



Decision Maker:	Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Young People
Date:	8 March 2018
Classification:	For General Release
Title:	Westminster City Council's Locally Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education
Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Approval by Cabinet Member
Financial Summary:	Costs will be contained within existing budgets
Report of:	Lucy Nutt Principal Lead Adviser

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 By statute, every local authority is required to adopt a Locally Agreed Syllabus (LAS) of religious education and to review it every five years. The current Westminster LAS was originally adopted in 2006, when it was adapted from the Hampshire LAS to make it more suitable for Westminster schools. It was reviewed in 2011 and agreed without any changes. At the SACRE meeting of 29th June 2016, members unanimously agreed that the Local Authority should be asked to establish an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) to review the syllabus.
- 1.2 As required under Section 375 and Schedule 31 of the Education Act 1996 an ASC was established and met on the 1st November 2016 to review the current agreed syllabus and agreed that it should be updated. A working party was established by the ASC, which included teachers from Westminster maintained schools and representatives of various faiths, to fully review the new Hampshire syllabus and to recommend updates to ensure the syllabus met the local requirements of Westminster schools. The structure and pedagogical approach in the new Hampshire syllabus remains the same as Westminster's current LAS. It was agreed that the Westminster LAS should include six religions plus a non religious world view such as Humanism in view of the diverse community in Westminster. Text would also be added to allow for other religious to be included, such as Baha'i and Jain, should schools feel this appropriate. The recommendations were presented and refined at two further ASC meetings on 20th February 2017 and 14th

June 2017. At the end of the last ASC meeting, the conference unanimously agreed to adopt the Hampshire LAS with the changes made by the working party.

- 1.3 The new LAS has been produced as a result of local teachers, members of different religions and beliefs and representatives of the local authority working together to produce a revised Westminster LAS to support the teaching of religious education in its maintained schools.
- 1.4 The LAS will be for all maintained schools or in accordance with the school's designated denomination or trust deeds. All schools must teach religious education to pupils at every key stage. Academies, Free Schools and Voluntary-aided schools with a religious character can choose to follow another agreed syllabus or adopt their own. Westminster currently has seven maintained community primary schools. There are no maintained community secondary schools.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Young People gives effect to the recommendation of the Agreed Syllabus Conference to adopt from 1st January 2018 the syllabus set out at Appendix A as Westminster's Locally Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education.
- 2.2 That the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Young People authorises the Director for Education to take all necessary steps to publish the Westminster locally agreed syllabus.

3. Reasons for Decision

- 3.1 The ASC, having taken advice from experts in the field, have concluded that the revised locally agreed syllabus for religious education will best serve Westminster's needs. The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Young People, in giving effect to the ASC recommendation would allow the local authority to fulfil its duty to review and provide a locally agreed syllabus for religious education.

4. Background, including Policy Context

- 4.1 All community schools are required to follow the agreed syllabus of religious education adopted by their local authority. Local authorities are required to review their agreed syllabus at least once every five years. Westminster's current agreed syllabus was reviewed and re-circulated to schools in 2011 and therefore was due to be reviewed in 2016. A review of the syllabus was undertaken by the ASC in between November 2016 and June 2017. The main advantages of the current syllabus are:
 - the quality of the support material for teachers;
 - consistency with the Non-Statutory National Framework; and
 - that it allows Westminster schools to deliver the religious education most appropriate to their situation.

- 4.2 The new syllabus will be provided at no cost to all community schools and will include access to lesson and unit plans and supporting resource materials.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The costs of the statutory process are contained within existing budgets. The new syllabus was purchased and adapted from Hampshire at a cost of £1,000 from the annual SACRE budget. Any monitoring and staff training will be funded through the annual SACRE budget.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 The adoption of a revised locally agreed syllabus fulfils the duty under Section 375 and Schedule 31 of the Education Act 1996 to review syllabi periodically.
- 6.2 There is no provision for a reference back to ASC if the Cabinet Member rejects its recommendation but the Secretary of State has the power to intervene and set up a separate consultative process.
- 6.3 The copyright owners have given their permission for Westminster to make amendments to the original syllabus where necessary.

7. Consultation

- 7.1 There is no statutory requirement to consult. Key staff in community schools have been using the existing locally agreed syllabus since 2006, which the new Hampshire syllabus is based on, and feedback has been positive. Teachers and a headteacher from community schools were members of the ASC and the Chair of the ASC is a headteacher from a Voluntary-aided school.

8. Health and Wellbeing Impact Assessment including Health and Safety Implications

- 8.1 Religious education promotes the emotional security and well-being of pupils and students within school by demonstrating the school's understanding of, and respect for, their religious and cultural beliefs and practices. It also promotes respect and better understanding between different religious and cultural groups within a school community and thereby contributes to the inclusion agenda. The ASC has sought to maximise the impact of religious education in these areas through its recommendations with regard to a Westminster Agreed Syllabus.

**If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the
Background Papers please contact:**

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

The documents referred to in compiling this report are:

Education Act 1996 Part V Chapter 3, and Schedule 31

Living Difference: Westminster's Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education: July 2006

Living Difference III: Hampshire's revised syllabus for religious education 2016

For completion by the **Cabinet Member** for Children, Families and Young People

Declaration of Interest

I have <no interest to declare / to declare an interest> in respect of this report

Signed: _____ Date: _____

NAME: _____

State nature of interest if any

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(N.B: If you have an interest you should seek advice as to whether it is appropriate to make a decision in relation to this matter)

For the reasons set out above, I agree the recommendation(s) in the report entitled **Westminster City Council's Locally Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education** and reject any alternative options which are referred to but not recommended.

Signed

Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Young People

Date

If you have any additional comment which you would want actioned in connection with your decision you should discuss this with the report author and then set out your comment below before the report and this pro-forma is returned to the Secretariat for processing.

Additional comment:
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If you do not wish to approve the recommendations, or wish to make an alternative decision, it is important that you consult the report author, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Strategic Director Finance and Performance and, if there are resources implications, the Strategic Director of Resources (or their representatives) so that (1) you can be made aware of any further relevant considerations that you should take into account before making the decision and (2) your reasons for the decision can be properly identified and recorded, as required by law.

Note to Cabinet Member: Your decision will now be published and copied to the Members of the relevant Policy & Scrutiny Committee. If the decision falls within the criteria for call-in, it will not be implemented until five working days have elapsed from publication to allow the Policy and Scrutiny Committee to decide whether it wishes to call the matter in.