

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

Minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2021

PRESENT: Councillor Dylan Rees (Chair)

The Education Authority

Councillors Gwilym O Jones, Alun W Mummery, Alun Roberts

The Religious Denominations

Mrs Elaine Green (The Presbyterian Church of Wales)

Rev Deborah Stammers (The Baptist Union of Wales)

Mr Christopher Thomas (The Catholic Church)

Teacher Representatives

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)
Committee Officer (SC)

ALSO PRESENT: Rhian Grieves (Ysgol Cybi)

APOLOGIES: Rev Jim Clarke (Union of Welsh Independents)
Mrs Heledd Hearn (Ysgol Uwchradd Bodedern)
Mrs Mefys Jones-Edwards (Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones, Amlwch)

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None received.

2 MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting of the SACRE held on 22 June 2021 were presented and confirmed as correct.

Matters arising from the minutes:-

It was noted that the RE Advisor has forwarded the St Giles Centre video on navigating guidance and links to the SACRE.

3 TO RECEIVE A REPORT BY THE RE ADVISOR TO THE SACRE

The RE Advisor gave a summary of her report, and the following points were noted:-

- Schools continue to face challenging times due to the pandemic. Head teachers are under considerable pressure to secure arrangements to prevent the spread of Covid-19, in line with Welsh Government guidelines.
- There has recently been an increase in the number of children and young people who have caught Covid-19, and more teachers have caught the infection.
- There is growing concern that more parents are removing their children from school and providing home schooling. It was noted that the instability and lower attendances has had a negative impact on schools, and is currently being monitored by the Education Department and Children's Services. The Council's welfare team work closely with parents to offer support and address the individual needs of children. Extra support is also offered to pupils who have additional learning and/or disability needs.

The SACRE expressed concern that the impact of home education has not been given due attention in Council meetings. As RE is a specialist subject, the SACRE felt that parents do not have the necessary level of expertise in the subject to educate their children at home to the required standard. Following discussion, it was agreed that the SACRE's concerns be raised in the next meeting of the Schools Progress Review Panel.

- Three secondary schools and two primary schools in Ynys Môn have participated in the Welsh Government's Philosophy for Children training. Positive feedback has been received from the SACRE's teachers, who believe the training will complement Religion Values and Ethics (RVE).
- Collective Worship arrangements have continued in secondary schools throughout the pandemic, despite the challenges schools face.
- 103 pupils took RE as a subject in GCSEs in 2020/21 - 46.7% achieved A*- A; 83.5% achieved A*- C. 23 pupils studied RE A Level for the same period - 95.7% achieved A*- C, and all pupils achieved a pass.
- GCSE and A Level external assessments results are yet to be confirmed. Statistical data from last year's assessments and previous years' examination results will be included in the SACRE's Annual Report, which will be presented to the SACRE's next meeting for adoption.

Concerns were raised regarding Welsh Government's lack of clarity as to whether examinations or assessments will be in place next year. It was noted that the lack of information is putting a strain on teachers and pupils in Years 11 and 13. It was further noted that WJEC reported in a recent NAPfRE meeting that examinations would be constantly reviewed for next year.

A question was raised as to whether RE A Level is delivered in each school? The RE Advisor responded that when only a small number of pupils want to study a particular subject at A Level, arrangements are in place for appointed schools to lead and teach those subjects. The flexibility offered by secondary schools enables pupils to study their chosen subjects, with no additional transport costs.

The SACRE praised the excellent collaboration in Anglesey schools. It was noted that teachers share their expertise and resources, and build upon existing partnerships, and encourage new partnerships to grow.

- The RE Advisor reported that due to the pandemic, the Operational Panel for Schools' SACRE has not had the opportunity to monitor and embed good practice in schools.
- The Operational Panel has received grant funding of £4,000 to assist schools in Ynys Môn to formulate the new curriculum and deliver the elements of Religion, Values and Ethics in schools in the Humanities AoLE.

The RE Advisor suggested, and it was agreed, that the grant funding be split into 5 catchment areas by one lead school, rather than shared between specific schools to plan the curriculum. It was noted that leaders in secondary schools could then share their expertise in planning the curriculum with the primary sector. Mrs Manon Williams reported that engagement in the Humanities AoLE is already taking place in some schools the south of the Island.

- To date, no further correspondence has been published on the Curriculum for Wales following the RVE consultation.

The Chair reported that in today's WASACRE meeting, it was confirmed that the draft guidelines for the Curriculum for Wales will be shared with SACREs and Directors of Education before Christmas, and published in January 2022.

Mr Rheinallt Thomas, who was also present in the WASACRE meeting reported that it will be necessary to agree on the new curriculum by the end of February 2022, due to the Purdah period prior to elections.

Mr Thomas stated that to meet the requirement of the RE Framework, it will be necessary for SACREs to accept non-religious representatives as members. It was noted that a copy of the draft Framework will be forwarded to the SACRE prior to publication in January 2022.

- A Peace Schools Conference was held virtually recently, which was attended by children and young people. The main topic discussed was climate change and its effect on world populations. Anglesey's contribution included developing the themes on ethnic minorities within the RVE Curriculum.

RESOLVED:-

- **To note the information presented.**

- That the SACRE members on the Schools Progress Review Panel raise the SACRE's concerns regarding home education in the Panel's next meeting.
- That the RE Advisor shares the £4,000 grant funding centrally between the 5 schools within each catchment area.

4 WALES ASSOCIATION OF SACRES (WASACRE)

Mr Rheinallt Thomas gave an update on the following main points raised at today's WASACRE meeting:-

- The Chair of the WASACRE reminded everyone of the importance of having the right mind set, by being positive in light of the events of the past 18 months.
- The virtual WASACRE meeting was held on TEAMS rather than Zoom. It was met with disappointment that no translation service was available.
- It was confirmed that WASACRE has responded to the Welsh Government Guidelines Consultation on Religion, Values and Ethics.
- NAPfRE gave presentations by 3 consortia; Central South, EAS and GwE. Experts in the field of RE were present, representing Central South and EAS. Although a representative from GwE was also present, it was evident that Ynys Môn and Gwynedd were not supported by GwE.
- With reference to professional development, Welsh Government have commissioned WASACRE to prepare resources. The WASACRE's Executive has set a timetable, with a closing date for applications from primary and secondary teachers on 3 December 2021. A team will be in place to prepare resources by the end of December 2021. It was noted that three applications have been received to date. The RE Advisor confirmed that she has received communication from WASACRE with a request for teachers to apply.
- Reference was made to the Statutory Conference and emphasis on adopting the RE Framework. A conference will be held in January to update the SACRE's Constitution, in light of changes made since 1996.
- It was noted for information, that Paula Webber has now been appointed Chair of WASACRE, and Phil Lord as Vice-Chair.
- The WASACRE's Statement of Accounts for 2020/21 was presented for information.

RESOLVED:-

- **To note the information presented.**
- **To note the WASACRE's Statement of Accounts for 2020/21.**

5 CORRESPONDENCE

The Chair reported that Mr Gerald Hewitson has retired from the SACRE. The Chair stated that he has sent correspondence to Mr Hewitson thanking him for his support and contribution to the SACRE.

The Chair also reported that Mrs Anest Frazer will be resigning from the SACRE, as she has taken up a new post. The Chair stated that he has emailed Mrs Frazer

thanking her for her support and contribution to the SACRE over the years, and wished her well in her new post.

The Chair further reported that he has written to the Archdeacon, Rev Andrew Herrick requesting that he nominates a new member from the Church in Wales to represent the SACRE. The Archdeacon responded stating that discussions will need to take place within the Diocese Office, before the request can be actioned, as a new representative also has to be appointed to sit on the Gwynedd SACRE.

Correspondence has also been received from Rev Jim Clarke, who will also be retiring from the SACRE, as his Chairmanship for the Union of Welsh Independents will be coming to an end. The Chair proposed and the SACRE were in agreement, that he asks Rev Clarke to nominate a new representative.

RESOLVED to request that Rev Jim Clarke nominates a new member to represent the Union of Welsh Independents on the SACRE.

6 ANY OTHER MATTERS

The Chair reported that the Church in Wales has received funding to set up a Pilgrimage Project. The Church intends to invite pupils from Anglesey schools to participate in the project, and raise awareness of pilgrimages on Anglesey. It was suggested that a member of the project be invited to the SACRE's next meeting to present an overview of the scheme. The SACRE agreed to the proposal.

RESOLVED to invite a member of the Church to attend the SACRE's next meeting to present an overview on the Pilgrimage Project.

The Chair informed the SACRE that Rev Deborah Stammers will be ordained on Saturday, 27 November 2021 in Bethel Chapel, Holyhead at 2.30pm. The SACRE expressed their good wishes to Rev Stammers.

The meeting concluded at 2.35 pm

**COUNCILLOR DYLAN REES
CHAIR**