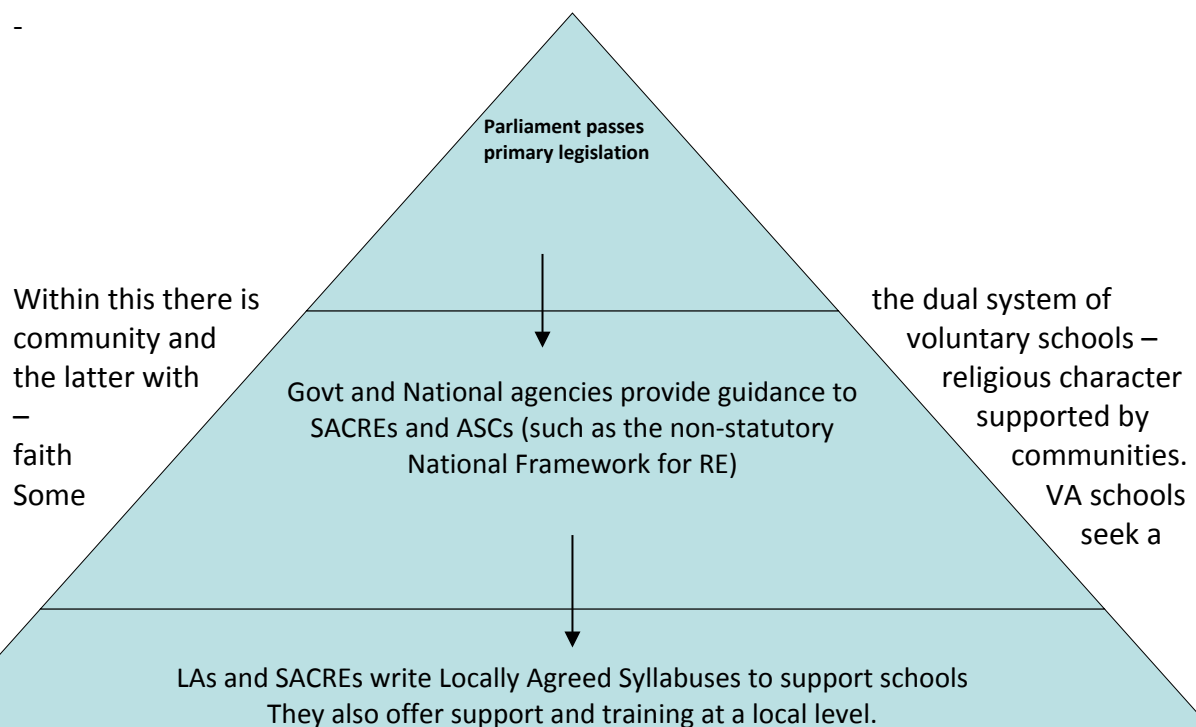
- Maintained – Locally agreed syllabus (LAS) – or designated determination or trust deed.
- Community foundation VA or VC w/o religious character – LAS
- Foundation and VC with a religious character – will depend on parental preferences.
- VA with a religious character – in accordance with the trust deed – teachers appointed accordingly.

2.5 RE in Academies

These are state funded schools managed by independent sponsors established under section 482 of the education Act 1996 – some have a religious character. Academies' funding agreements require RE to be provided for all pupils, unless they are withdrawn by their parents. However, the precise requirements governing the nature and content of the RE curriculum is specified by the funding arrangement that exists between DCSF and the individual Academy.

2.6 RE: a shared responsibility

- local and national , religious and belief communities, educationalists +reps of the LA



determination to decide the RE curriculum, most VC and foundation teach the LAS (Locally Agreed Syllabus).

3. The importance of RE in the curriculum.

- Learning about and from religions and beliefs plays an important role in a broadly based curriculum which:
“promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils and of society , and prepares pupils for the opportunities , responsibilities and experiences of later life”
- RE should be taught in an objective and pluralistic manner, and not as an indoctrination into any belief or faith.
- Religion as part of diversity.
- Religion has a huge impact on people’s lives- personally internationally.

3.2 RE and spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development.

- RE makes a distinct contribution
- It considers questions of meaning and truth
- Religious expression through the creative arts
- Consider their relationship with the natural world, and with God.
- Enables pupils to develop a sense of belonging and consider their own and others views
- Engages with questions of Justice and trust
- How beliefs can lead to actions
- Contributes positively to community cohesion – effective RE promotes Peace

3.3 RE and Personal development and well-being

- Engages the whole person
- Looks at identity and develop personal meaning
- Listened to and listening carefully to others.

3.4 RE and Community Cohesion

- a context where children and young people can develop a common vision and a sense of belonging
- understanding and appreciation of religious diversity – 4 levels –School , Local, Uk, Global
- pupils progress monitored to ensure equality across different groups

4. The Non-statutory national Framework for RE

- Published 2004 – endorsed by all major faith groups – provides a basis for a more coherent and consistent RE curriculum across the country.

- Enabled RE to keep in step with wider curriculum developments.
- Written for LAs ASCs and SACREs and to inform communities about the scope of RE .
- Sets out breadth of study – current diversity of faiths in the UK and across the world.
- Depth of study – providing powerful, meaningful and positive learning experiences.

5. What SACREs and LAs need to know?

5.1 Local Authorities, Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education and Agreed Syllabus Conferences working in Partnership

- Partnership between SACRE and LA and ASCs is a key factor in the delivery of successful RE.
- What makes an effective partnership?
- There followed a list of very useful questions worth careful looking at – for a future meeting

5.2 Role of LAs

- To establish a SACRE.
- Adopting an Agreed Syllabus recommended/written by an ASC.
- Make sure that the funding, expertise and structures are in place to support the effective provision of RE.
- A very useful list of the roles of the LAs is laid out .

5.3 Role of SACRE

- The broad role of a SACRE is to support the effective provision of RE in schools in order to enrich the experience of RE for all pupils.
- A very useful list of the role of SACREs is laid out – and is worth careful examination at a later meeting.

5.3.2 Composition and membership of SACRE

- Should be as inclusive as possible - 4 committees - Christian denominations and other faiths, Cof E, Teachers Associations, The LA, and co-opted members
- Each group a single vote in decision making process.

5.4 Agreed Syllabus Conference

- Every SACRE is required to establish and support an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC)
- Its role is to produce and recommend an agreed syllabus and then review it every five years.
- Can specify what must be taught but it may not require schools to allocate particular time to RE.
- The Non-statutory framework offers a National benchmark for an ASC when revising its syllabus.

5.4.3 Nature of an Agreed Syllabus

- The document offers clear guidance on the nature of an effective agreed syllabus – including the contribution of RE, continuity and progression, standards and

assessment arrangements, effective planning, appropriate levels of challenge refer to national developments.

6. What Schools Governors and Headteachers need to know

- The document offers good clear advice to all schools and outlines the roles and responsibilities of Governors and Headteachers and the need for a well trained and confident workforce to ensure good quality RE.

7. What those who manage, plan and teach RE need to know

- The document offers excellent guidance for curriculum planning
- Schools are advised to give consideration to three questions – What are we trying to achieve? How will we organise the learning and How will we measure success?
- Further helpful questions about the organisation of delivery are also posed – where RE fits in the overall school's curriculum priorities/ Whether RE will be taught separately, or combined with other subjects, or both.
- Whether it will be taught every week or term or in a block, curriculum design, transition issues and curriculum enrichment.

7.3 RE Post 14

- The document re-iterates the statutory nature of RE in this phase and the challenges RE needs to offer at this Key Stage
- It also outlines the potential problem of curriculums where students are following alternative curriculum pathways – for example vocational courses –and how schools need to ensure all students receive their entitlement to RE in that context

7.4 Qualifications

- Since 1996 the number of students gaining qualifications in RE has quadrupled (short course GCSE).
- The number of students taking AS RE has doubled in the past 10 years.
- There is no legal requirement that students must sit public exams in RE
- Recommends that ASCs recommend approved qualification 14-16 and 16-19

7.5 Support for RE

- Faith Communities – make a real contribution to RE- nationally and Locally
- Learning Outside the Classroom – bringing faith to life through visiting places of worship and having visitors into schools
- Professional associations
- The Religious Education Council
- Government Agencies – QCA, TDA- through ITT and CPD
- Specialist and Academies Trust
- Ofsted

8. Information on Parents' and Pupils entitlement

- Parents should be encouraged to take a positive interest and are entitled to have access to statutory and non- statutory documents and to know how their child is achieving.

- Pupils are entitled to receive it and be helped to see its relevance and enjoy it – they in turn should play their part as active learners.

9. The right of withdrawal

- The parent has the right to withdrawal – although much has changed since this right was enshrined in law- no longer Religious Instruction but now Religious Education.
- Given the part that RE plays in modern public life it is now more important that students study RE.
- Although parents have the right to withdraw from RE they need to be aware that children may also encounter religions and beliefs in other parts of the curriculum – community cohesion.
- The document then outlines the various options for withdrawal in various contexts.

9.2 Managing the right of withdrawal

- Must be instigated by the parents (or students if they are 18 or over).
- Should be in writing.
- Make clear whether it is from all the subject or just part.
- Schools have to make it clear what the educational objectives and the content of RE are – so parents can make an informed choice.
- Where withdrawn – schools have a duty to supervise then – but at not to provide additional teaching or incur cost.

10. For Further reference

This outlined other useful documents

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