

# Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

## Minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2015

**PRESENT:** Councillor Dylan Rees (Chair)

### **The Education Authority**

Councillor G.O. Jones

### **The Religious Denominations**

Mr Rheinallt Thomas (The Presbyterian Church in Wales) (Vice-Chair)

Mr Christopher Thomas (The Roman Catholic Church)

Mrs Catherine Jones (The Baptist Union of Wales)

Stephen Francis Roe (The Methodist Church)

### **Teacher Representatives**

Mrs Alison Jones (Ysgol Parch. Thomas Ellis)

Mrs Mefys Edwards (Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones)

Mrs Heledd Hearn (Ysgol Bodedern)

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Mr D. Gareth Jones (Primary Education Officer) (Clerk to the SACRE)  
Shirley Cooke (Administrative Assistant/Committee Officer)

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Alun Mummery, Alwyn Rowlands, Mrs Manon Morris Williams (Ysgol Gynradd Llangaffo), Kirsty Williams (Church in Wales).

**ALSO PRESENT:** Miss Bethan James (GwE Challenge Adviser)

## **1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

No declaration of interest was received.

## **2 MINUTES OF THE 9 JUNE, 2015 MEETING**

The minutes of the previous meeting of the SACRE held on 9<sup>th</sup> June, 2015 were presented and confirmed as correct subject to the inclusion of Reverend Stephen Roe in the list of attendees.

## **3 MATTERS ARISING**

### **4. Collective Worship Visits**

The Chair referred to the following action points:-

- **The GwE Challenge Adviser to circulate the pro-forma to record collective worship to the SACRE's members.**

The GwE Challenge Adviser said that whilst not all Members had received a copy of the pro-forma it had been verified and is included as an agenda item.

- **Primary Education Officer to make schools aware via the primary and secondary strategic groups of the purpose of the pro-forma and how it will be used**

The Primary Education Officer reported that the Primary Strategic Group supports the use of the pro-forma. He said that he would follow up on the views of the secondary sector with the Secondary Education Officer.

The GwE Challenge Adviser suggested that the pro-forma be trialled for a period of one year to see if a consensus can be reached and a report issued based on Members' common usage of the form. By the year's end, any weaknesses in the pro-forma will have come to light and the SACRE needs to be open to having to amend the pro-forma accordingly.

**It was agreed that the pro-forma for recording collective worship visits be piloted for one year.**

**Action:**

- **The GwE Challenge Adviser to circulate the pro-forma to record collective worship visits to the SACRE's members.**

#### **7. Exemplar Materials to Develop Literacy and Numeracy in KS3 RE**

The GwE Challenge Adviser referred to the presentation she gave at the last meeting on materials developed by Mrs Mary Parry, RE Adviser in Carmarthen, and she sought confirmation that all secondary schools on Anglesey had received a copy of the CD module.

Mrs Mefys Edwards said that she had not as yet made use of the CD but that she intended to trial it with Year 8 pupils and to adapt it to their work programme.

The Chair confirmed that the Primary Education Officer had written a letter of thanks to Mrs Mary Parry.

#### **4 ESTYN INSPECTIONS**

- The relevant information regarding Estyn inspections undertaken at Ysgol Gymraeg Morswyn and Ysgol Bodffordd was presented for the SACRE's consideration. The information was noted.
- The Section 50 report with regard to Ysgol Llangaffo was presented for the SACRE's consideration.

The Vice-Chair referred to the use of the term corporate worship (cyd-addoli) in the Welsh version of the Section 50 report whereas the English version makes reference to "collective worship" and he sought an explanation for the discrepancy between the two versions. He said that possibly as Ysgol Llangaffo is a Church in Wales school, legally speaking it could be 'corporate worship'. The Vice-Chair highlighted the fact that the use of the correct terminology has been an issue over the years and that he was surprised that the Bangor Diocese has used an erroneous term in the Welsh version of the report in this case. He proposed that the attention of the Diocese of Bangor be drawn to the error and that it be asked to use the correct term for collective worship in Welsh i.e. "addoli ar y cyd" within the

report to tally with the use in the English version of the report of the term “collective worship”.

The SACRE whilst acknowledging the report as comprehensive and informative in its contents and as attesting to the achievement of Ysgol Llangaffo, was agreed that the Diocese be made aware of the inaccuracy in the Welsh version with regard to the use of “collective worship”.

Mr Christopher Thomas referred to the report as saying that “The school meets the statutory requirement for collective acts of worship”. Given that the nature of the report speaks of “inspirational” with reference to collective worship it is a shame that it receives such a matter of fact comment as that quoted. He stated that the report reads very well and should be congratulated as a whole.

The Primary Education Officer said that it perhaps reflects the standard inspection terminology used to describe such characteristics.

The Chair agreed that it was a positive report and he suggested and it was agreed by the SACRE that the letter to the Diocese of Bangor also acknowledges the reference within the report to collective worship as being inspirational.

The GwE Challenge Adviser referred to the extracts from Estyn inspection reports which the Primary Education Officer prepares for the SACRE and she said that particular attention is given to references within the reports to both collective worship and Religious Education. She said that she had also asked the Officer to check the reports for the section on local partnerships, and in instances where a reference is made to a chapel or a church, then that should also be highlighted as part of the SACRE’s scrutiny of those reports. That would enable representatives of the Religious Denominations on the SACRE to report back to their group that schools appreciate those links and to be able to work together with local religious communities.

**It was agreed to note the Section 50 report on Ysgol Llangaffo.**

**Action:**

**The Primary Education Officer to write on behalf of the SACRE to the Diocese of Bangor:**

- **To acknowledge the report and the achievement of Ysgol Llangaffo particularly with regard to its collective worship practice which is described as inspirational.**
- **To highlight the inaccuracy in the Welsh version of the inspection report in relation to the use of the term collective worship.**

## **5 SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATIONS**

The Religious Education self-evaluation reports prepared by Ysgol Bryngwran, Ysgol y Fali, Ysgol Rhosybol and Ysgol Llanfechell were presented for the SACRE’s consideration.

The GwE Challenge Advisor referred to the report by Ysgol Rhosybol which was a first draft submitted in error. She had asked the Head Teacher to submit the second draft to the SACRE for its next meeting and consequently she suggested that the present report be disregarded.

The GwE Challenge Adviser advised the SACRE on what it should be alert to in assessing the quality of self-evaluations. She stated that the first section with regard to how good the outcomes are needs to evidence what children can do in Religious Education e.g. references to the majority of pupils being able to compare religious practices outstandingly well, well, adequately, or unsatisfactorily. She further stated that the SACRE should look at the skills children have; how many children can carry out those skills, and the quality of these skills. It can be a tendency in self-evaluation reports for schools to confuse the provision made i.e. what the teachers prepare and the experiences the children have with the standards evidenced by the children's school books.

The second part of the self-evaluation refers to provision and ideally schools will provide information on the nature of lessons and the kind of work undertaken in Religious Education lessons e.g. what Religious Education stories children study, are guest speakers invited to schools etc. The Adviser said that there is room to further improve self-evaluation reports particularly in order to make the qualitative aspects more robust. She suggested that for the SACRE's Spring meeting, the Primary Education Officer propose that she be available to schools for a period in the morning, in the afternoon and after school so that anyone wishing to do so could seek her advice. She advised the SACRE that in scrutinising the reports it should seek out those terms that provide a qualitative opinion e.g. good, adequate, improving, strong etc.

Mr Christopher Thomas questioned whether there is available an exemplar of the self-evaluation document for all schools.

The GwE Challenge Adviser confirmed that there is but that in adhering too closely to that particular format the self-evaluation reports of some schools can appear very similar, hence her offer of a workshop to address any issues or concerns with regard to preparing RE self-evaluation.

The SACRE sought clarification of the number of schools which had not provided an RE self-evaluation. The Primary Education Officer stated that there were several which had not done so. The Chair suggested that in highlighting that the GwE Challenge Adviser is available to provide advice, attention be drawn to the need for schools to provide the SACRE with their RE self-evaluations to enable it to carry out its monitoring role.

**It was agreed to note the RE self-evaluation reports presented.**

**Action:**

**The Primary Education Officer in conjunction with the GwE Challenge Adviser to arrange a workshop for schools to address any concerns with regard to RE Self-Evaluation and to highlight the need for schools to provide their self-evaluation reports to the SACRE.**

## **6 MAINTAINING AND RAISING GCSE STANDARDS**

Mrs Mefys Edwards gave a presentation and slides showing results achieved in Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones, Amlwch.

She reported on how the RE Department has maintained and raised standards in the classroom, and responded to a self-evaluation report for the previous year. She referred to GCSE examination results for 2014/15, and stated that Year 10 & 11 had done exceptionally well and reached their expected targets:-

- Year 11 - 98% A\*- C (over half receiving A - A\*)

- Year 10 - 91% A\*- C (nearly half receiving A – A\*)

Mrs Edwards stated that from analysis of those results, the Department decided by way of an Action Plan to focus on the boys, and tried to challenge them by finding different ways of keeping their interest in the course. The second objective was to maintain and raise standards. She stated that at the beginning of the year with the help of the learning coaches, the children are given a test to find out the ways in which they learn best which in turn provides her with information regarding how the children learn be that visually, orally or kinaesthetically i.e. by doing things. The Department sought to improve lessons by way of activities that would engage the boys' interest, and to track the boys more consistently. It was also decided to try to improve communication with the learning coaches and with parents e.g. by text reminders of upcoming tests, and by recognising good results.

Mrs Edwards reported on identifying how pupils learn and referred to an analysis of learning styles in her class in Year 11 as follows:-

There are 5 who learn visually;  
 There are 2 who learn orally;  
 There are 12 who learn kinaesthetically.

Mrs Edwards stated that she was interested in trialling activities for pupils who learn kinaesthetically and she proceeded to elaborate on some of the teaching methods deployed in the classroom to engage those learners who learn more by doing rather than by listening e.g. by the use of contemporary film and TV clips to encourage pupils to provide a response and to articulate their views orally and in writing; making use of news and events within the community ; assessing for learning whereby pupils are responsible for assessing their own work and other pupils' work and challenge themselves and each other etc. She referred to the traffic light system for tracking pupils' progress and the input made by teachers and learning coaches as regards those pupils who need further support.

Mrs Edwards said that she was very happy with the RE scores achieved at Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones in the summer examinations and that both Years 10 and 11 had attained their targets. She confirmed that the boys' standards were also good. She also confirmed that traditional teaching methods are deployed alongside more innovative practices.

The SACRE thanked Mrs Mefys Edwards for her informative presentation and noted with interest the creative teaching and learning practices being used by the school to improve standards in RE.

## **7 ANGLESEY SACRE'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2014/15**

The draft of the Annual Report of the Isle of Anglesey's SACRE for 2014/15 was presented for the SACRE's consideration and endorsement.

The GwE Challenge Adviser reported on the following aspects -

- The report seeks to provide the context for how the SACRE in Anglesey scrutinises standards in RE e.g. Page 4 of the Report - 8 schools' self- evaluation reports have been discussed between 2014/2015. The minutes of the SACRE's meetings show that more than 8 self-evaluation reports have been discussed, but some of these refer to schools that have been inspected in previous years. The 8 Reports presented have been for this academic year and the others have been covered in the previous year's Annual Report.
- The Education Authority on Anglesey has been supportive with regard to self-evaluation and has asked schools to undertake RE self-evaluation within the year but notwithstanding only 15 % of schools have responded.

There ensued a discussion whether the Annual Report should reflect the response rate. The general view was that even though it is disappointing it should be included whilst at the same time highlighting within the report that the system has changed this year.

The Primary Education Officer said that he would write to schools who have not responded at all to convey to them the SACRE's disappointment that their self-evaluation reports have not been submitted hitherto and that it is looking forward to receiving them at the earliest opportunity. Moreover, the Education Authority does encourage schools to be "inspection ready" meaning therefore that whatever schools have prepared in terms of self-evaluation should already be at hand.

In response to a question about the Anglesey SACRE's comparative performance in this respect, the GwE Challenge Adviser confirmed that the information shows that Gwynedd and Anglesey SACREs are performing exceptionally well at collecting self-evaluation reports compared to other authorities. The SACRE also raised the point that being an RE specialist has a bearing on what teachers are able to do in the subject and particular reference was made to the primary sector where it was noted that more might be done in terms of addressing initial teacher training for a statutory subject to provide teachers with the body of general knowledge they require to address the subject area.

- In terms of outcomes the GwE Challenge Adviser reminded the SACRE that it had agreed that schools could be named and that she had therefore selected extracts from schools' self-evaluation reports to evidence the kind of activities they are undertaking.
- Provision – the SACRE is able to identify good provision within both the primary and secondary sectors whilst also noting aspects that will receive attention during the forthcoming year. The SACRE also needs to consider in turn what support it as a body is providing to schools to achieve the priorities they have identified.
- The report refers to collective worship sessions in schools which some of the SACRE's members have attended and observed.
- The report reflects the recommendations made by the SACRE to the LEA with regard to maintaining and improving RE standards (Page 8). The GwE Challenge Adviser asked the SACRE whether it was satisfied with those recommendations.

There ensued a discussion regarding what kind of support would assist teachers and schools. It was noted that schools are now more isolated in terms of support and mention was made of the demise of the consortium meetings and the shortage of opportunities for teachers of the same discipline to meet and share experiences and develop ideas. Various suggestions were made e.g. to be able to observe each other's lessons. The GwE Challenge Adviser suggested that Head Teachers could be asked to facilitate opportunities for departments to work together particularly in preparing new GCSE and A Level specifications.

- The Education Authority's response. (Section 2.4) The GwE Challenge Adviser said that the SACRE needs to evaluate its own effectiveness as a body in terms of the guidance and leadership it provides.
- Collective Worship (Section 2.7). The GwE Challenge Adviser suggested that comments in relation to collective worship be confined to this section and removed from section 2.3.1 which deals with schools' self-evaluation. The SACRE concurred and endorsed also the recommendations within this section with the proviso that the final bullet point refer to the trialling of the collective worship form.

**It was agreed to adopt the draft Annual Report for 2014/15 subject to any minor amendments that may arise as well as the amendments agreed during the discussion thereon.**

## **Action**

- **The Primary Education Officer to write to those schools who have not responded at all with regard to self-evaluations, to convey to them the SACRE's disappointment that their self-evaluation reports have not been submitted hitherto and that it is looking forward to receiving them at the earliest opportunity.**

## **8 THE SACRE'S ACTION PLAN**

The Action Plan of the SACRE was presented for consideration and comment with particular reference to the SACRE's achievement against the priorities and outcomes within the Action Plan. The SACRE evaluated its performance as follows:

- **Develop good leadership in RE and collective worship**

Outcome 1 – Unsatisfactory progress made

Outcome 2 – Good progress made

Outcome 3 – Satisfactory progress made

- **Close the gap between standards attained by boys and girls at GCSE**

Outcome 1 – Good progress made

Outcome 2 – Good progress made

- **Update teachers' knowledge e.g. Welsh Government guidance documents and Estyn thematic report**

Outcome 1- Unsatisfactory progress made

- **Promote good quality collective worship**

Outcome 1 – Good progress made

Outcome 2 – Good progress made

Outcome 3 – Good progress made

The GwE Challenge Adviser said that with the SACRE's agreement she would include a comment in the Annual Report to reflect the progress made. The SACRE agreed.

## **NO FURTHER ACTION ARISING**

## **9 WELSH GOVERNMENT PLANS WITHIN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

The SACRE was provided with background information in relation to the response to the announcement made by the Welsh Government's Minister for Education regarding proposals to re-designate RE as religion, philosophy and ethics.

The Primary Education Officer drew the SACRE's attention to an e-mail he had received that morning from the Secretary of the WASACRE with a copy of correspondence she had received from the Welsh Government's Minister for Education in which he clarifies the position as regards proposed changes to Religious Education.

The Vice-Chair said that the WASACRE's Executive had met the previous week and determined that the correspondence above should be circulated to SACRE bodies. He referred to the context and background to the Minister's original announcement which was

made in July and the response it generated. He said that if the intention is to re-designate RE then it is understood it would have to be done via primary legislation to amend the Education Act and that it would also have implications for SACRE bodies. The Vice-Chair said that it was difficult to square the announcement with the Minister's acceptance of the Donaldson Review which is supportive of RE. He said that he thought it important that SACRE bodies remain alert to potential developments and ensure they are in a position to be able to respond to them.

The Chair said that he was satisfied that the matter may be left to the WASACRE at this point in time and that the SACRE in Anglesey is supportive of the efforts of the WASACRE in this respect. The SACRE endorsed this viewpoint.

The GwE Challenge Adviser said that it is likely that the WASACRE will be regarded as a high level stakeholder in discussions on the development of the Donaldson Review and that the value of the association is recognised particularly as regards engagement with the range of faith communities through the contact it provides with other SACRE bodies.

It was suggested and agreed that Anglesey's AM be made aware of the Anglesey's standpoint on this matter.

**It was agreed to note the information and the situation at present.**

**Action:**

**The Primary Education Officer to write to the Assembly Member for Anglesey to inform him of the Anglesey's SACRE's standpoint on this matter.**

## **10 WALES ASSOCIATION OF SACRES (WASACRE)**

The minutes of the meeting of the WASACRE held on 25th June, 2015 in Flintshire were circulated at the meeting and it was noted that the Welsh version would be available soon.

The Vice-Chair reported that two meetings were held on the day - the General meeting and the Annual meeting. He referred to the two presentations made in the General meeting – the one by the WASACRE's Secretary on the provision for INSET training for collective worship in Wrexham and the other by Phil Lord regarding a working in partnership project.

With regard to the Annual Meeting, the Vice-Chair referred to the following points:

- Gavin Craigen was elevated to the Chair but has since resigned from that position and the newly elected Vice Chair - Phil Lord - is expected to be confirmed as Chair at the next meeting.
- Two new members have been appointed to the Executive, namely Councillor Ernie Goulsworthy from Merthyr and Ruth Davies from Gwynedd.
- Consideration was given to the report of the Treasurer with the recommendation (which was accepted) that the annual subscription fee for membership of the WASACRE for 2015/16 be increased by 2.5% to £433.

**It was agreed that SACRE recommends to the LEA that it pays the annual subscription fee of £433 to the WASACRE for 2015/16.**

## **11 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION RESULTS 2015**

It was agreed to defer consideration of this matter until the next meeting.



## **12 NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting of the SACRE has been scheduled for 2.00 pm on the 16th February, 2016. **The Chair proposed and it was agreed that the meeting be deferred for a week to the 23rd February, 2016 in order to avoid conflict with the Half Term holidays.**

**Councillor Dylan Rees  
Chair**