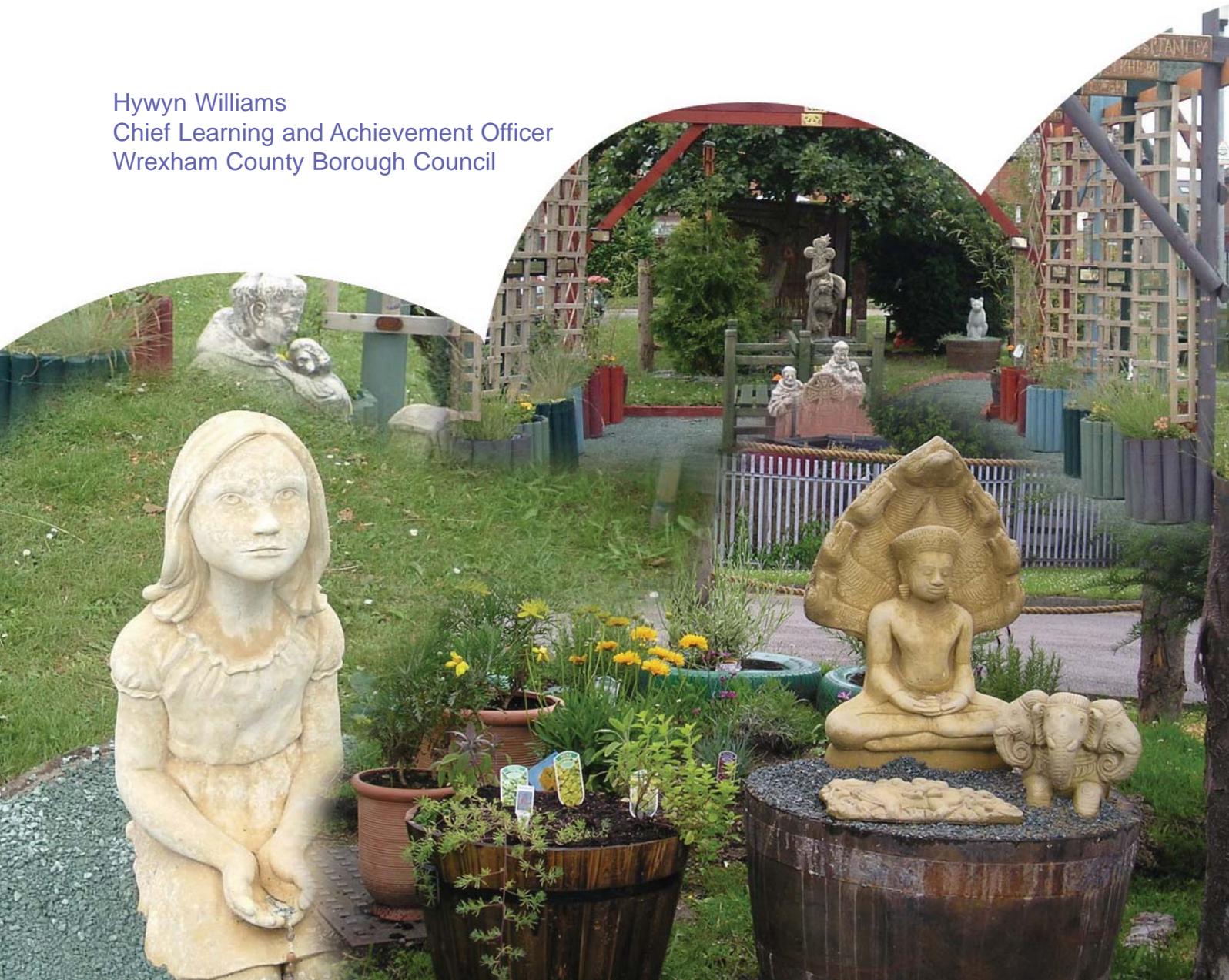


Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education

Wrexham LEA

Hywyn Williams
Chief Learning and Achievement Officer
Wrexham County Borough Council



Foreword:

I am delighted to introduce the new Wrexham Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education. It has been very pleasing to see that RE has had a national focus as part of the Curriculum Review 2008 and we are confident that by adopting the National Exemplar Framework for RE as our Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education in Wrexham, we will continue to improve standards of religious education in our schools.

This syllabus builds on the 2001 syllabus that has served Wrexham well in developing provision for RE and will support schools in ensuring that RE has a continued focus on the learner that:

- Ensures that appropriate skills development is woven throughout the curriculum
- Has assessment for learning principles and vocabulary embedded within
- Focuses on continuity and progression 3 –19
- Offers reduced subject content with an increased focus on skills
- Is flexible
- Is Relevant to the 21st century
- Support national policies including bilingualism, Curriculum Cymreig, Europe and the World, equal opportunities, food and fitness, education for sustainable development and global citizenship, and the world of work and entrepreneurship.

This National Exemplar Framework sits alongside national curriculum subject orders and other frameworks and is focused on enabling all learners to learn in the way and at the pace that allows them to succeed. Schools are encouraged therefore to look at the WAG document ***Making the Most of Learning: Implementing the Revised Curriculum*** alongside this new Agreed Syllabus for Wrexham.

This is an exciting opportunity for Religious Education in Wrexham and in Wales as a whole. We look forward to working more closely with other partners in continuing to ensure that Religious Education in our schools is effective and engaging. I commend the work of Wrexham SACRE and the enthusiasm of its members for supporting Religious Education in Wrexham as we look forward to the implementation of this revised Agreed Syllabus.

Hywyn Williams
Chief Learning and Achievement Officer
Wrexham County Borough Council

The Wrexham Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education

Introduction:

Religious Education is 'basic' in that, like National Curriculum subjects, it is an entitlement for all, but the Secretary of State has no power to determine programmes of study, attainment targets or methods of assessment for Religious Education. These are determined at the local level by the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) and an Agreed Syllabus Conference.

Wrexham SACRE has adopted **the National Exemplar Framework for Religious Education for 3 – 19-year-olds in Wales** as its new Agreed Syllabus. In addition, the Local Education Authority and the Agreed Syllabus Conference have decided to specify which of the other principal religions and how many of them should be studied at the foundation and key stages. There is therefore a clearly stated structure as regards which religions can be studied within each phase. (See Figure 1)

The National Exemplar Framework for RE has been written to comply with the legal obligations for a locally agreed syllabus which require:

- The promotion of the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils, including those in nursery settings.
- Appropriate provision for all registered pupils in every maintained school in Wales, including those in reception settings and those up to the age of 19.
- That Christianity should be studied at each key stage and that the other principal religions should be represented in Great Britain.
- That religious education be non-denominational, but teaching about a particular catechism or formulary is not prohibited (i.e. similarities and differences in beliefs, teachings and practices of the religious traditions can be studied.)

The syllabus is not intended to be a scheme of work. It provides a framework within which each school can best devise a programme of RE to fulfil the stated aims of the syllabus.

Schools should take note of the following points:

- The syllabus makes clear, in accordance with statutory requirements, that Christianity is the predominant core and should be taught in all phases.
- It is important, however, that all pupils are aware that both in Wales and in world society there are living faiths besides Christianity. The Syllabus therefore refers to the major faiths of Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism.
- All religions studied should be accorded equal respect.

Responsibilities:

It is the responsibility of the LEA, School Governors and Headteachers to ensure that Religious Education is taught in accordance with the Agreed Syllabus to every pupil registered at the school.

Under the Education Acts, the LEA must provide local arrangements for dealing with complaints. The SACRE will therefore consider complaints about the provision of or lack of provision of Religious Education. This arrangement will give parents and others the opportunity to ensure the proper provision of Religious Education in the schools. It is also the duty of the SACRE to advise the LEA on matters that include “methods of teaching, the choice of teaching materials and the provision of teacher training.”

Religious Education in voluntary controlled schools is given in accordance with the Agreed Syllabus. However, if parents so request, arrangements should be made for Religious Education to be provided for their children in accordance with any trust deed, or the practice followed before the school became controlled.

Religious Education in voluntary aided schools is given in accordance with the trust deed of the school and the appropriate guidance as given by the religious authority pertaining to the school. However, if parents so request, arrangements should be made for Religious Education to be provided for their children in accordance with the local Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education.

Rights of Withdrawal

Under the Education Acts, parents have rights of withdrawal. Parents of a pupil at any maintained school may personally request that their child be wholly or partly excused from receiving Religious Education given in the school in accordance with the basic curriculum. It is important that schools ensure parents are aware of the aims and nature of Religious Education and that an opportunity is given to discuss fully with parents the implications of withdrawal, including the problems arising with integrated and thematic approaches.

The rights of teachers and headteachers are also safeguarded.

Curriculum Time

In all maintained schools time allocated to Religious Education in the Foundation Phase and KS2 should be on a par with that given to full foundation areas of learning or subjects. This time does not include time given to Collective Worship. At KS3 and KS4, time allocated should be a minimum of 5% of curriculum time at each Key Stage. At KS5, schools should ensure that they meet the requirements of the Post 16 National Exemplar Framework of Study. This should include a minimum of 30 hours over the Key Stage and can be covered through Religious Education Conference Days.

At KS4 where GCSE Religious Studies (Full Course) is offered as an examination option in addition to a programme of statutory Religious Education, the time allocation for the examination work in Religious Studies should be consistent with that given to other Humanities subjects. Where a school follows an accredited GCSE Short Course in Religious Studies as the statutory Religious Education programme, they will be deemed to have satisfied the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus, if the course they follow considers more than one religious tradition.

At KS5 where students are working towards the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification, schools are advised to look at meeting the statutory requirements for Religious Education within the Core element provision of the Baccalaureate. Signposting for this is included in the guidance documents for the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification.

Resources

A wide range of resources should be available including textbooks and reference books, audio-visual equipment and resources, religious artefacts, access to IT equipment, adequate library provision and grants for out of school visits. Schools should also make use of the Wrexham RE Resources Library based at the Erlas Centre. In secondary schools specialist rooms should be allocated.

Staffing and In- Service Training

A Coordinator for RE or a Head of Department should be designated in all schools. Fully accessible resources and regular programmes of in-service training should be provided.

Teacher role

The teacher's principal responsibility is to help pupils to fulfil the main aims of the syllabus. These aims are educational, leading the pupil both to an understanding of religion and its variety of beliefs, practices and underlying values and to an appreciation of the part that faith plays in life. The teacher must take a non-confessional approach to the study of any faith or denomination.

Sensitivity to the beliefs, values and practices of others should always be a consideration. The question of whether or not a teacher makes known his or her personal beliefs is a matter for the individual teacher. A teacher's convictions or lack of conviction, expressed to the class or not, should not prejudice the educational approach taken to the subject.

Religious Education is not indoctrination. "Education" seeks, amongst other things, to impart knowledge, deepen understanding, encourage informed judgements and develop positive attitudes and values. There is no place in Religious Education for the coercion of a child into any particular faith or denomination, or conversely into non at all.

Religious Education is a unique subject that provides a particular perspective on a multitude of issues, and this stems from the concepts of faith and commitment, which are at the heart of religion. The religious dimension gives greater breadth and depth to that which is personal, spiritual, social and moral and this should be recognised in any form of combined or integrated course. Religious Education is not the same as Personal and Social Education (PSE). In following a course of Religious Education each child and young person will be considering and developing personal beliefs, acquiring social skills and making moral judgements but this is no more than what should happen in all areas of the curriculum.

Religious Education in the twenty first century encourages pupils to explore a range of philosophical, theological, ethical and spiritual questions in a reflective, analytical, balanced way that stimulates questioning and debate. It also focuses on understanding humanity's quest for meaning, the positive aspects of multi-faith / multicultural understanding and pupils' own understanding and responses to life and religion.

Religions to be studied

Phase	Compulsory	Choice	Comments
Foundation	Christianity (as the predominant core) <i>and</i> one other religion	Either: Judaism or Hinduism	Additional elements of other religions may also be included from time to time, if appropriate to the topics being followed.
2	Christianity (as the predominant core) <i>and</i> two other religions Key Stage 2 planning should take account of religions studied at Foundation Phase	Judaism Hinduism Islam	Additional elements of other religions may also be included from time to time, if appropriate to the topics being followed.
3	Christianity (as the predominant core) <i>and</i> three other religions Key Stage 3 planning should take account of religions studied in feeder primary schools.	Judaism Hinduism Islam Buddhism Sikhism	Additional elements of other religions may also be included from time to time, if appropriate to the topics being followed.
4	Christianity (as the predominant core) <i>and at least</i> three other religions	Judaism Hinduism Islam Buddhism Sikhism	Where a school follows an accredited GCSE Short Course in Religious Studies as the statutory Religious Education programme, they will be deemed to have satisfied the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus, if the course they follow considers more than one religious tradition.
5	Christianity (as the predominant core) <i>and other religions as appropriate</i>	Appropriate aspects of the other religions	Where a school follows the signposting for Religious Education in the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification as the statutory Religious Education programme, they will be deemed to have satisfied the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus, if the planning includes Christianity and other religions as appropriate.