

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

Minutes of the meeting held on 10th October, 2017

- PRESENT:** Councillor Dylan Rees (Chair)
- The Education Authority**
- Councillors Glyn Haynes, Gwilym O Jones, Alun Roberts
- The Religious Denominations**
- Mrs Anest Frazer (The Church in Wales)
Professor Euros Wyn Jones (The Welsh Independents)
Mrs Catherine Jones (The Welsh Baptists)
Mr Christopher Thomas (The Catholic Church)
- Co-Opted Member**
- Mr Rheinallt Thomas (Sunday Schools' Council)
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Mr D Gareth Jones (Education Officer) (Clerk to the SACRE)
Mrs Shirley Cooke (Committee Officer)
- APOLOGIES:** Mrs Mefys Edwards (Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones)
Mrs Heledd Hearn (Ysgol Uwchradd Bodedern)
Mrs Manon Morris Williams (Ysgol Gynradd Llangaffo)
- ALSO PRESENT:** Miss Bethan James (GwE Improvement Support Advisor)
Mrs Rhian Hughes (Head Teacher -Ysgol Pencarnisiog) (for
Item 5)

The Chair welcomed Mrs Anest Frazer to her first meeting of the SACRE. Mrs Frazer will be representing the Church in Wales on the Anglesey SACRE.

The Chair reported that the meeting was not quorate due to the absence of a member from the teaching sector. The SACRE discussed whether the meeting should continue without a quorum, and agreed to proceed without decision making powers in accordance with SACRE's Constitution.

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None received.

2 MINUTES OF THE 13TH JUNE, 2017 MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting of the SACRE held on 13th June, 2017 were presented and confirmed as correct, subject to the following:-

Mrs Catherine Jones asked that a correction be noted in the Welsh version of the minutes, that she is a member of the Baptist Church, and not a member of the Presbyterian Church as noted in the apologies.

3 MATTERS ARISING

Mr Gareth Jones, the Education Officer confirmed that:

6 - A representative from Ysgol David Hughes will attend the next meeting of the SACRE to share the good practice in literacy in RE, as mentioned in the Estyn report.

8(1) - Information on the SACRE's role and responsibility has been forwarded to new Members of the SACRE.

8(2) - Head Teachers have been thanked for supporting RS teachers and allocating time for them to teach the new RE course. Mrs Mefys Edwards has expressed her appreciation of SACRE's support.

8(2) - Correspondence has been sent to the Dean of the Welsh National College conveying SACRE's concerns that theology is in decline in schools and colleges.

8(2) - The minutes of the previous meeting of the SACRE have been shared with the Head of Learning.

8(5) - The petition link in relation to Collective Worship has been forwarded to members of the SACRE. Mr Rheinallt Thomas, a co-opted member, gave an update on the current situation regarding the petition, and reported that the Welsh Assembly's Petition Committee met on 3rd October, 2017 and postponed a decision on the matter.

A proposal was put forward by the Chair and agreed by the SACRE that he writes to Mr Rhun ap Iorwerth, the Welsh Assembly Member for Anglesey expressing the SACRE's concern at the length of time taken by the Petitions Committee to make a decision on collective worship.

Action:

As noted above.

4 ANGLESEY SACRE'S ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17

The draft Annual Report by the Anglesey SACRE for 2016/17 was presented to the Authority for consideration. The Chair thanked Miss Bethan James, the Improvement Support Advisor (GwE) for her effort in preparing the report. The Annual Report summarises the work of this Committee during the past year.

The Improvement Support Advisor highlighted the following points from the report:

- 11 self-evaluation reports were submitted during the year, representing 21% of Anglesey schools, consistent with the number submitted during the past few years. However, there are schools who have not presented their self-evaluation reports following letters circulated to them on 1st July, 2016, 23rd January and 26th September, 2017.

- Nearly all schools reported that their standards, provision and Collective Worship were good. One school was very honest and reported that their standards and provision were adequate. It was noted that the school's action points were fair and valid, and the SACRE appreciated the school's willingness to share their plans with the Committee.

The Improvement Support Advisor summarised the main points that every school or group of schools have made. Trends have emerged this year due to the use of the tracking tool. Issues were identified that require further attention during the next two years.

Teachers intended to:-

- ensure that pupils by the end of the Foundation Phase develop and understand the effect of religion on believers;
- develop pupils' reasoning skills as they discuss major religious questions;
- develop pupils' ability to analyse and interpret layers of meaning.

In relation to the provision of RE in schools, the SACRE identified good practices, which demonstrate the nature of experiences children encounter in schools. They include attending educational visits, focusing on questioning skills and carrying out filming work. The Improvement Support Advisor stated that it was good to see secondary school children in KS3 dealing with big, fundamental questions.

The SACRE noted that every school acknowledged that they understand the nature of Collective Worship and comply with the statutory requirements.

In the Improvement Support Advisor's summary of recommendations for the Council, particular emphasis was placed on encouraging the Authority to help co-ordinators to improve RE outcomes in schools, and gain access to guidance and good practice.

With reference to external examination results, it was recommended that secondary school teachers continue to work together. Two Anglesey teachers, Mrs Mefys Edwards and Mrs Angharad Derham from Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones, Amlwch are Lead Practitioners across the North, and have carried out excellent work co-ordinating teachers in Anglesey and Gwynedd specifically to work together to prepare for the new GCSE syllabus.

It was reported that there was very little information relating to RE in the Estyn Inspection reports. Only four Estyn reports have been submitted this year, three in the primary, and one in the secondary sector.

The SACRE's Action Plan was presented for consideration and comment with particular reference to the SACRE's achievement against the priorities and outcomes within the Action Plan. SACRE members agreed that Anglesey Education Department had made good progress in response to the priorities of the 2015-17 Action Plan. However, the SACRE have not been very pro-active in driving the agenda forward in relation to attending Collective Worship sessions in schools. It was therefore proposed and agreed that arrangements be made for four

members of the SACRE to visit schools in different catchment areas to observe Collective Worship and report back to the Committee.

Action:

The Education Officer to target schools in different catchment areas and write to Head Teachers requesting that SACRE members be afforded the opportunity to attend Collective Worship sessions at their schools.

GCSE Religious Studies (update shared by ISA on behalf of Mrs Mefys Edwards)

Since September, bilingual resources to complement the new GCSE RS syllabus have been published on GwE's website. RE teachers in Gwynedd and Anglesey have worked very hard on the project, and their efforts need to be praised. The teachers intend to continue with their work next year and produce material that goes with the course, and hope to provide guidelines for children on how to answer examination questions. Mrs Mefys Edwards had expressed concern that the textbooks to go with the new GCSE and 'A' Level courses are yet to be published in English, with the Welsh versions to follow.

The SACRE were pleased with outcomes in supporting secondary teachers as they prepare and deliver the new GCSE syllabus.

Anglesey SACRE Action Plan

The Improvement Support Advisor recommended that the SACRE keep their priorities for a period of one year to improve RE leadership, particularly in preparation for the new curriculum as schools in Wales respond to recommendations made by Professor Graham Donaldson in his report, 'Successful Futures'.

Mr Rheinallt Thomas, the co-opted member, referred to how the RE curriculum is developing at present, and how the Assembly Government sees RE as relevant to the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience. It was noted that a group of representatives from pioneer schools will be outlining the principles of the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience curriculum to schools.

The Improvement Support Advisor gave an update on the Agreed Syllabus for RE. It was noted that the Anglesey SACRE and the Welsh Government have a good relationship when discussing Humanities issues.

The Welsh Government has commissioned external specialists to prepare papers on every subject. Ms Barbara Wintersgill has been commissioned to provide a paper on RE, particularly the big ideas of RE. Her themes are: continuity, change and diversity; words and beyond; a good life; making sense of life's experiences; influence the community, culture and power, and the big picture.

The WASACRE has also been commissioned to produce an advisory paper for the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience group. The principles refer to the following three important issues in RE:-

- awareness of life's experiences and the questions arising from them;
- teaching beliefs and practices;
- personal exploration and response.

The WASACRE document refers to the contribution of RE to skills, such as literacy, numeracy and ICT, and includes suggestions on the enriching RE experiences a child could have at various times in school.

It was suggested that one SACRE meeting this academic year be replaced by a business meeting or workshop in order to prepare teachers and SACRE members for a revised locally agreed syllabus, and the SACRE's views were sought on the proposal. Since the SACRE only met once a term, members felt they did not want to lose a meeting, and therefore, proposed that a workshop be held in the morning, and the Committee meeting in the afternoon.

Members of the SACRE welcomed the idea of a workshop as a way of moving forward, and sharing the good work carried out in Anglesey schools. Teachers would be invited to the workshop to discuss their views and their work. The consensus was that the SACRE adopts the workshop approach, to commence in Spring/Summer 2018.

The Chair proposed that a new Action Plan be drawn up for the next meeting to address any additional recommendations, and the SACRE agreed to the proposal.

Action:

- **The Education Officer to:-**
 - **write to RE teachers in Anglesey schools thanking them for their contribution in preparing and delivering the new GCSE syllabus; and,**
 - **write to Mrs Mefys Edwards thanking her for her excellent presentation at the WASACRE meeting.**
- **The Improvement Support Advisor to prepare a new Action Plan for the SACRE's next meeting.**
- **The Improvement Support Advisor to arrange a workshop for the SACRE in Spring/Summer 2018.**

It was agreed to accept the draft Annual Report of the Anglesey SACRE for 2016/17 subject to the above.

5 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STANDARDS

Teacher Assessments KS3 - not discussed.

External Examination Results - not discussed.

School Inspections

Information from Estyn Inspection reports undertaken at Ysgol Gynradd Dwyran, Ysgol Gynradd Henblas, Ysgol Gynradd Pencarnisiog and Holyhead High School was presented for the SACRE's consideration.

The Chair welcomed Mrs Rhian Hughes, the Head Teacher of Ysgol Pencarnisiog to the meeting.

The Head Teacher reported that in February, 2016, a full Estyn inspection was conducted at Ysgol Pencarnisiog, following a period of instability in the leadership of the school.

It was noted that the Estyn report made five recommendations, which the school had to respond to within twelve months. Recommendation 3 of the Estyn report cited 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 Head Teacher informed the SACRE that Estyn had returned to the school after twelve months to monitor progress against the recommendations.

During the Estyn inspection, the Head Teacher worked very closely with the schools Support Advisor and the GwE Support Advisor who serves Anglesey SACRE, who ensured that the school responded to Estyn's recommendations. A post-inspection Action Plan was put in place at the school, and staff collaborated and mapped the general overview for RE, ensuring that their plans across the school met the RE requirements. The school used Welsh Government's RE guidelines in the Foundation Phase and KS2 for forward planning, and also made use of resources still available on the Cynnal website.

A detailed presentation was given by the Head Teacher on the course of action Ysgol Pencarnisiog followed to meet Estyn's requirements. It was noted that work to improve standards at the school is ongoing, but the school has been removed from the list of schools requiring Estyn monitoring. The Head Teacher thanked the GwE Advisors for their excellent support and guidance during this difficult time.

The SACRE congratulated the Head Teacher for the good work and progress made at the school, and thanked her for today's presentation.

Councillor Gwilym O Jones reported that he has attended a collective worship session at the school, and was very impressed by the way the children responded well during discussion and were rewarded for their effort.

Ysgol Gynradd Dwyran

The Education Officer reported that Ysgol Gynradd Dwyran has appropriate schemes of work that respond to the requirements of the National Curriculum and

the Agreed Syllabus for RE. It was noted that lessons are planned in the short, medium and long term, and teaching at the school is structured.

Extra-curricular activities are available to pupils, and the school fosters pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development successfully, and reflects on topics such as Syria. It was noted from the Estyn report, that the standard of teaching at the school was very acceptable.

Ysgol Henblas

The Education Officer reported that Ysgol Henblas satisfies the requirements of the National Curriculum and RE. The school promotes pupils' moral, social and spiritual development effectively, and Collective Worship sessions reinforce these values.

It was noted that Estyn has placed Ysgol Henblas in the 'significant improvements' category, and will be returning in twelve months' time to monitor the school's progress.

Holyhead High School

The Education Officer reported that Holyhead High School provides a broad and balanced curriculum. The personal and social education programme contributes well towards the spiritual, moral and cultural development of pupils.

The Chair noted that Gobaith Môn's work was recognised in the Estyn report, although the organisation itself was not named. Section 11 of the Estyn report states that:-

"The school works well in partnership with a youth engagement programme that concentrates on building teamwork and leadership skills. This has helped to improve pupils' wellbeing and attainment".

The Chair reminded the SACRE of Mr Joe Morino's presentation on behalf of Gobaith Môn at SACRE's last meeting, and referred to the praise Gobaith Môn received from the Head Teacher.

It was agreed to note the information.

School Self-Evaluation Reports

The SACRE has not received any self-evaluation reports since its last meeting. Members were concerned that schools are not responding, and they discussed ways of getting schools to co-operate and present their self-evaluation reports. It was suggested that schools who had not participated be named, and the SACRE agreed.

Action:

The Education Officer to write to schools asking them to prepare self-evaluation reports by the next meeting of the SACRE. Schools who complied/did not comply would be named.

6 ESTYN'S THEMATIC REVIEW

The Chair reported that he has received a 'Questions for Chairpersons' questionnaire from Estyn, which he shared with the SACRE. Members of the Committee were asked to provide their input in response to questions.

The Improvement Support Advisor reported that Estyn is now undertaking thematic reviews in schools. The subject of last year's review was Humanities ie History and Geography, the outcomes of which are published on Estyn's website. The results of the inspections were encouraging in both the primary and secondary sector, and recommendations were put forward to schools, local authorities and the Welsh Government.

This year, Estyn will be carrying out a thematic review on RE, and will be visiting schools throughout Wales as well as undertaking telephone interviews and collating information collected by inspectors during their inspection visits to schools. The only Anglesey school to be visited will be Ysgol Parc y Bont.

The Chair welcomed observations by SACRE members in response to the questionnaire. **It was suggested that the Chair, the Support Advisor and the Education Officer work together on a response to include the SACRE's comments. It was proposed that a draft response be sent to Members for approval, and to include any further comments by the SACRE, before a final version is forwarded to Estyn by the closing date of 27th October, 2017.**

The Improvement Support Advisor reported that she has received a copy of the questions that Estyn will be asking schools during the thematic review. **She suggested that some of the questions be included in the template that will be sent to schools to prepare self-evaluation reports.**

RESOLVED that the SACRE agreed to the above.

Action:

- **The SACRE's comments to be sent to the Education Officer.**
- **The Education Officer to forward a draft response to SACRE members on behalf of the Chairman for further comments and approval.**
- **The Education Officer to send a final version of SACRE's response to Estyn by 27th October, 2017.**
- **The Improvement Support Advisor to include questions from the questionnaire in the template for schools self-evaluation reports.**

7 ORAL UPDATE ON GCSE RELIGIOUS STUDIES

An oral update was provided in item 4 on the agenda.

8 UPDATE BY THE GWE IMPROVEMENT SUPPORT ADVISOR

The Improvement Support Advisor reminded the SACRE that an RE KS3 Welsh medium magazine is available on the HUB website. The recently issued fourth edition, is entitled 'The Environment'.

9 WALES ASSOCIATION OF SACRES (WASACRE)

The Committee noted the draft minutes of the WASACRE meeting held in Wrexham on 7th July, 2017. The Chair reported that he was also present at the meeting, but his attendance was not recorded.

Mr Rheinallt Thomas, the co-opted member highlighted the main points discussed at the WASACRE meeting, and raised a concern over the protocol for sending out the minutes of WASACRE meetings. He reminded WASACRE members that in the past, the minutes would be received within two weeks of the meeting, but the current process takes much longer, even though some SACREs need access to the minutes earlier, in advance of SACRE meetings.

It was noted that the minutes are initially sent out in English, with the Welsh translation to follow. It was recognised that there should be equality for both languages when circulating the minutes. Mr Thomas reported that, to date the two action points have not been implemented, as the Welsh version of the minutes have not been received.

Mr Thomas also referred to Mrs Mefys Edwards' excellent presentations on the progress of Lead Practitioners in North Wales, and their work to provide support for schools delivering the new GCSE specification. Mr Thomas and other WASACRE members congratulated Mrs Edwards for her very effective presentation at the meeting.

It was noted that next meeting of the WASACRE will be held in Bridgend on 10th November, 2017.

10 CORRESPONDENCE

None received.

11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of SACRE's next meeting has been re-scheduled to Tuesday, 6th March, 2018, due to the unavailability of some SACRE members in February.

The meeting concluded at 4.00 pm

**COUNCILLOR DYLAN REES
CHAIR**