

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Minutes of the meeting held on 24 February 2015

- PRESENT:** Councillor Dylan Rees (Chair)
- The Education Authority**
- Councillors W. T. Hughes, G. O. Jones, R. Llewelyn Jones, Alun Mummery
- The Religious Denominations**
- Mr Rheinallt Thomas (The Presbyterian Church in Wales)
Kirsty Williams (The Church in Wales)
Mrs Catherine Jones (The Baptist Union of Wales)
- Teacher Representatives**
- Mrs Manon Morris Williams (Ysgol Llangaffo)
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Mr D. Gareth Jones (Primary Education Officer) (Clerk to the SACRE)
Ann Holmes (Committee Officer)
- APOLOGIES:** Mr Christopher Thomas (The Catholic Church), Mrs Mefys Edwards (Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones)
- ALSO PRESENT:** Miss Bethan James (GwE Challenge Advisor)
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The Chair welcomed all those present to this meeting of the SACRE and he gave a particular welcome to Mrs Manon Morris Williams who was present in her first meeting as a Member of the SACRE.

The Chair referred with great sadness to the bereavement experienced recently by Professor Euros Wyn Jones in the loss of his wife. He extended his, and all the SACRE's Members' sincerest condolences to Professor Jones and his family in their loss. All Members and Officers stood in silence as a mark of sympathy and respect.

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest was received.

2 MINUTES 7TH OCTOBER, 2014 MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting of the SACRE held on 7th October, 2014 were presented and confirmed as correct.

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Kirsty Williams, the Church in Wales provided the SACRE with further information regarding the Church's intentions in respect of offering Religious Education related support for schools following a proposal made originally to the SACRE's meeting in July, 2014.

Miss Williams referred to a letter which it was proposed would be sent to the Island's secondary schools to ask them what support with Religious Education teaching they are receiving and what

they would find helpful. She said that the Church does have an officer who visits secondary schools to provide some RE of a Christian denomination but that he combines that role with sports education as a Christian as well. There are projects ongoing in the primary sector including the Open Book project which presents Religious Education through drama. Miss Williams explained that the Church in Wales has more of a one to one relationship with primary schools and although it is intended that the letter should also go to the primary schools she would prefer because of the existing relationship, that they be contacted on a one to one basis to try to establish what further support they would like to have. She referred to two other projects in which the Church was currently engaged with Year 6 pupils – the one involving a roadshow where Year 6 pupils can come with Year 7 link tutors to help them with the transition to secondary school and the other a project in collaboration with other organisations to write a year-long curriculum on moving on as an RE theme in primary schools.

The SACRE whilst welcoming the availability to schools of the Church in Wales resource, emphasised that it is a matter for schools locally to decide whether or not to avail themselves of the Church's offer of support. It was suggested and agreed that the correspondence to schools referred to by Miss Williams be included as an item for information purposes on the agenda of the SACRE's next meeting.

It was agreed to note the information.

ACTION ARISING: Committee Officer to include the Church in Wales's correspondence to schools on the issue of support as an item of information on the agenda for the SACRE's next meeting.

3.2 Miss Bethan James, GwE Challenge Advisor reported as follows with regard to the review of the Curriculum –

- That the Statement made by the Welsh Government's Minister for Education on the theme of developing a new curriculum for Wales, a copy of which was provided to the SACRE's members, refers to overhauling professional development to facilitate delivery of the new curriculum and higher standards within the classroom. However, the Welsh Government will not necessarily provide training for RE Teachers as it is not a national curriculum subject area, and therefore consideration might need to be given to alternative ways of providing support to teachers in RE locally. NAPfRE has already discussed a number of models that could be adopted and that work is ongoing.
- That the Statement mentions that it is timely for another "great debate" in Welsh education on the subject of curriculum change. The National Exemplar Framework for Religious Education post-dates the National Curriculum for other subjects by some time and is therefore more current. The professional view is that a review of the curriculum is advisable every 5 years so that it is reflective of developments and the society in which pupils live. The current National Exemplar Framework does place an emphasis on RE skills and an understanding of concepts and themes – compared to other curriculum subjects, the RE Framework is a first draft and more work is required in terms of defining RE skills. It is hoped that in Anglesey a Local Agreed Syllabus can be developed which reflects the Curriculum and is responsive to the needs of pupils.
- The Statement says that international evidence is clear that higher standards are not necessarily achieved by spending more, meaning that greater expectations will be placed on teachers and schools to adapt the Curriculum on the basis of skills, teaching and pedagogy rather than through additional resources.
- Professor Graham Donaldson's Review of the National Curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales to be published on the 25th February has generated many responses some of which will be supportive of RE on the school Curriculum and some of which will not. A further round of consultation will be held on the published report.

The SACRE considered the information and considered also, depending on the length of time accorded to the latest consultation, whether it might be necessary to convene an extraordinary meeting of the SACRE to respond to the Donaldson Review report given that there is no scheduled meeting of the committee until June. It was agreed to do so if that is found to be necessary.

It was agreed to note the information and that if necessary, an extraordinary meeting of the SACRE be convened to respond to the Donaldson report.

NO FURTHER ACTION ARISING

3.3 The Primary Education Officer confirmed that in accordance with the SACRE's wishes, he had written to the schools whose self-evaluation reports were the subject of consideration at the previous meeting to acknowledge, and to thank them for the information.

3.4 The Primary Education Officer confirmed that the Local Education Authority had renewed the SACRE'S subscription to WASACRE for 2014/15 at a fee of £422.

4 ANGLESEY SACRE ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14

The definitive version of the Annual Report for 2013/14 was presented for the SACRE's information. It was noted that the draft version was discussed at the SACRE's previous meeting in October, 2014.

The GwE Challenge Advisor said that the format of the report has changed to reflect Welsh Government guidance from its review of SACRE bodies' annual reports, and the need for SACREs to evaluate their own effectiveness as advisory bodies with oversight for Religious Education and collective worship matters in schools. The Officer said that it has become more difficult for the SACRE due to pressures on local authorities and the demise of the RE Advisor to be assured that its input is put into practice. Consequently, the SACRE has given thought to how it can extend its responsibility by incorporating recommendations for the LEA at the end of each section of the Annual Report. These in turn have been translated into an Action Plan containing four priorities which are accompanied by actions points, supporting evidence and an outline of the outcomes which implementing the priorities are expected to achieve.

The SACRE considered the Action Plan and particular attention was given in the ensuing discussion to how under the fourth priority in respect of promoting good quality collective worship, the SACRE's members would report back on their visits to schools to observe collective worship practices and whether the feedback should be provided through oral or written reports.

The GwE Challenge Advisor said that Members' understanding of what constitutes good quality collective worship might need to be refreshed by referring to the WASACRE guidance on Collective Worship, and could be enhanced by Members sharing their experiences within the SACRE. A draft pro-forma would also be useful to record that a collective worship visit has been undertaken but not necessarily to reflect judgement.

The Chair invited Members to undertake further collective worship visits to schools before the SACRE's next meeting; the Primary Education Officer confirmed that that would be on a voluntary basis i.e. schools would be invited to express an interest in hosting a visit unless there are circumstances where a SACRE member has an established connection with a school e.g. as a school governor.

It was agreed to note the definitive Annual Report and Action Plan for 2013/14.

ACTIONS ARISING:

- **Primary Education Officer/Committee Officer to circulate the WASACRE Guidance on Collective Worship to schools and the SACRE's members respectively.**
- **Primary Education Officer to invite expressions of interest from schools in hosting a collective worship observation visit by a member of the SACRE in the period from now until June, 2015.**
- **GwE Challenge Advisor to draft a pro-forma for recording collective worship visits by members of the SACRE.**
- **Committee Officer to include an agenda item on collective worship for the SACRE's next meeting.**

5 SCHOOL INSPECTIONS - AUTUMN 2014

The report of the Primary Education Officer summarising the relevant findings from Estyn inspection reports in relation to Ysgol Parch. Thomas Ellis, Ysgol Parc y Bont and Ysgol Uwchradd Bodedern was presented for the SACRE's consideration.

The Primary Education Officer confirmed that there were no issues arising from the reports presented.

Mrs Manon Williams reminded the SACRE that church schools are also subject to separate inspections under Section 50 of the 2005 Education Act and that three Church schools have received those inspections.

It was suggested that it would be informative for the SACRE to be provided with copies of Section 50 inspection reports.

It was agreed to note the report.

ACTION ARISING: Primary Education Officer to make available to the SACRE copies of Section 50 inspection reports where those have been undertaken.

6 SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATIONS

The Religious Education self-evaluation reports of Ysgol Gynradd Llangoed and Ysgol Santes Gwenfaen, Rhoscolyn were presented for the SACRE's consideration.

The GwE Challenge Advisor reminded the SACRE by means of a visual presentation of the need for school self-evaluation reports to mirror the terminology used by Estyn to evaluate school performance in its inspection reports, and she sought to show how well the self-evaluation reports presented drew on the repository of qualitative and evaluative terms used by Estyn and where they could further improve.

The SACRE noted the information and acknowledged the schools' candour in recognising areas for improvements. It was agreed that it was appropriate that as part of her role, the GwE Challenge Advisor rather than the SACRE, should provide schools with feedback on where further improvements can be made to RE self-evaluation reports where that applies.

It was agreed to accept the self-evaluation reports and to note their contents, and to also thank the schools concerned for making them available to the SACRE.

NO FURTHER ACTION ARISING

7 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION RESULTS 2014

A report by the GwE Challenge Advisor which provided an analysis of Religious Education attainment and external examination results for Summer, 2014 was presented for the SACRE's consideration.

The GwE Challenge Advisor reported that the results reflect a generally healthy situation as regards Religious Education in schools in Anglesey. She referred to the recommendations for the Local Authority at the end of the report which have been formulated as part of the SACRE's advisory role and to support and enable teachers to continue to deliver good Religious Education in the county's schools.

It was agreed to accept the report and to note its contents.

ACTION ARISING: Primary Education Officer to ensure that schools are made aware of the recommendations.

8 WASACRE

8.1 Information relating to WASACRE meetings, activities and financial position was presented for the SACRE's information.

The Vice-Chair highlighted matters of interest from the WASACRE's July, 2014 meeting in Powys including the NAPfRE presentation on current Consortia arrangements for supporting SACRE bodies and the variations therein. At the Torfaen meeting of the WASACRE on 26 November, 2014, the Association was provided with an update on changes in RS examinations as well as a presentation on RE data and what can be learnt from it.

With reference to the Curriculum review, the GwE Challenge Advisor said that the SACRE has a responsibility to develop a Religious Education curriculum for Anglesey's schools and that in the past this has been undertaken jointly with Gwynedd. The current Local Agreed Syllabus is based on the National Exemplar Framework and there is a wish at professional level to see the continuation of a national framework that is adopted locally and serves as a local syllabus. The Officer said that in the interests of national consistency and the development of resources, she did not believe teachers would want to see a variation on Anglesey. In light of the fact that there may be changes to subjects as a result of the curriculum review, RE teachers might wish that RE reflects the other subjects. Consequently, pressure will be brought to bear on the Welsh Government to include Religious Education in any forthcoming discussions so that if any of the curriculum subjects are discussed in national groups, then arrangements should be made for a national forum on RE as well.

8.2 Consideration was given to providing nominations for the WASACRE Executive Committee and the position of Vice-Chair.

The Vice-Chair informed the SACRE that whilst he would continue to attend meetings of the WASACRE, he now intended to stand down as a member of the Executive Committee thus allowing the Anglesey SACRE to nominate another person to undertake that role.

It was agreed to nominate Miss Bethan James for the position of WASACRE Vice-Chair and also to serve on the WASACRE Executive Committee.

ACTION ARISING: Primary Education Officer to forward the nomination form to the WASACRE.

9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was discussed.

10 NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the date of the next meeting should be brought forward from 16th June to Tuesday, 9th June, 2015.

**Councillor Dylan Rees
Chair**