

Department of  
**Education**  
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**Oideachais**  
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SUB 326/2006

Reverend Donald J Watts  
Joint Secretary to the Churches Leaders Meeting  
Church House  
BELFAST  
BT1 6DW

November 2006

*Dear Rev Watts,*

#### **PROPOSALS FOR A REVISED CORE SYLLABUS FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

I am writing in response to the Proposals you submitted to my predecessor, on behalf of the Four Churches, for a Revised Core Syllabus for Religious Education (RE). I am pleased to tell you that I have accepted the Proposals.

I am confident that schools will deliver RE in an inclusive environment, where the beliefs of every pupil are respected. I am aware that some groups have concerns about the potential equality implications of the Proposals. However, the Department carried out a full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) on the Proposals and is satisfied that measures can be put in place to mitigate any such impacts. For example, schools could take advantage of the increased curricular flexibility they now have to make more provision for world religions, as suits the needs of their pupils and the ethos of the school, beyond the Core Syllabus and to make links between RE and relevant areas such as Citizenship.

Schools will also be able to use new guidance materials to support the introduction of the revised core syllabus. I am aware that the Churches have established an advisory group with The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) to support work to develop these materials and that the group includes representatives from the Boards, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, Inter-Faith Forum, St Mary's and Stranmillis University Colleges and RE teachers. I understand that early areas of work will be to map RE to the revised curriculum and to develop materials on world religions at Key Stage 3. I would also like the group to develop similar materials for Key Stage 4 to facilitate progression to post-16 and beyond and officials will ask CCEA to look at what provision can be made for world religions in its GCSE Religious Studies specification during the review of GCSE specifications in 2007. I



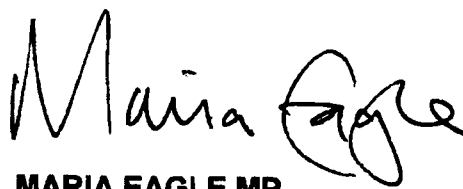
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trust that the members of the advisory group will work well together and will adopt an inclusive approach to the development of high-quality materials to support the teaching of RE.

I am aware of the length of time the review process has taken and want now to move ahead with implementing the revised core syllabus. The Department will make the necessary legislative provision to introduce it from September 2007 to ensure that RE keeps in step with the implementation timescale for the revised curriculum. In the meantime, this letter will be published on the Department's website and drawn to the attention of schools and the education partners to enable them to plan accordingly. The Department will also publish the Final Results of the EQIA.

Finally, I would like to thank all of those involved in the review of the core syllabus for their time and effort and I wish you well in your work to develop new guidance material to support the introduction of the new RE curriculum. I am confident that the common core for the teaching of RE, alongside the revised curriculum, will help to better prepare our young people to deal with the challenges of life and work in today's global society.

Best Wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maria Eagle". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped "E" at the end.

**MARIA EAGLE MP**

