

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

Minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2021

- PRESENT:** Councillor Dylan Rees (Chair)
- The Education Authority**
- Councillors Gwilym O Jones, Alun W Mummery,
Alun Roberts, Dafydd Rhys Thomas
- The Religious Denominations**
- Mrs Elaine Green (The Presbyterian Church of Wales)
- Teacher Representatives**
- Mrs Heledd Hearn (Ysgol Uwchradd Bodedern)
Mr Owain Roberts (Ysgol Cybi)
Mrs Manon Morris Williams (Ysgol Santes Dwynwen,
Newborough)
- Co-opted Member**
- Mr Rheinallt Thomas
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Mrs Gwyneth M Hughes (Senior Welfare Manager, Education)
(RE Advisor to the SACRE)
Mrs Shirley Cooke (Committee Officer)
- APOLOGIES:** Mrs Anest Frazer (The Church in Wales)
Mr Gerald Hewitson (The Quakers)
Rev Debra Stammers (The Baptist Union of Wales)
Mr Christopher Thomas (The Catholic Church)
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The Chair welcomed Councillor Dafydd Rhys Thomas, Mrs Elaine Green and Mr Owain Roberts to their first SACRE meeting. Councillor Thomas will be taking over from Councillor Glyn Hayes. Mrs Green will be representing the Presbyterian Church of Wales, and Mr Roberts will be a teacher representative on the SACRE.

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None received.

2 MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting of the SACRE held on 12 November 2020 were presented and confirmed as correct.

Matters arising from the minutes:-

- The Chair referred to concerns raised by the SACRE previously regarding the volume of work in the RE Agreed Syllabus and the future of RE in 2022. WJEC had agreed to modify and reduce the workload in the syllabus, but due to the pandemic, these arrangements had been withdrawn, and the method of teaching was replaced with pupil assessments. The RE Advisor reported that due to changes in teaching practices, it was felt that a letter of thanks to WJEC would not be relevant at the present time, and the matter was disregarded.
- Mrs Heledd Hearn reported that pupils must carry out some work under examination conditions and in lessons for GCSEs and A Level courses. She stated that Covid-19 has placed a terrible strain on pupils and their learning, and the next half term will be very challenging for pupils. She further stated that teachers have been able to complete the GCSE and A Level courses in Ysgol Bodedern.
- The SACRE expressed concern that pupils have missed out so much on their school work, not just in RE, but in all subjects over the past year. Concerns were also raised that some pupils are now suffering from mental health issues, which are on the increase, and need to be addressed.
- It was noted that Webinar sessions were no longer relevant and had been cancelled.

3 PRESENTATION ON SHARING INFORMATION WITH TEACHERS ON AN ELECTRONIC PLATFORM

This item was not discussed.

4 PRESENTATION ON THE WORK OF THE OPERATIONAL PANEL FOR SCHOOLS' SACRE

This item was not discussed.

5 THE ANGLESEY SACRE'S ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

The RE Advisor presented the final version of the SACRE's Annual Report for 2019/20 for approval, and gave an overview of the points discussed, as outlined below:-

- Five schools' self-evaluation reports were presented during the pre-lockdown period from September 2019 to March 2020. The reports presented were honest and effective, and no concerns were raised.
- The work of the Operational Panel for Schools' SACRE continues to develop and needs to be strengthened further, as progress has been limited due to the pandemic.
- Concerns were raised that the number of pupils following RE as a subject continues to fall. It was noted that 83 pupils followed the GCSE RE course in 2019/20, 11 less than in the previous year. However, pupils who undertook GCSE and A Levels assessments during the Summer of 2020 achieved good grades in the subject.

- Estyn praised RE teaching in their inspections of Anglesey's schools during 2019/20, and no concerns were raised.
- Three members of the SACRE attended collective worship sessions in schools, and further scheduled visits had to be postponed due to Covid-19. It was suggested that collective worship sessions be convened through Microsoft Teams in future.
- The Welsh Government guidance documents to support RE will change with the new curriculum in 2022. It was noted that from September onwards, Estyn's expectations will become clearer for schools.
- As a result of the Welsh Government consultation on access to the curriculum for all learners in October 2019, each child will now have full access to the curriculum and will undertake lessons in RE.
- RE will change to Religion, Values and Ethics as part of the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience.
- Concerns were raised regarding GDPR compliance, and whether it is appropriate to present photos and videos of children in the classroom and school environment in SACRE meetings.
- The SACRE expressed concern that no pupils had chosen to study RE in some secondary schools. It was confirmed that there is provision in place for pupils to travel to other schools for RE lessons outside their catchment areas, and this system is currently being utilised and working well.
- There needs to be provision in place for pupils who have been taught RE through the medium of Welsh in the primary sector to continue to be taught in Welsh in the secondary sector.
- It was agreed that the SACRE's current membership and attendance at meetings should be monitored.

Reference was made to the SACRE's Action Plan listing the Committee's priorities, aims and objectives up to 2022. Work will continue to raise the SACRE's profile in schools, and increase awareness that RE will be part of the Humanities AoLE Curriculum. The SACRE and the Operational Panel will be focusing on the new curriculum, particularly how schools adapt and work thematically during the transition from Year 6 to 7. It was noted that the objective to create a platform to share resources and good practice within RE has been delivered by Mr Owen Davies.

Members of the SACRE showed appreciation and thanked the RE Advisor for her outstanding work in preparing the Annual Report, and the Chair for his excellent Chairman's Summary.

RESOLVED:-

- **To accept the SACRE's Annual Report for 2019/20.**
- **That the SACRE's current attendances at meetings be monitored over the forthcoming year.**
- **To agree that only individuals who have prepared a presentation/self-evaluation report should be permitted to show photos and videos of children in their school environment, and only during a SACRE meeting.**

6 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STANDARDS - SCHOOLS' SELF-EVALUATION REPORTS

The RE self-evaluation report by Ysgol Gynradd Kingsland was presented for information.

The SACRE noted that the Head Teacher had stated in his self-evaluation report that standards in Ysgol Kingsland were good or adequate. The SACRE felt that he had judged himself rather harshly in his comments, since the self-evaluation report was detailed and interesting, and gave a taste of what is happening in the school in relation to RE.

The Committee wished to express their appreciation to Mr Rhys Hearn for his comprehensive report.

RESOLVED:-

- **To note the content of Ysgol Kingsland's Self-Evaluation Report.**
- **That the RE Advisor provides feedback to Mr Rhys Hearn and conveys the SACRE's appreciation for his work.**

7 GCSE AND A LEVEL RESULTS 2021

The RE Advisor reported that teachers in individual schools will decide on GCSE and A Level results this year. Teachers will assess and mark their pupils' work, and results will be available in June. Any parents who are dissatisfied with their children's grades will have a month to appeal against a decision, before a final grade is awarded in August 2021.

Concerns were raised on the effect this new method of teaching will have on teachers, who are currently working under increased pressure and facing a very challenging half term.

Mrs Heledd Hearn reported that three of the teachers in Anglesey schools teach GCSEs, A Levels and Key Stage 3. She stated that teachers from all five secondary schools have agreed to work together and undertake equal amounts of work under examination conditions, in the classroom, and in the home.

It was noted that with regard to last year's RE examination results in Bodedern School, pupils were happy with their results.

RESOLVED to note the information presented.

8 WALES ASSOCIATION OF SACRES (WASACRE)

The Chair reported that he and the RE Advisor attended the virtual WASACRE meeting on 23 March 2021. He referred to the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill, and stated that the Bill has been passed by Welsh Government, and is awaiting Royal Assent.

Mr Rheinallt Thomas, who was also present at the WASACRE meeting gave an update on the following:-

- With reference to the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill, Mr Thomas praised the Education Minister, Kirsty Williams for listening and acting upon feedback on matters relating to RE in the Welsh Government Consultation, and incorporating these changes into the Bill.

Mr Thomas reported that he had attended a key Welsh Government meeting on the consultation, and was invited to lead a discussion on criticism. He stated that he gave harsh criticism on some elements of the consultation, which were supported by all political groups. A strong presence from the Churches, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and other religious groups ensured that religion was given due attention by the Education Minister and Welsh Government, which resulted in a successful outcome from a religious perspective.

Mr Thomas referred to the following changes which were adopted on 29 January 2021 and included in the Bill:-

- Non-religious groups have not been given separate group status within the new Standing Advisory Council;
- References were made to Wales, rather than Great Britain;
- Christianity was accepted as the main religion in Wales;
- The SACRE's name will change, probably to the Standing Advisory Council.
- Discussion focused on the future of GCSE RE. Emphasis was placed on how RE can follow three routes; as an individual subject, an integrated subject, or as part Social Studies. It was highlighted that RE is a statutory subject, and should not be weakened.
- It was noted that the next steps for SACREs will be adapting to the changes and provide direction to schools in future, and to embrace the four elements of 'what matters', which are fundamental to the new curriculum.
- The next WASACRE meeting will be held in Powys on 16 June 2021.

It was noted that the Draft Guidance on the RE Framework has been published, and is now out for consultation until 9 April 2021. The SACRE discussed whether they should respond to the initial draft proposals, or wait until a full public consultation will take place in May, which would allow a response time of eight weeks.

RESOLVED:-

- **That the RE Advisor, on behalf of the SACRE, writes to Welsh Government stating that due to the timetable, the Ynys Môn SACRE will consider the initial draft consultation document on the RE Framework in its June meeting. A full response to the consultation will be forwarded to Welsh Government in May.**
- **That SACRE members may respond individually to the initial consultation document prior to the SACRE meeting in June, should they wish to do so.**

9 NEXT MEETING

The next SACRE meeting will be held on Tuesday, 22 June 2021.

The meeting concluded at 3.20 pm

**COUNCILLOR DYLAN REES
CHAIR**