

Analysis from SACRE Survey on the new Sunderland Agreed Syllabus

In December all schools were sent the following email:

SACRE is keen to receive your feedback on the Sunderland Agreed Syllabus and the additional training that has been provided to support its implementation.

Please follow the attached link and complete the survey by the 16th December 2022. We look forward to your responses and will report on our findings in 2023.

Agreed Syllabus Questionnaire <https://forms.office.com/r/qL98XpBRuz>

The original email was followed up with a piece in the January Newsletter asking for responses by 5 February 2023.

Use of Sunderland Agreed Syllabus

We had a total of 30 responses (taking out those who submitted twice); 28 from Infant/Primary schools and two from Secondary schools.

When asked if they were currently using the new syllabus, 26 schools said they were, 3 are planning to and 1 Secondary school (Venerable Bede) uses the Durham Diocese syllabus. The three schools planning to use the scheme are already trialing elements and have attended some of the CPD we have provided.

Attendance at Training

When asked about attendance at the training that has been provided (launch/3 CPD sessions and one day conference), 28 of the responding schools had attended both the launch and the one-day conference and 46% of respondents had attended all training offered. The following are some of the comments made about the training:

“All training has been exceptional. Very informative and helpful.”

“All of the sessions have been well presented and informative.”

“Conference with Lat Blaylock provided practical ideas for implementing the syllabus”

“The SACRE Conference was a fantastic event which should be an annual event so that RE Leads and Senior Leader can network and improve the teaching and learning of RE.”

“Excellent conferences each year. Both inspiring with excellent practical examples. Great ideas in second conference for deep dive questions/activities to gain pupil's voice.”

“The training by Lat has been fantastic and the support Cathryn has provided has been very helpful also.”

“All the training has been fantastic at providing real ideas for lessons and activities to use in the classroom. Each person who has provided training has been very helpful and approachable and willing to answer any questions that I had.”

Use of support materials

Teachers were asked about resources they had purchased to support the delivery of the Agreed syllabus. When asked about the 'Understanding Christianity' training and resource, 21 of the schools had purchased and attended training. Those who had not felt there was enough in the Agreed Syllabus to support teaching currently but may consider the resource in future. When asked about the resources available to purchase on the launch day, 18 schools had bought them.

When asked how much of their current RE curriculum followed the new Agreed Syllabus, all, except for one school, have begun the implementation of the syllabus.

Positive aspect of the new Agreed Syllabus

Teachers were asked to detail the positive aspects of the new Sunderland Agreed Syllabus e.g. ease of use; clarity of learning outcomes for each KS etc. The areas most frequently commented on included: Clear vision; clarity of outcomes; clear progression; easy to use; and greater depth.

Below is a selection of the comments made:

"It fits in with our other curriculum subjects with its spiral curriculum and it's aim of digging deeper. It's intention is clear. Staff have found it clear to use and outcomes are clearly matched to the key questions."

"Clear progression across year groups, religions and concepts."

"Learning outcomes are clear within each block, and progression is evident across school,"

"CPD package that has been rolled out alongside it - it is positive that schools have the opportunity to understand the rationale in full"

"The syllabus is structured well. Progression of learning is clear."

"More opportunities to reflect and revisit key concepts."

"Wider opportunities to make the curriculum current and relevant to religion as a living faith."

"I love the way the curriculum teaches different religions alongside one another."

"Clarity of progression"

"Staff have responded positively to the key questions and say that outcomes are clear."

"The older children have particularly liked the new syllabus and their ability to question and discuss faith. The progression through the key stages is very clear and staff have also found this beneficial."

Challenging aspects of the new Agreed Syllabus

Teachers were asked to outline any aspects of the new Sunderland Agreed Syllabus which they have found particularly difficult. The two biggest issues were: covering knowledge gaps when introducing a new syllabus across all year groups; and resourcing lessons.

This is a selection of some comments:

"Assessment of each unit."

"Lack of lesson plans"

"Some of the concepts in KS2 are quite tricky."

"The way the learning builds as your progress from EYFS to Y6 means current classes beyond Reception have not always had the relevant prior input to build upon."

"General changes to the RE curriculum."

"We are finding resourcing some of the lessons a challenge."

"Pitching the outcomes so that we aren't covering too much/too little or spending time repeating across year groups."

"Nothing immediately springs to mind." "Christian units for Y5/6"

"Coverage/ gaps in learning with cohorts"

Good Practice

Teachers were asked to share something they felt proud of having used the new syllabus. These are some of the comments:

"In the dinner hall two children from Year 2 turned to the deputy head teacher and asked her if teachers could see everything, and when she replied that nobody can see everything one boy replied well God can. The other little boy disagreed politely and they started to debate whether God was all knowing. Two year 2 children having a philosophical discussion while eating their lunch because of their new thought provoking RE curriculum."

"The depth of discussion it has created. Pupils have enjoyed it."

"As lead, I have created and resourced the MTP's for all year groups across school. The Syllabus helped me do so effectively and easily."

"Whole school engagement with RE curriculum."

"The children are enjoying the Big Question aspect of the lesson plans - not only is it a key way to assess their knowledge of what has been taught but also a good review for them and a great way to get children to discuss certain aspects of the religion taught so far."

"Our staff- they have been very supportive and worked hard to try and implement it."

"Children's engagement."

"We now have a syllabus that reflects our values and the world children live in today"

"Deep learning from Reception to Year 6. Children asking thought provoking questions. Children having a balanced understanding of religion and world views"

"Staff feel more confident in the delivery of RE and children are enjoying it more."

"Year 5 and 6 children are sharing their own beliefs and opinions about belief and faith. (following U2.2 unit) They are now confident to share their opinion and some pupils are showing respect in how they respond to those who have differing beliefs; which is wonderful to see."

Further training/help

Teachers identified a number of areas that would help with the implementation of the Agreed Syllabus. These included: Assessment; support with G&T; sharing resources on some sort of central hub; lesson resources; and more training on the teaching of Islam.

Conclusion

It is evident from schools that responded to the survey that the new Sunderland Agreed Syllabus is viewed positively. Teachers in Sunderland schools are working hard to implement the new syllabus and that children are benefitting from a more challenging RE curriculum.

Teachers have overall taken advantage of training offered and particularly value the One-day conferences delivered by Lat.

A focus on developing assessment models and challenging all children would further enhance the delivery of the new syllabus.