

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

Minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2019

PRESENT: Councillor Dylan Rees (Chair)

The Education Authority

Councillors Gwilym O Jones, Alun W Mummery, Alun Roberts

The Religious Denominations

Rev Jim Clarke (Union of Welsh Independents)
Mrs Anest Frazer (The Church in Wales)
Mr Gerald Hewitson (The Quakers)
Mrs Catherine Jones (The Baptist Union of Wales)
Mr Christopher Thomas (The Roman Catholic Church)

Teacher Representatives

Mrs Amanda Earnshaw (Ysgol Cybi)
Mrs Heledd Hearn (Ysgol Uwchradd Bodedern)

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs Helen Bebb (Ysgol Uwchradd Porthaethwy) (RE Advisor)
Mrs Gwyneth M Hughes (Senior Well-being Manager, Education)
(Clerk to the SACRE)
Mrs Margaret Peters (Schools Business Support Project Officer)
Mrs Shirley Cooke (Committee Officer)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Glyn Haynes
Mrs Mefys Jones-Edwards (Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones, Amlwch)
Mrs Manon Morris Williams (Ysgol Santes Dwynwen)
Mr Rheinallt Thomas (Co-opted Member – Sunday Schools’
Council)

The Chair welcomed all those present, and extended a particular welcome to Rev Jim Clarke and Mrs Margaret Peters from the Education Department to their first meeting of the SACRE. Rev Clarke has been appointed as a representative of the Union of Welsh Independents to the SACRE, and Mrs Peters will be shadowing the Clerk to the SACRE.

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None received.

2 MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting of the SACRE held on 9 July 2019 were presented and confirmed as correct.

Matters arising from the minutes:-

- It was confirmed that the SACRE members have agreed to include members from other religious denominations on the Committee.
- With reference to the SACRE's two vacant seats, the Chair reported that he would pursue the matter of the vacancy for an elected Member of the Council. Rev Jim Clarke has offered to raise the issue of the vacant seat for a representative from the Presbyterian Church with the Church.
- It was confirmed that the Clerk to the SACRE has targeted one catchment area in relation to requesting schools' self-evaluation reports.
- It was noted that the SACRE's response to the questionnaire on the Draft Curriculum for Wales 2022 has been forwarded to Welsh Government.
- The Chair and Clerk to the SACRE provided feedback from the WASACRE meeting they attended in Conwy on 28 June 2019. It was noted that WASACRE has been lobbying the Minister for Education to invest money to fund consultants to provide specialist advice and guidance to SACREs across Wales in relation to the new curriculum. Discussion also focused on the work involved in preparing the Supporting Framework for RE to accompany the new curriculum.
- The Chair confirmed that he will be visiting Ysgol Talwrn next week to observe Collective Worship at the school. He urged the SACRE members to arrange visits to local schools in their areas; to observe Collective Worship sessions, view pupils' workbooks, speak to the children, then report back to the SACRE on their findings.

The SACRE discussed the option of adopting a more structured, formal approach to record school visits, and provide feedback for monitoring purposes. It was suggested that the template prepared previously by Miss Bethan James to record Collective Worship be reviewed and updated to record school visits.

- The RE Advisor shared copies of last year's Welsh and English RE GCSE and A Level Philosophy and Ethics examination papers to familiarise the SACRE with the Agreed Syllabus.

At the previous meeting of the SACRE, the RE teacher representatives had expressed concern that the delivery of the RE syllabus had become more challenging, due to a shortage of Welsh resources and the onerous workload of RE teachers compared to other subjects. It was noted that the local press had recently reported on the lack of Welsh teaching resources, which had been highlighted by the Gwynedd SACRE.

Concerns were raised regarding the provision of RE resources and its long term impact on schools, the disparity between examination papers, and the volume of work in the RE syllabus compared to other subjects eg History and Geography. The SACRE felt strongly that the above issues should be raised with WJEC and the WASACRE. The SACRE agreed that the above issues be raised by Mr Rheinallt Thomas at the WASACRE's next meeting.

The SACRE expressed concern at the lack of teachers who are currently being trained to teach Humanities as a subject, which will have negative impact on RE in the future.

The Clerk to the SACRE reported that Miss Bethan James, the SACRE's former advisor, has suggested that a teacher representative from a non-church primary school be appointed to the SACRE to strengthen the relationship between the SACRE and schools.

RESOLVED:-

- **That the Chair raises the issue of a vacant seat on the SACRE for an elected Member with the Head of Democratic Services.**
- **That Rev Jim Clarke contacts the Presbyterian Church to request that the Church nominates a representative to join the SACRE.**
- **That members continue to undertake visits to local schools to observe Collective Worship, and to use the template previously prepared by Miss Bethan James.**
- **That the Clerk, on behalf of the SACRE, writes to the WJEC to express concerns regarding the disparity between examination papers and the volume of work in the RE syllabus compared to other subjects.**
- **That the issue of disparity between RE GCSE and A Levels compared with other subjects be raised by Mr Rheinallt Thomas at WASACRE's next meeting.**
- **That the Clerk and teacher representatives discuss the content of the letter to the WJEC regarding the RE syllabus and teachers' heavy workload.**
- **The Clerk to look into the possibility of including a non-church teacher representative from the primary sector on the SACRE.**

3 REPRESENTATION BY RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS ON THE SACRE

The SACRE discussed and agreed to accept the Quakers as a religious denomination on the SACRE.

Mr Gerald Hewitson, a member of the Anglesey Quakers was nominated and appointed as a members of the SACRE, and was formally welcomed by the Chair.

RESOLVED to note the information presented.

4 ANGLESEY SACRE'S ACTION PLAN FOR 2019/22

The Chair reported that the SACRE's Action Plan 2019/22 was adopted at the SACRE's last meeting, and will be reviewed on a regular basis.

Discussion focused on adapting the way the SACRE works, and introducing a level of expertise to the SACRE. The Clerk to the SACRE reported that she will be taking over the role of RE Advisor from Mrs Helen Bebb, and will prepare the Action Plan in future, and represent the SACRE in meetings.

It is hoped to convene additional informal meetings between the Clerk and teachers from the secondary sector to share their subject expertise and good practice in RE, which the Clerk will deliver to the SACRE. The SACRE's members will then have an opportunity to convey good practice to their catchment areas across the primary sector, ensuring that the SACRE's voice reaches all schools, and children have continuity in their learning.

The SACRE agreed that the above proposal was an excellent and exciting way forward, both to promote SACRE's profile and raise the image of RE in schools. It was noted that new channels of communication would be opened up, and bridge the gap between the primary and secondary sector.

RESOLVED:-

- **To accept the information presented in the Action Plan 2019/22.**
- **To identify good practice in the secondary sector and facilitate the dissemination of good practice for the benefit of schools and teachers, and continue to raise the SACRE's profile.**

5 ANGLESEY SACRE'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2018/19

The Clerk to the SACRE reported that she will be preparing the SACRE's Annual Report for 2018/19, which will contain detailed information on GCSE and A Level examination results. It was noted that the Annual Report will be presented in draft format, either this term, or at the SACRE's next meeting.

RESOLVED to note the information presented.

6 SCHOOLS' SELF-EVALUATION REPORTS

Schools' self-evaluation reports were presented by Ysgol Gynradd Bodedern, Ysgol Gymuned Llannerch-y-medd and Ysgol Gymraeg Morswyn.

It was noted that Bodedern school's self-evaluation report highlighted good practice by demonstrating opportunities the pupils had to speak, ask questions and express their opinions effectively in the Foundation Phase. Reference was made to pupils in Key Stage 2 successfully using their literacy skills to research information and complete written tasks.

It is evident that the self-evaluation report by Ysgol Gymuned Llannerch-y-Medd is very honest, as the Headteacher states that standards are satisfactory in the school. The pupils have a good RE background; the work is planned in advance; timetabled robustly on a weekly basis; and is listed as a priority in the Development Plan. The SACRE felt that examples of the pupils' work in the classroom was excellent.

The Ysgol Morswyn self-evaluation report states that the Governing body has monitored RE in the school, and should be praised. It was noted that good progress had been made in different areas, and pupils' understanding of religious artefacts is good. The report referred to keeping pupils safe from radicalisation.

The SACRE felt that this approach is good, but showed concern that only Christianity is discussed in the morning service, therefore other religions need to be introduced.

RESOLVED to note the RE schools' self-evaluation reports presented.

7 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STANDARDS

Estyn inspection reports undertaken at Ysgol Gynradd Bodedern, Ysgol Gymuned Llannerch-y-medd and Ysgol Gymraeg Morswyn were presented for the SACRE's consideration.

The Clerk to the SACRE reported that no concerns have been raised by Estyn in the above schools.

It was noted that RE standards in Ysgol Gynradd Bodedern are being praised in the Estyn report. The report states that pupils are well behaved, courteous, show respect, care and concern towards others, and gain beneficial experiences and spiritual development at the school to become good citizens.

The Estyn report for Ysgol Gymuned Llannerch-y-medd states that the school's current performance is good, and most pupils make good progress in their writing skills in the Foundation Phase. The pupils also show respect and care for others.

Ysgol Gymraeg Morswyn's Estyn report states that the school's current performance is good. Pupils make sound progress in their learning and achieve well at the school. It was noted that the schools has a family atmosphere happy community for pupils and staff.

RESOLVED to note information from the Estyn inspection reports presented.

8 WALES ASSOCIATION OF SACRES (WASACRE)

The draft minutes of the previous meeting of the WASACRE held on 28 June 2019, were presented for information.

The Chair reported that the WASACRE has lobbied Welsh Government to provide professional support to SACRES across Wales. Reference was also made to the Supporting Framework for RE, which is now being finalised.

The SACRE highlighted the presentation given by Sally Holland, the Children's Commissioner for Wales, which referred to the 'rights' of children. The SACRE felt that children educated at home could be disadvantaged in their social skills development, and that changes need to be implemented by Welsh Government to address this, as current monitoring and intervention measures are inadequate.

It was noted that the WASACRE's next meeting would be held in Aberaeron on 21 November 2019.

RESOLVED to note the information presented in the WASACRE minutes.

9 CORRESPONDENCE

The SACRE discussed a Welsh Government Consultation document on the right to withdraw from Religious Education and Relationships and Sex Education, and change the name of RE.

Discussion focused on whether RE and RSE should be linked together in one questionnaire, and how the SACRE should respond. The SACRE's consensus was not to respond as the Anglesey SACRE, as its members had different opinions on RSE. However, the SACRE agreed unanimously that RE lessons should be mandatory.

Mrs Anest Frazer reported that the Church in Wales believes that the more information you can give children and involve them in the decision making process, the greater the opportunity the children will have to respond themselves to decisions that affect them, rather than have their parents deciding for them.

Mr Gerald Hewitson invited the SACRE to attend a Fairness Commission for Anglesey Conference at Llangefni Town Hall on 21 October 2019 between 9.30am - 2.30pm.

RESOLVED that the teacher representatives respond jointly to the questionnaire by the 28 November 2019 deadline in relation to the RE remit, and, that the SACRE members respond individually, if they desire.

10 NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the SACRE is scheduled for Tuesday, 18 February 2020 at 2.00pm.

The meeting concluded at 3.40 pm

**COUNCILLOR DYLAN REES
CHAIR**