From: Penny Smith-Orr – Religious Education Consultant
Joel Cook – Head of Democratic Services

To: **Agreed Syllabus Conference –** 25 November 2026

Subject: **Kent Locally Agreed Religious Education Syllabus Extension**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Past Pathway of report: N/A

Future Pathway of report: Officer decision pending the recommendation of the Agreed Syllabus Conference.

Electoral Division: All

Summary: This report summarises the work to be undertaken by the Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) and asks the ASC to recommend that schools should continue to use the current Kent Agreed Syllabus, RE Today Model A+, until a national syllabus is adopted as a result of the inclusion of Religious Education (RE) into the National Curriculum. This is expected to take place in 2028.

Recommendation:
The Agreed Syllabus Conference is asked to recommend to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, that the use of the existing Locally Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education be extended until the introduction of a national syllabus, expected in 2028.

1. Introduction

1.1 Every maintained school in England must provide a basic curriculum covering RE, sex education and the National Curriculum. This includes provision for RE for all registered pupils at the school, except for those withdrawn by their parents (or withdrawing themselves if they are aged 18 or over) in accordance with Schedule 19 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. The key document in determining the teaching of RE is the locally Agreed Syllabus within the Local Authority concerned.

2. Background

2.1 The Local Authority is required to reconsider its Locally Agreed Syllabus for RE at least every five years. The current Kent RE syllabus was introduced in September 2017. The license was renewed for a further five years in 2022 and is now due to expire on 31 August 2027.

2.2 Section 375 and Schedule 31 of the Education Act 1996 requires the establishment of an ASC to oversee the syllabus review.

2.3 The 2026 Kent ASC comprise of the members of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) which includes representatives of local faith groups, teacher representatives and elected Members, organised as follows:

i. Group A – Christian Denominations (other than Church of England) and other religions which reflect the principal religions in the area
ii. Group B – Church of England
iii. Group C – Teacher representatives (from a range of teacher associations)
iv. Group D – Local Authority (LA councillors)

3. SACRE Input

3.1 The SACRE has been monitoring the development of the Government's Curriculum and Assessment Review. In recognition that a national RE syllabus is expected to take effect in 2028, members have indicated a preference to extend the existing licence rather than create or purchase a new syllabus. This approach would minimise disruption for schools and offer best value for money to the Council as it avoids the need to provide a new syllabus that would become obsolete in a short period of time.

3.2 SACRE members also highlighted that it was probable that a national RE syllabus would require some form of local syllabus supplementation to make it relevant for use in local schools. This situation will become clearer once the national syllabus becomes available for review.

3.3 In the event that further locally focused activity is required, SACRE will consider the relevant information and explore appropriate commissioning arrangements to secure the required provision, including the involvement of the Agreed Syllabus Conference where appropriate.

4. Proposal

4.1 The proposal is to extend the use of the RE Today Model A+ syllabus, with the additional syllabus units added in 2022, past the current expiry date of 31 August 2027, until a national RE syllabus can be adopted. This is planned to take effect in 2028. On that basis, the extension is planned for 1 year through to 31 August 2028.

4.2 During the lifetime of the current syllabus, it has delivered against the requirements set when commissioned. No significant concerns or issues have been identified and therefore the ACS can have confidence that an extension would support continued delivery of an effective programme of religious education across Kent's Education landscape.

4.3 This approach will require monitoring as there is a risk that there could be a delay in the release of a national syllabus; however, it will provide schools with a degree of consistency during this period of transition. Should the national syllabus timetable change, the arrangements will be reviewed and longer term commissioning approaches will be explored.

4.4 If the recommendation is agreed by the ASC, the decision to extend the use of the syllabus will be made by the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills. The record of decision will be appended to the Cabinet Member decision

made in 2022 to evidence ongoing implementation of the policy choice to maintain current arrangements.

4.5 Subject to agreement by the ASC to recommend an extension and the subsequent determination by the Corporate Director, the use of the syllabus will be formally extended with effect from 1 September 2027.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 The cost of extending the use of the RE Today Model A+ syllabus will be met from within existing budgets.

5.2 The cost of licensing a new syllabus is approximately £25,000. The cost of extending the existing RE Today Model A+ syllabus licence for one year is approximately £4,500.

6. Legal implications

6.1 The review and extension of the locally agreed syllabus fulfils the duty under Section 375 and Schedule 31 of the Education Act 1996 to review syllabi periodically.

7. Equalities implications

7.1 No adverse implications are expected to arise from the continued use of the RE Today Model A+ syllabus.

8. Recommendation:

The Agreed Syllabus Conference is asked to recommend to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, that the use of the existing Locally Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education be extended until the introduction of a national syllabus, expected in 2028.

9. Appendices

Appendix 1: RE Today Syllabus Model A+

Appendix 2: Additional Syllabus units for 2022

Appendix 3: Decision - 22/00048 - Kent Locally Agreed Religious Education Syllabus 2022-2027 - Kent County Council - Council & Democracy

10. Background Documents

Non-Statutory Guidance for the Kent Agreed Syllabus (Bottom of page):
Standing advisory council for religious education (SACRE) - KELSI

RE Today Agreed Syllabus brochure:
https://www.retoday.org.uk/consultancy/sacre-la/agreed-syllabus-brochure/

11. Contact details

Report Author:
James Clapson – Democratic Services Officer
03000 412 7387
james.clapson@kent.gov.uk

Relevant Director:
Benjamin Watts – Deputy Chief Executive
03000 416814
benjamin.watts@kent.gov.uk