

Statement from the Chairman of SACRE

As Chairman of the Agreed Syllabus Conference and Wandsworth SACRE I have great pleasure in commending this revision of the syllabus to you. This syllabus provides the statutory framework for the entitlement for Religious Education in all maintained schools in Wandsworth. Religious Education makes a unique contribution to both the academic and the personal development of pupils. The original Agreed Syllabus and this revision is the final result of much dedicated effort. I am most grateful to members of the Agreed Syllabus Conference and our professional advisors who have contributed to the final document.

Religious Education is not about the transmission of any particular faith. It should not be confused with or substituted for the faith nurture of the home and faith community. It is about giving pupils opportunity to learn about the importance of the religious dimension of life and about how for many millions of people, both in this country and throughout the world, religious faith is the motivating factor for their lives and behaviour.

Perhaps one of the most important aspects is that pupils should appreciate that all the religions included in our syllabus prescribe moral and ethical behaviour. Religious Education contributes not only to the spiritual and moral development of pupils, but it clearly should make a major impact on cultural and social development, and personal, social, health and citizenship areas of the curriculum.

As my predecessor as Chairman of SACRE, Mrs Calcott-James pointed out in the preface to the previous edition of the Agreed Syllabus, it is important in an historical sense, that all children growing up in our society should understand the facts about Christianity: it has shaped our history and our culture. A knowledge of its teaching and symbolism is also necessary to an understanding of much of our literature, poetry, music and art. In this country we cannot properly understand who and what we are without knowledge and understanding of Christianity. It is also of great importance that children grow to understand and respect various beliefs, whether they themselves have any faith or not. It is thus important that pupils learn about the other religions of the world. Understanding about the faith of others should lead to respect, and avoid any confrontation in this area which so often denies tenets of the faiths that the disputing parties claim to represent.

During the process of revising the Syllabus we have taken into account good educational practice, the needs of pupils and the views of teachers. We built on the Syllabus of 1995 and subsequent local and national initiatives. The changes that have been made have been in consultation with teachers, educational advisors and faith communities. I feel sure that the syllabus will help teachers in their planning and delivery of this important area of the curriculum. In Wandsworth our schools are fortunate to have so many dedicated and supportive teachers who care about their pupils and the academic progress that they make; and about the kind of people those pupils will become. They strive to provide a strong framework for their pupils based on sound values and principles.

Councillor Professor B.N.C. Prichard, C.B.E.
Chairman of Wandsworth Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
and of the Agreed Syllabus Conference.

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