

## **Religion and Worldviews Approach to the New RE Syllabus in Coventry and Warwickshire**

Dear SIAMS Inspector,

Coventry and Warwickshire SACREs, in conjunction with Coventry Diocesan Board of Education, have recently launched a new RE syllabus (April 2024) with the intention set for local schools to implement this from September 2024. This syllabus makes a shift towards a religion and worldviews approach to the teaching of RE and, as such, is in keeping with national thinking on RE and is both innovative and pioneering. This approach assumes that everyone, including pupils themselves, has a worldview and for some people that worldview might align with an organised worldview such as a religious tradition or a non-religious tradition such as Humanism. For many people, their worldview is individual and non-religious and the new syllabus recognises this also.

A religion and worldviews approach is based on these three key principles:

- *Starting with the particular (e.g. individual & communal worldviews) and moving towards the general (e.g. knowledge of the recognisable familial traits of organised worldviews such as religious traditions).*
- *Making use of the immediate context and available resources in Coventry and Warwickshire and schools' own immediate localities and contexts.*
- *Focusing more on the ways in which people live, the diversity of worldviews and the hermeneutical nature of beliefs as interpreted and 'embodied' by those with different worldviews both here and in the wider global picture.*

The new syllabus is based on seven core concepts relevant to all worldviews:

- Belonging and Believing (from EYFS onwards)
- Wisdom and Guidance (from EYFS onwards)
- Personal Responsibility (from EYFS onwards)
- Living Well (from KS1 onwards)
- Authority and Power (from KS1 onwards)
- Changes (from KS1 onwards)
- Grand Narratives (from KS2 onwards)

These concepts are re-visited in a spiral curriculum and explored through three main ways of knowing (disciplinary knowledge):

- Theology
- Philosophy

- Human and Social Sciences

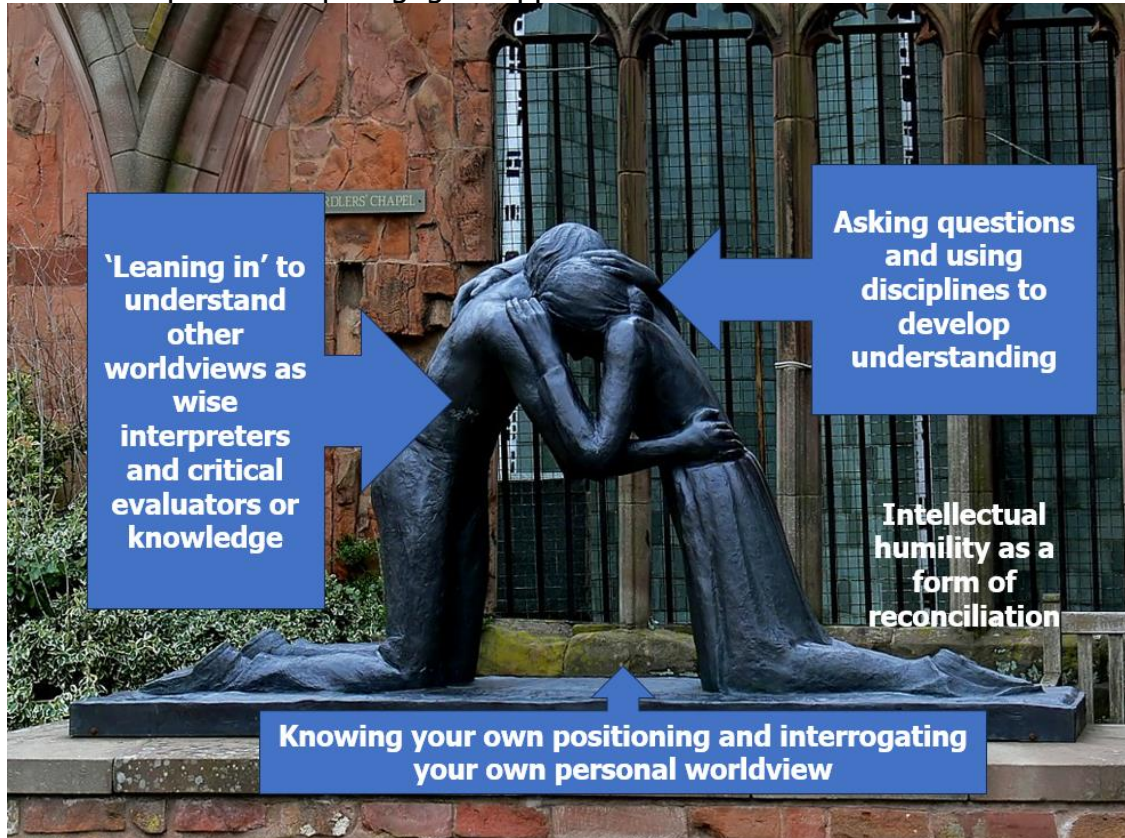
In addition, history is also used as a discipline in some units of work.

Where concepts and disciplines intersect, enquiry questions have been posed to form the basis of units of work. These make use of case studies drawn from religion and worldviews as examples of how such questions might be answered by those with differing worldviews. Over time, pupils build up a growing knowledge of the familial traits of organised worldviews such as religious traditions.

The RE syllabus is conceived of as a journey and pupils are regarded as 'Worldview Explorers'. Their personal knowledge and personal worldviews are considered throughout and intentionally nurtured.

The syllabus supports CE schools in crafting a RE curriculum that meets the CE Statement of Entitlement. In particular, it supports the following:

- It is a highly-sequential RE programme with peace and reconciliation at the centre in terms of substantive content and pedagogical approach, reflecting the local and global narrative of Coventry as a city of reconciliation. The syllabus aims to support the flourishing of both pupils and adults as personal worldviews are explored alongside the worldviews of others and personal knowledge is nurtured. The reconciliation statue in the ruins of Coventry Cathedral provides a visual metaphor of its pedagogical approach:



- The syllabus itself is 'in the main Christian' and seeks to explore Christianity as a living, diverse and global faith. It routinely seeks to de-colonise the teaching of Christianity as well as other religious traditions. Through this syllabus, and the inclusion of units from Understanding Christianity, local CE schools explore Christian worldviews and the diversity that comes from recognising how Christian beliefs are interpreted and embodied in diverse ways locally and around the world.
- The syllabus also includes carefully-sequenced study of a range of worldviews, both religious and non-religious, allowing pupils to build up substantive knowledge whilst using disciplinary knowledge and skills to effectively study worldviews other than their own.
- This syllabus is one that will engage and challenge pupils through an exploration of core concepts and key enquiry questions. It offers pupils the opportunity to understand the role foundational texts, beliefs, rituals, and practices might play in the lives of individuals and communities and how these things can help form identity in a range of religions and worldviews.
- Based on the disciplines of theology, philosophy and human and social sciences, as well as history on occasion, this syllabus offers pupils the methods and tools to study the religion and worldviews of their own local context, both past and present, as well as the wider world.
- Featuring a robust assessment system based upon disciplinary knowledge and skills, pupils develop the knowledge and skills they need to study a range of substantive content drawn from religion and worldviews case studies. Current learning builds on prior knowledge whilst anticipating future knowledge as part of a carefully considered sequence of study.
- Academically rigorous, it raises the profile of RE and demands an increased level of teachers' subject knowledge and pedagogical expertise, whilst providing scaffolding for the development of those things.

The syllabus informs the RE curriculum in local CE schools, which in turn provides evidence to answer the following IQs focused on RE in the SIAMS Inspection Framework:

***IQ6: Is the religious education curriculum effective (with reference to the expectations set out in the Church of England's Statement of Entitlement for Religious Education)?***

***IQ7: What is the quality of religious education in voluntary aided and former voluntary aided schools, and in former voluntary controlled schools in which denominational religious education is taught?***

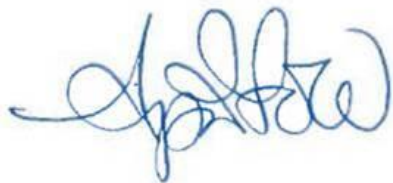
The syllabus seeks to address many of the issues raised in the recent RE Research and RE Subject Reports published by Ofsted. For example:

- A distinct, challenging and academically-rigorous curriculum is outlined for pupils at all key stages, with desired end points clearly identified through an assessment system which ensures disciplinary knowledge and skills are developed and retained and provide a meaningful vehicle for the substantive knowledge of religion and worldviews to be studied.
- Knowledge has been carefully selected to reflect a growing and changing world, as well as the richness of our historical-social-geographical location in Coventry and Warwickshire (for example, the centrality of peace and reconciliation). This seeks to educate pupils in the nuance, complexity and messiness of worldviews and to avoid unhelpful generalisations.
- The syllabus navigates a balance of breadth and depth so that pupils encounter both religious and non-religious worldviews and can, most importantly, develop the skills needed to study these effectively.
- It provides opportunity for pupils to build on their prior knowledge and to deepen their understanding of their own personal worldview, and those of others, over time.
- The syllabus recognises that the world changes and substantive knowledge can and will change and that local context can also shape this, placing decisions around substantive content into the hands of schools.
- A clear assessment system supports teachers in ensuring pupils develop disciplinary knowledge and skills and retain and recall selected substantive knowledge over time.

The launch of the syllabus has been coupled with ongoing professional development sessions for teachers, to enhance their subject knowledge in readiness for teaching this ambitious syllabus. Both SACREs and the Diocesan Board of Education have provided ongoing training to support schools as they implement this exciting and innovative new syllabus. It is recognised that both paperwork and pedagogy are key for an effective RE curriculum.

This syllabus is in the early stages of implementation and is the first of its kind in the country. It meets the National Content Standard recently shared by the Religion and Education Council. Implementation is expected to be ongoing and organic as schools create their RE curricula based on the syllabus they have been given. Please do recognise this when evaluating the RE curriculum and its effectiveness in schools in Coventry Diocese from September 2024 onwards.

With kind regards,



**April Gold (Director of Education- Coventry Diocesan Board of Education)**