

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Agreed Syllabus Conference held
at County Hall, Usk - Remote Attendance on Tuesday, 26th April, 2022 at 11.15 am

PRESENT: COUNTY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES:

County Councillor P. Pavia (Chair)
County Councillor L. Brown

FAITH REPRESENTATIVES:

Mrs S. Gooding
Mrs S. Cave
Rebecca Morteo
Revd. J Greaves

TEACHER REPRESENTATIVES:

Mrs. C. Rhodes

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Will McLean	Chief Officer for Children and Young People
Wendy Barnard	Democratic Services Officer
Hayley Jones	EAS Curriculum Partner (SACs and RVE)
Geraint Edwards	Solicitor

APOLOGIES:

County Councillors T.Thomas and M. Powell

1. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

2. Public Open Forum

No members of the public were present.

3. To consider feedback from Welsh Government and advice from Officers in relation to Draft Agreed Syllabus

The RE Adviser explained the changes made to the legislative section of the guidance in line with the last meeting. The box added highlights the concerns, changes and the parts staying the same.

Welsh Government has been advised of the discrepancies in the legal section but it is unlikely that changes will be made before the date of implementation. There is a need to proceed in the meantime to ensure the availability of a syllabus for school at the beginning of September.

A link to Cynefin has been added to further explain the term.

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In response to our thoughts on including the UK between Wales and the wider world, advice has been received from WASACRE that amendments to the guidance should be made with caution to avoid confusion. The UK was not added but could be.

Parent, carers and learners was added to the Audience section. Some information about Voluntary Aided schools was added.

Under Curriculum design, to clarify that it was not necessary to have specialist teachers in primary schools, the following wording was added "the process should be supported by discipline specialist teaching" to avoid any confusion. Clusters and secondary school specialists will be able to help here.

The Collective Worship section was changed to read: "be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character".

The Complaints section was reworded to reflect that complaints are referred to the local authority and that SACRE/SACs consider and advise on matters of RVE provision. The contact details of the Customer Relations Manager, Annette Evans will be added. Complaints regarding worship or religious education would consider the complaint and offer advice.

The Solicitor explained the amendments to the Function section. Section 375A of the Education Act 1996 provides that the agreed syllabus must reflect that religious traditions in Wales are in the main Christian whilst taking account the teaching and practices of other principle religions represented in Wales. Also, the agreed syllabus must reflect that a range of non-religious philosophical convictions are held in Wales. Accordingly, the boxed section includes a brief explanation of each term reflecting the approach in the legislation. The legislation takes precedence over guidance.

Regarding the non-religious philosophical convictions element of the syllabus, some guidance has been provided including examples shown in case law in European and British courts. This is not an exhaustive list.

The points made, provide a broad legal overview of the scope of the syllabus.

It was suggested that the Introduction should be moved to the beginning of the document followed by the Function section.

A Member asked if the section on Voluntary Aided schools could be separated to Church in Wales and Catholic Schools as their versions of the syllabi will be different.

It was queried if collective worship is included in the syllabus. It was explained that it is included in the agreed syllabus. It was clarified that the Right to Withdraw from collective worship is still in place and that is a separate matter between the parent/learner and school.

A Member preferred the order of the sections clarifying the legislative summary and RVE guidance to be first then the Introduction. It was suggested that the title of the Introduction could be changed as necessary. Links to the Church in Wales and Catholic websites will be added to the VA School section.

It is intended, once the new syllabus is in place, to provide training for practitioners to answer questions, provide clarity and help build confidence.

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A Member suggested that the reference to European case law is removed to aid clarity. It was suggested and agreed that a third bullet point could be added to insert that the definition of Christianity and other principle religions remain unchanged under the 2021 Act. WASACRE has cautioned against adding definitions.

The Church in Wales is firmly committed to curriculum development that is objective , critical and pluralistic and will be following the RVE guidance as published.

Assurance was given that a school Humanities AoLE Lead will be able to provide/seek support for teachers requiring clarification.

Regarding the insertion of “the UK”, advice was received from WASACRE cautioning against the addition of words. A Member reminded that WASACRE is advisory only and it is the responsibility of the local authority to decide and agree the syllabus. WASACRE has provided non-prescriptive material for teachers to develop as appropriate. The syllabus is for local determination. Legal advice was provided that the insertion of “the UK” makes no difference in terms of the requirements of the Education Act and the Agreed Syllabus Conference can make that decision.

It was suggested that consideration should be given to the practitioners delivering the syllabus who may notice small changes between the syllabus and the version on Hwb where they would normally find information. It's important not to confuse and worry teachers, or discourage them from teaching the subject instead to provide them with easy to assimilate tools to teach quality RVE.

4. To agree the Final Agreed Syllabus Draft for consultation

The Faith, Teacher and LA Groups broke up into their voting groups and agreed by majority not to pursue a change to add “the UK” to the final draft.

The RE Adviser guided the committee through the changes made today and will work with the Church of Wales regarding the VA section and links.

The Faith, Teacher and LA Group re-joined their breakout groups and approved the draft agreed syllabus with the changes made today for wide consultation.

5. To confirm the minutes of the Agreed Syllabus Conference held on the following dates:

The minutes of the meetings of the Agreed Syllabus Conference held on the following dates were confirmed as a true record:

9th March 2022 – legacy meeting

9th March 2022

28th March 2022

6. Next Steps and date of next meeting

The draft agreed syllabus will be now be circulated as widely as possible to include schools, other religions and other stakeholders.

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The consultation period will end on 12th May and it was agreed to seek a further date for an Agreed Syllabus Conference w/c 23rd May 2022 to finalise the draft agreed syllabus and plan for it to be presented to County Council for approval, and onward distribution to schools.

It was agreed to facilitate some learner feedback in line with the Children's Commissioner Right of the Child training for RVE, noting that this topic is worthy of further consideration by SACRE in future.

The meeting ended at 12.40 pm