

# Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

## Minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2016

- PRESENT:** Councillor Dylan Rees (Chair)
- The Education Authority**
- Councillors Gwilym O. Jones, R. Llewelyn Jones, Alun Mummery
- The Religious Denominations**
- Kirsty Williams (The Church in Wales)  
Mrs Catherine Jones (The Baptist Union of Wales)  
Professor Euros Wyn Jones (Union of Welsh Independents)
- Teacher Representatives**
- Mrs Mefys Edwards (Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones)  
Mrs Manon Morris Williams (Ysgol Gynradd Llangaffo)  
Mrs Heledd Hearn (Ysgol Uwchradd Bodedern)
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Mr D. Gareth Jones (Primary Education Officer) (Clerk to the SACRE)  
Ann Holmes (Committee Officer)
- APOLOGIES:** Mr Christopher Thomas (The Roman Catholic Church), Rev. Kate McClelland (The Methodist Church), Alison Jones (Ysgol Parch. Thomas Ellis)
- ALSO PRESENT:** Miss Bethan James (GwE Challenge Advisor), Mr Alan Macdonald (Head Teacher Ysgol y Borth) (for item 1)
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### 1 PRESENTATION BY YSGOL Y BORTH

The Chair welcomed Mr Alan Macdonald the Head Teacher of Ysgol y Borth to the meeting and invited him to address the SACRE on the school's Religious Education work in the Foundation Phase.

Mr Alan Macdonald circulated examples of Foundation pupils' work in RE along with the school's scheme of work for Members to look at. He explained that Religious Education is an integral part of the Curriculum and is interlinked with elements of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework in a cross curricular way; the school seeks to interweave these aspects into its work plans. This is not as much of a challenge as it appears since Literacy permeates all areas of the school's activities and work.

Members were also provided with a copy of the school's programme for collective worship sessions. The school holds a daily collective worship session with Bible stories and religious themes having been clearly and purposefully mapped out beforehand. These sessions are led by the school's teachers in their turn either across their Key stage from the Nursery Class to Year 2 or from Year 2 to Year 6. Collective worship sessions are also held within the classroom. The pupils take great interest in the stories presented to them and a specific effort is made to use a variety of presentational methods so that the sessions do not become repetitive. The school will also be participating in the Open the Book project from September where a group of identified individuals from the local church come into the school to present aspects of religious education through elements of drama.

Mr Macdonald presented a copy of the Work Scheme for Years 1 and 2 and circulated examples of pupils' work in the form of books and drawings for the SACRE's Members to peruse. They were informed that in the Foundation Phase much of the work is through play underpinned by a great deal of discussion work which is evidenced by pictures on the school's website and Twitter account. Evidence in the Foundation Phase is also often verbal with the children. The success of the work can also be evaluated by the percentage of children who achieve the expected level in personal and social development; much progress has been made at the school in this respect in the past few years and Religious Education forms an essential part of this area of learning in the Foundation Phase.

The SACRE's Members thanked Mr Alan Macdonald for giving of his time to attend the meeting and they were given the opportunity to question him on any aspect of the RE provision in the Foundation Phase which they felt needed clarifying. From the materials presented to them, the Members acknowledged the work as challenging and stimulating for the pupils.

## **2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

No declaration of interest was made.

## **3 MINUTES OF THE 23 FEBRUARY, 2016 MEETING**

The minutes of the previous meeting of the SACRE held on 23 February, 2016 were presented and confirmed as correct.

## **4 MATTERS ARISING**

- The Primary Education Officer confirmed that he had received a response from the Diocese of Bangor to correspondence sent at the request of the SACRE regarding the Church's use of terminology in its Section 50 inspection report in relation to Ysgol Llangaffo. The Church's Director of Education for the Bangor Diocese had explained that the Church in Wales has its own framework for inspections carried out under Section 50 of the 2005 Education Act and that this sets out the expectations and process in relation to the conduct of those inspections.
- The GwE Challenge Advisor provided the SACRE with a revised copy of the Action Plan based on its 2014/15 Annual Report and the matters which have arisen during 2015/16 and she said that she would elaborate on the contents of the Plan under item 7 on the agenda under which she would be providing the SACRE with an update on this and other relevant developments.
- With regard to RE provision and planning at Ysgol Garreglefn which the SACRE had requested that the GwE Challenge Advisor keep an oversight of, the Officer said that she had visited Ysgol Garreglefn to scrutinise Religious Education provision and had made recommendations thereon. As there had been changes in the staffing at Ysgol Garreglefn she intended to re-visit Religious Education provision at the school.
- The Chair confirmed that the Head teacher of Ysgol y Bont had accepted the invitation to attend a meeting of the SACRE to give a presentation on the school's RE provision but that the details of his attendance remain to be confirmed.
- The Primary Education Officer confirmed that the letter which the SACRE requested be sent to the WJEC regarding the provision of INSET arrangements for the new GCSE course and the availability of Welsh medium resources for the new A Level course had been drafted but might require adapting.

Mrs Mefys Edwards, Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones informed the SACRE that the new A Level syllabus commences in September, 2016 and that she had learnt informally that materials for the new specification are unlikely to be ready until the end of October and that there is no confirmation regarding the availability of Welsh medium materials. Training provision for teachers for both the new GCSE (commencing in September, 2017) and A Level Course syllabus has been made but attending the A Level course training in October entails a cost in the region of £200 for one member of staff and in practice means that schools will incur a further £250 cost to engage a supply teacher.

There is concern that many schools will find this unaffordable. Mrs Mefys Edwards also reported that GwE has introduced a system of “Lead Practitioners” which means that for every subject there will be 3 Lead Practitioners – one for each Hub in Gwynedd/ Anglesey, Conwy/Denbigh and Flint/Wrexham. In addition, one of the three has been appointed as Lead Regional Practitioner who will be responsible for co-ordinating support across the region. Mrs Edwards said that she would be taking on the role of Lead Regional Practitioner for Religious Education and Lead Practitioner for Gwynedd and Anglesey and that she would be in contact with the GwE Challenge Advisor and would be in a position to update the SACRE on developments.

The SACRE was agreed that the letter which it had proposed at the last meeting be sent to the WJEC be revised to address the concerns regarding the cost to schools of releasing RE teachers to attend training for the new A Level course syllabus in terms of both meeting the cost of the course itself and the cost of providing cover for the absent teacher in the classroom.

**ACTION ENSUING: Primary Education Officer in consultation with the Secondary Head teacher/teacher representatives on the SACRE to re-draft the letter to the WJEC to also include representations regarding the cost of the teacher training for the new A Level course syllabus as well as the need for Welsh medium materials to be made available in time for the commencement of the course.**

## **5 ESTYN INSPECTIONS SPRING 2016**

The relevant information from Estyn inspections undertaken at Ysgol y Ffridd and Ysgol Pencarnisiog was presented for the SACRE’s consideration.

The Primary Education Officer confirmed that there were no issues arising with regard to Ysgol y Ffridd. Ysgol Pencarnisiog is currently subject to monitoring by Estyn and the Inspector has recommended in the inspection report that the school should ensure that schemes of work respond fully to the requirements of the National Curriculum and the syllabus for Religious Education.

The GwE Challenge Advisor said that she had visited Ysgol Pencarnisiog recently in order to scrutinise pupils’ books and schemes of work. She could confirm that there is plenty of evidence of Religious Education in the children’s work books in the Foundation Phase and evidence of Religious Education in KS2 work books. The element that needs to be strengthened is the continuity and co-ordination of planning. To this end the Head Teacher of Ysgol Pencarnisiog in her role as co-ordinator has visited another school to gain insight as regards practice and to work with another teacher with a view to mapping out RE provision across Ysgol Pencarnisiog. The school will have a new teacher in KS2 in September.

**It was agreed to note the information presented.**

**NO FURTHER ACTION ENSUING**

## **6 SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATIONS**

The Religious Education self-evaluation reports provided by Ysgol Pencarnisiog and Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones were presented for the SACRE’s consideration.

The SACRE welcomed the self-evaluation of Ysgol Pencarnisiog as an honest and fair assessment of the school’s provision for and outcomes in Religious Education and it re-emphasised its supporting role noting that it looked forward to receiving an update on progress from Ysgol Pencarnisiog in due course.

Mrs Mefys Edwards guided the SACRE through the self-evaluation of Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones and highlighted areas of achievement and good practice in RE under the principal headings as well as areas for development. She referred to collective worship practices at the school and said that collective worship is held daily on a whole school basis apart from on Wednesdays when sessions are held with tutors within class which might for example involve discussion about a piece of news which is then used to prompt reflection. The readings and themes at collective worship sessions are predominantly Christian in nature. Sessions are taken by the Head Teacher on Mondays; by the

pupils themselves on Tuesdays and Thursdays and by a member of the school's Senior Leadership Team on Fridays.

The SACRE acknowledged the self-evaluation as a comprehensive and detailed report. With regard to RE self-evaluations that remain outstanding, the Primary Education Officer said that three had been submitted in the last few days and would be presented to the next meeting. Alternative ways of obtaining information about the standard and provision of RE at those schools who have not submitted self-evaluation reports need to be considered e.g. by conducting visits.

The GwE Challenge Advisor informed the SACRE that she had adapted the guidance this year to reflect the emphasis on the Literacy and Numeracy Frameworks and to promote consistency in terms of method and contents. A section for reflecting on the standards in skills including literacy, numeracy, ICT and thinking has been included.

The Chair said that he had attended a collective worship session at Ysgol Bodffordd where the Good Samaritan was the theme. The Primary Education Officer said that he would contact schools in the new term in September to ask them to consider inviting Members of the SACRE to observe collective worship periods.

**It was agreed to note the self-evaluation reports of Ysgol Pencarnisiog and Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones, Amlwch and to thank the two schools for providing them.**

#### **ACTIONS ENSUING:**

- **The SACRE to be provided with an update on progress at Ysgol Pencarnisiog in relation to RE provision, planning and outcomes in due course.**
- **GwE Challenge Advisor to draw up a list of schools already visited by Members of the SACRE as part of the agreed monitoring practice of observing collective worship periods.**

## **7 UPDATE BY THE GWE CHALLENGE ADVISOR**

The GwE Challenge Advisor reported as follows:

- That the SACRE's Action Plan is based on the 2014/15 Annual Report and the recommendations made therein. The priorities of the Action Plan are noted below and it is suggested that these continue to form the basis of the SACRE's work in 2016/17. The Officer explained how it was proposed each priority would be met and how that would be evidenced; the planned outcomes as well as the body/personnel responsible for ensuring that the necessary actions are taken be that the Local Authority, the GwE Challenge Advisor or the SACRE's Members themselves. The Officer also updated the SACRE on actions and progress to date under each priority heading as well as actions planned for the coming months.
- Develop good leadership in Religious Education and collective worship
- Respond to the Donaldson Successful Futures report as it relates to Religious Education
- Support secondary teachers as they prepare and deliver the new GCSE syllabus
- Promote good quality collective worship
- That primary schools make extensive use of the INCERTS tool for tracking and assessing pupils' performance and progress and that it is used to inform teacher assessments primarily but not exclusively, in Welsh, English, Maths and Science. It has become apparent that teachers are inadvertently using level descriptions for an outdated Roman Catholic RE syllabus instead of those for the agreed National Exemplar Framework for RE due to the fact that they have to select the appropriate set of level descriptions and are being mistakenly directed - via the numerous options available - to the incorrect set. The GwE Challenge Advisor sought the SACRE's approval to alert schools to this error and to advise them to use the level descriptions for the National Exemplar Framework.

**It was agreed –**

- **To note the update.**

- To endorse that the priorities of the Action Plan as presented continue to form the basis of the SACRE's work in 2016/17.

**ACTION ENSUING: GwE Challenge Advisor to advise the county's primary schools by letter of the need when using the INCERTS tracking programme, to ensure they select the appropriate set of level descriptions for RE pertaining to the National Exemplar Framework.**

## **8 WALES ASSOCIATION OF SACRE'S**

The following documentation was presented and was noted by the SACRE:

- The minutes of the meeting of the WASACRE held in Haverfordwest on 8 March, 2016
- The minutes of the meeting of the WASACRE's Executive Committee held in Cardiff on 10 May, 2016
- The agenda for the WASACRE's meeting in Rhyl, Denbighshire on 23 June, 2016. It was noted that the draft minutes had not as yet been circulated.

## **9 NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting of the SACRE would be held at 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday, 11 October, 2016.

**Councillor Dylan Rees  
Chair**