

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

Minutes of the meeting held on 11th October, 2016

PRESENT: Councillor Dylan Rees (Chair)

The Education Authority

Councillors Gwilym O Jones, Robert Llewelyn Jones,
Alun Mummery

The Religious Denominations

Mrs Catherine Jones (The Baptist Union of Wales)
Professor Euros Wyn Jones (Union of Welsh
Independents)
Mr Christopher Thomas (The Roman Catholic Church)

Teacher Representatives

Mrs Heledd Hearn (Ysgol Uwchradd Bodedern)
Mrs Alison Jones (Ysgol Parch Thomas Ellis)

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D Gareth Jones (Primary Education Officer) (Clerk to the
SACRE)
Mrs Shirley Cooke (Committee Officer)

APOLOGIES: Mrs Mefys Edwards (Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones)
Mr Rheinallt Thomas (Presbyterian Church of Wales)
Kirsty Williams (The Church in Wales)
Mrs Manon Morris Williams (Ysgol Gynradd Llangaffo)

ALSO PRESENT: Miss Bethan James (Systems Leader - GwE)
Ms Sioned Parry (Canolfan Addysg Y Bont)

1. CANOLFAN ADDYSG Y BONT

Ms Sioned Parry, a teacher at Canolfan Addysg Y Bont, gave a presentation on the school's RE provision as part of the school's Religious Education Policy. She referred to the good practice methods used at the school for teaching children with special educational needs, and the RE experiences they receive, which focus on social skills, ethics, morals and teaching pupils respect.

The teaching methods at the school include the following:-

- creating a school prayer that is used in all classrooms and assemblies, which the children can join in and recite;
- adapting songs - making songs fun for the children;
- communicating with symbols and signs - Makaton;
- listening sessions eg 'Llond Llaw' - children sit quietly and listen to Bible stories;
- preparing Christmas shoe boxes for disadvantaged children abroad;
- International Week - looking at religions and lifestyles in other countries;
- visits to religious buildings eg St Asaph Cathedral - last year the children performed and sang in a concert for North Wales Special Schools; they also visited St Cyngar's Church, Llangefni and carried out a school project in the classroom on the Church's stained glass window;
- learning about religious symbols and festivals;
- guest speakers are invited to conduct services.

It was noted that the school does not teach meditation at present, but is looking at different ways of responding to sensibilities.

The SACRE thanked Ms Parry for her presentation and the excellent teaching practices demonstrated at the school.

Councillor Dylan Rees declared that he is a School Governor of Canolfan Addysg Y Bont.

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None received.

3. MINUTES OF THE 12TH JULY, 2016 MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting of the SACRE held on 12th July, 2016 were presented and confirmed as correct.

4. MATTERS ARISING

The Chair reported that Mr Rheinallt Thomas's period of service as a representative on this Committee has come to an end after many years. Mr Thomas has expressed that he wishes to stay in contact with the SACRE.

The Chair reminded the SACRE that there is a vacant seat on the Committee for a co-opted Member. A proposal was put forward to invite Mr Thomas to serve as a co-opted Member of the SACRE. The process would involve suggesting to the Officers of the Sunday Schools Council on Anglesey that they appoint Mr Thomas as their representative.

ACTION: Primary Education Officer to:-

- **write to Mr Rheinallt Thomas inviting him to serve as a co-opted Member of the SACRE; and if he and Officers of Anglesey's Sunday Schools agree to the proposal,**
- **invite Officers to formalise the appointment.**

The Primary Education Officer confirmed that a letter has been sent to the WJEC in July, raising the SACRE's concerns in relation to the cost of teacher training for the new RE "A" Level course syllabus, and the availability of Welsh medium materials for the course. The Officer reported that he has not received a reply to the letter to date.

Mrs Heledd Hearn, Ysgol Uwchradd Bodedern reported that training provision for the new GCSE course syllabus will be held in February, 2017 and will be free. She stated that the RE "A" Level curriculum is almost ready in English, and the Welsh will follow soon. It was noted that the WJEC have listened, even though they have not yet responded to the CYSAG.

Estyn Inspections – Spring 2016

The Systems Leader (GwE) provided an update on progress at Ysgol Pencarnisiog, which is currently monitored by Estyn. It was noted that following the Systems Leader's visit to the school, the school responded immediately to Estyn's comments, particularly the Foundation Phase. The Head Teacher was provided with exemplar materials to improve teaching practices at the school, and the school's Challenge Adviser (GwE) will report back on progress soon.

The Systems Leader reported that she is confident that the school is responding well to Estyn's recommendations, and will return to review RE provision at the school during the spring term, before Estyn's follow up visit.

Schools' Self-Evaluations

The Primary Education Officer reported that he contacted schools in September to ask them to consider inviting Members of the SACRE to observe collective worship periods. Although some schools responded positively to the request, it was noted that no further sessions had been attended by Members of the SACRE, and no invitations have been received for the coming term. Councillor Gwilym Jones offered to attend Ysgol Pencarnisiog to observe collective worship at the school.

Action: Primary Education Officer to contact the Head Teacher of Ysgol Pencarnisiog to arrange a visit for Councillor Gwilym Jones to observe collective worship at the school.

Mr Christopher Thomas referred to the word 'INCERTS' on the last bullet point on page 4 of the Minutes. He informed the SACRE that it is now referred to as 'The Assessment Foundation'.

Reference was made to the RE curriculum in Catholic schools, and it was noted that the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers produce all materials for Roman Catholic schools.

Professor Euros W Jones sought clarity on Canon Robert Townsend's response as Director of Education for the Diocese of Bangor to the Church's use of terminology in RE. The matter was raised because Estyn, at times, describes 'collective worship' in schools as 'joint worship'. It was noted that Church schools use the term 'corporate worship', but 'collective worship' can also be used by the Church, as religious groups come together to worship.

5. SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATIONS

The Religious Education self-evaluation reports presented by Ysgol Beaumaris, Ysgol Brynsiencyn, Ysgol Parch Thomas Ellis and Ysgol Uwchradd Bodedern were presented for the SACRE's consideration.

The Systems Leader (GwE) reported that she would like more information on the substance of lessons; the kind of discussions held in schools; and the units of learning schools use. She stated that she has circulated new guidelines for schools, which suggest they give a more specific flavour of what is going on in RE lessons as part of their narrative.

The contents of the above were noted by the SACRE's Members.

6. ANGLESEY SACRE'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2015/16

Submitted - the draft Annual Report of the Anglesey SACRE for 2015/16.

The Systems Leader (GwE) reported that the SACRE's Annual Report is based on work undertaken during 2015/16. She referred to her update on GwE's work in item 7 of the minutes of the previous meeting. It was noted that unlike previous Annual Reports, this year the report included a number of schools' self-evaluation reports. In 2014, Anglesey County Council sought to encourage every school to present a self-evaluation report, and the SACRE Clerk circulated a letter to each primary and secondary school asking them to submit a self-evaluation report to the Anglesey SACRE. Twelve schools responded and submitted their reports for 2015/16. A number of SACRE's have adopted Anglesey SACRE's pattern, and more reports were scrutinised last year.

It was noted that progress is slow in increasing the number of schools who submit self-evaluation reports. Estyn have emphasised that Governing Bodies are not doing enough to challenge schools on performance in RE. The SACRE questioned whether it was time to communicate with the Chairs of the Governing Bodies.

The Primary Education Officer suggested that schools need reminding of the importance of completing self-evaluation reports. It was noted that over the

past three years, 26 self-evaluation reports have been received, and another 27 are still outstanding.

The Systems Leader referred to a section in the report that requires the Authority's response to the SACRE's work during the year. Last year an evaluation of SACRE's priorities was included in the Action Plan, and at the last meeting of the SACRE, a revised Action Plan was adopted. Members of the SACRE discussed whether they should evaluate a year's work, or leave more time to settle in and mature as a group.

The Systems Leader reported that schools were asked to address their strengths and weaknesses. Some schools have recognised that they have room for improvement. It was noted that these improvement matters are not currently re-visited by the SACRE to confirm that the improvement has taken place.

Action:

- **The SACRE agreed to accept the Annual Report;**
- **The SACRE agreed to review its Action Plan every two years, the next review will be in 2016/17.**
- **The Primary Education Officer to write to the 27 schools who have not yet submitted their schools' self-evaluation reports, asking them to complete them as soon as possible.**

7. UPDATE BY THE GWE CHALLENGE ADVISER

The Systems Leader (GwE) provided an update on her work in Gwynedd and Anglesey as a member of the National Advisory Panel for RE, which offers support to SACREs across Wales. The Panel has met to try to put together guidance for schools, and to help prepare schools for a curriculum that is a bit different. The document which is in draft form, is called "What makes good RE?", and is made up of 10 bullet points, is in simple form for non RE specialists, and it asks a series of questions that teachers can use when they meet to look at themes. It also looks at the contribution that RE can make to developing literacy, numeracy, reading and IT skills. The Panel spent some time in trying to envision what the guidance would look like if it was based on the theme of the Natural World, and was aimed at pupils in the Foundation Phase, and what activities would reflect the principles of RE. Some time was also spent on modelling guidance for CA2, but this has not been shared with the Panel's members. It must be borne in mind as well that Donaldson in his "Successful Futures" report has emphasised that the children themselves need to have a voice in how plans are developed.

In response to questions about the impact of Donaldson in respect of RE, and the continuity of arrangements from primary to secondary, the Systems Leader reported that the current arrangements regarding a locally determined RE syllabus remain effective. Professor Donaldson has made a strong statement that RE should be part of the curriculum and that has been welcomed, but any change in terms of the local administration of RE would

require a change of legislation. While continuity is reflected in local plans, they do not show adequately enough what contribution children have had in the making of those plans. It is perhaps timely for the SACRE to give some thought to how it might obtain the views of children and teachers about what they want from the SACRE as regards RE.

The contents of the above were noted by the SACRE's Members.

8. WALES ASSOCIATION OF SACRES

The draft minutes of the WASACRE held on 23rd June, 2016 in Rhyl, Denbighshire were presented to the SACRE and noted.

The Systems Leader (GwE) reported that there was poor attendance at the WASACRE meeting in Rhyl, with representations from small groups rather than a collective voice.

Reference was made to Gill Vaisey's 'Guidance on Managing the Right of Withdrawal from Religious Education'. It was noted that the guidance focuses on helping Head Teachers manage the withdrawal from RE, and will be available for schools.

The Committee noted the draft minutes of the WASACRE.

9. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the SACRE is scheduled for 2.00 pm on Tuesday, 14th February, 2017.

The meeting concluded at 3.40 pm

**COUNCILLOR DYLAN REES
CHAIR**