

# North Tyneside Council

## Report to Cabinet

### Date: 30 March 2020

#### Title: The agreement of a Religious Education Syllabus for schools

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<b>Portfolio(s):</b> Children, Young People and Learning	<b>Cabinet Member(s):</b> Councillor Peter Earley
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<b>Report from Service Area:</b>	Health, Education, Care and Safeguarding	
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Jacqui Old, Head of Health, Education, Care and Safeguarding	Tel: 0191 643 7317
<b>Wards affected:</b>	All	

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#### **PART 1**

##### **1.1 Executive Summary:**

This report submits to Cabinet for approval a new North Tyneside Syllabus for Religious Education. The Authority has a statutory responsibility to review its Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education every five years. This review has been undertaken by the North Tyneside Standing Advisory Conference for Religious Education (SACRE) which established a process for reviewing the syllabus, as required by law.

Through representation at SACRE, extensive consultation has taken place with relevant faith and non-faith representatives and all groups have responded in an extremely positive and enthusiastic manner to the detail and composition of this new syllabus.

##### **1.2 Recommendation(s):**

It is recommended that Cabinet approve the Religious Education Syllabus for use in North Tyneside schools.

##### **1.3 Forward Plan:**

Twenty-eight days' notice of this report has been given and it first appeared on the Forward Plan that was published on 14 February 2020.

##### **1.4 Council Plan and Policy Framework**

This report relates to the following priorities in the 2020-24 Our North Tyneside Plan:

- Be ready for school – giving our children and their families the best start in life.

- Be healthy and well – with the information, skills and opportunities to maintain and
- improve their health, well-being and independence, especially if they are carers.

## **1.5 Information:**

### **1.5.1 Background**

The Authority has a statutory responsibility to review its Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education every five years. This review has been undertaken by the North Tyneside Standing Advisory Conference for Religious Education (SACRE) as required by law. In discharging that duty, the SACRE established a sub-group called the Agreed Syllabus Committee to consider the review of the syllabus before final approval by SACRE.

The SACRE has representatives from Elected Members, the Church of England, as well as representatives from Teacher Associations.

A new draft syllabus (developed by Durham County Council) was identified as a model of best practice and was reviewed by the Agreed Syllabus Committee. Minor amendments to the model syllabus were identified to reflect local circumstances and arrangements. The draft syllabus was also shared with schools in the spring term for consultation and some modifications were made in response to that feedback.

The draft syllabus reflects changes in the local population as well as the content for all phases of education and aims to ensure that the final agreed syllabus is accessible and easy to use by teaching and support staff in schools. The review of the draft syllabus has involved the consideration of Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development issues and that the religious traditions in the United Kingdom are mainly Christian but need to reflect all six major religions. This includes Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Sikh, Jewish and Hindu faiths. There is also recognition of other faiths as well as non- beliefs.

The draft syllabus if adopted by the Authority will enable schools to develop their own religious education curriculum.

The draft syllabus is fully supported by members of the SACRE Committee.

## **1.6 Decision options:**

The following decision options are available for consideration by Cabinet

### Option 1

To approve the Religious Education Syllabus for use in North Tyneside schools.

### Option 2

Formally receive the report and decline to agree the recommendations

Option 1 is the recommended option.

## **1.7 Reasons for recommended option:**

Option 1 is recommended for the following reasons:

The new draft syllabus has been drawn up with the needs of children and young people at its heart and aims to ensure that the final agreed syllabus is accessible and easy to use by teaching and support staff in schools of the proposals.

Schools have been fully involved at all stages of the process of consultation and the specific views of teaching and support staff responsible for Religious Education have been incorporated into the final draft syllabus.

## **1.8 Appendices:**

Appendix 1: The draft North Tyneside Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education.

## **1.9 Contact officers:**

Rob Smith, School Improvement Advisor (PE, Sport & Health, including SACRE)  
School Improvement Service – tel. (0191) 643 8545  
Claire Emmerson, Senior Manager Financial Strategy & Planning – tel. (0191) 643 8109

## **1.10 Background information:**

The following background papers/information have been used in the compilation of this report and are available at the office of the author:

- (1) Education Reform Act [ERA 1988] and the statutory powers and responsibilities now entrusted to the local SACREs <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/40>

## **PART 2 – COMPLIANCE WITH PRINCIPLES OF DECISION MAKING**

### **2.1 Finance and other resources**

This proposal has no financial implications for the Council, beyond initial costs to Durham County Council for adoption of their syllabus and training. The cost of this was taken across two financial years, totalling £11,000 and can be met from existing budgetary provision.

### **2.2 Legal**

The Authority has a duty to appoint a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) to advise on all matters related to the teaching of Religious Education in schools as set out in the Education Reform Act of 1988. The SACRE agreed the process of the review of the syllabus for Religious Education and appointed an Agreed Syllabus Committee to take the review forward. SACRE have approved the draft syllabus as attached to this report and have agreed to submit that draft for approval by Cabinet for subsequent adoption by schools.

Cabinet must be satisfied that the new syllabus reflects the fact that the religious traditions in North Tyneside are mainly Christian while taking account of the other five major religions in the UK. If Cabinet is not satisfied that the new syllabus reflects those conditions, then the SACRE would need to review the syllabus further.

## **2.3 Consultation/community engagement**

### **2.3.1 Internal Consultation**

The review of the syllabus has been undertaken by SACRE which is Chaired by the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Learning. Schools have been fully involved at all stages of the process and the specific views of teaching and support staff responsible for Religious Education have been incorporated into the final draft syllabus.

### **2.3.2 External Consultation/Engagement**

SACRE has approved the draft document; its members include representatives of faiths and non-faith groups as well as the teacher associations.

## **2.4 Human rights**

The Human Rights Act 2000 protects the right to have one's own thoughts, beliefs and religion. This includes the right to change one's religion or beliefs at any time. Individuals also have the right to put their thoughts and beliefs into action. Importantly, this right protects a wide range of religious beliefs and other beliefs including veganism, pacifism, agnosticism and atheism.

## **2.5 Equalities and diversity**

Religion and belief (including no belief) is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. Learning about religions in school will contribute to the achievement of the three aims of the Act and the Public Sector Equality Duty (to eliminate discrimination, victimisation and harassment; to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not) and encourage the acceptance of a range of religions and beliefs.

## **2.6 Risk management**

There are no risk management issues arising from this report.

## **2.7 Crime and disorder**

There are no crime and disorder issues arising from this report.

## **2.8 Environment and sustainability**

There are no crime and disorder issues arising from this report.

### **PART 3 - SIGN OFF**

- Chief Executive  X
- Head(s) of Service  X
- Mayor/Cabinet Member(s)  X
- Chief Finance Officer  X
- Monitoring Officer  X
- Head of Corporate Strategy and Customer Service  X