

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

Minutes of the meeting held on 18th April, 2018

PRESENT: Councillor Dylan Rees (Chair)

The Education Authority

Councillors Gwilym O Jones, Alun W Mummery

The Religious Denominations

Mrs Anest Frazer (The Church in Wales)

Mrs Catherine Jones (The Baptist Union of Wales)

Professor Euros Wyn Jones (Union of Welsh
Independents)

Mr Christopher Thomas (The Roman Catholic Church)

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

APOLOGIES: Councillors Glyn Haynes, Bryan Owen
Mrs Mefys Edwards (Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones, Amlwch)
Mrs Heledd Hearn (Ysgol Uwchradd Bodedern)
Mrs Einir Morris (Presbyterian Church of Wales)

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None received.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING - 10TH OCTOBER, 2017

The minutes of the previous meeting of the SACRE held on 10th October, 2017 were presented and confirmed as correct, subject to the following:-

Item 3 - Matters Arising

- No response has been received from the Welsh Assembly regarding the Petitions Committee's decision on collective worship.

Action:

Education Officer to request that the Welsh Assembly's Petitions Committee updates the SACRE on the outcome of the decision on the collective worship petition.

- In response to the SACRE's concerns that theology is in decline in schools and colleges, the Dean of the Welsh National College has requested further information, in order to respond to the SACRE's request.

Action:

Education Officer to write to the Dean of the Welsh National College expressing concerns regarding the future of teacher training in Wales, and the lack of opportunity currently available for prospective students to train through the medium of Welsh.

- In relation to Estyn's Thematic Review, it was confirmed the SACRE's comments on the Thematic Review have been forwarded to Estyn.

A request was made for the questions Estyn sent to schools for inclusion on the new self-evaluation reports template to be shared with the SACRE.

Action:

Education Officer to share a copy of the new template for schools' self-evaluation reports with the SACRE.

3. CHAIRMAN'S SUMMARY ON THE ANGLESEY SACRE'S DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17

The Chairman's Summary was presented for SACRE's consideration.

The Chair reported that the Anglesey SACRE had adopted the draft Annual Report for 2016/17 at its last meeting.

RESOLVED to accept the Chairman's Summary for SACRE's Annual Report for 2016/17.

Action:

Education Officer to forward the Chairman's Summary to the Head of Learning to finalise Anglesey SACRE's Annual Report for 2016/17.

4. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STANDARDS

- **Estyn School Inspections – Autumn 2017 & Spring 2018**

The Education Officer's report incorporating information from Estyn Inspection reports undertaken at Ysgol Penysarn, Ysgol y Fali, Ysgol Brynsiencyn, Ysgol Llanbedrgoch, Ysgol Santes Gwenfaen, Rhoscolyn and Ysgol Rhosybol was presented for the SACRE's consideration.

The Education Officer confirmed that there were no issues arising from the schools inspected.

RESOLVED to note the content of the information presented.

The following points were noted:-

- Inconsistencies were highlighted in Ysgol Penysarn and Ysgol Llanbedrgoch's Estyn reports, in that the term 'joint worship' is used in Welsh, rather than the correct term for 'collective worship'.
- Members showed concern that there is a lack of collective worship in some schools in North Wales. It was noted that schools who have not participated in collective worship, have been given a positive allocation by Estyn. Estyn's guidance does not allow a negative report, if there is no collective worship in a school.

The Education Officer circulated Estyn's guidance in the field of RE, entitled 'Update for Inspectors (April 2018)' to the Committee. The following extract was highlighted in the guidance:-

'A failure to meet the statutory duty might not affect the judgement for IA4. This is something for the team to consider. The team will need to weigh up a number of factors in each specific case, such as the number of pupils that it affects, and the team will have to decide whether this is significant or not and whether it should affect the overall judgement for IA4. Irrespective of whether or not inspectors decide to report on collective worship, they must always report on the spiritual, moral social and cultural development of pupils.'

The SACRE felt that collective worship in schools is being replaced by Humanities teaching.

Action:

Chair to request that 'Collective Worship in Schools' be included on WASACRE's agenda for its next meeting in Anglesey on 6th July, 2018.

School Self-Evaluations

Submitted and accepted, the self-evaluation reports of Ysgol Corn Hir, Llangefni and Ysgol Pentraeth.

Action: None

5. SUPPORT FOR THE FUTURE

The Education Officer reported that GwE have withdrawn support to the Anglesey and Gwynedd SACREs. It was noted that Miss Bethan James, has provided invaluable support and guidance to the Anglesey SACRE for many years in her role of Support Advisor (GwE), and previously as Humanities Advisor for Cwmni Cynnal.

The Education Officer further reported that GwE's support to the SACRE is not part of the agreement between the six North Wales local authorities.

However, GwE are willing to discuss any options available with the Council to provide support, should the Council wish to amend the current agreement. The Chair has written to the Head of Learning expressing SACRE's concerns and disappointed in the way GwE's support has been withdrawn, without official notification.

The SACRE felt that the support and guidance received from the Support Advisor is essential to fulfil its duties as a statutory body, and monitor standards in RE in Anglesey schools. It was noted that without the right support and guidance, the SACRE's work cannot be achieved.

Action:

- **Chair to write to Mr Arwyn Thomas, GwE's Chief Executive expressing SACRE's concerns.**
- **Education Officer to write to the Head of Learning requesting that the SACRE receives the necessary funding to obtain the expertise and guidance required.**
- **To update the Portfolio Holder for Education on the Committee's concerns in relation to GwE withdrawing support to the SACRE.**

The Chair reported that Mr Gareth Jones, the Education Officer and Clerk to the SACRE will be retiring at the end of May, 2018. On behalf of the SACRE, the Chair thanked Mr Jones for his excellent work and support as Clerk to the SACRE, and wished him well in his retirement.

Information received from Mrs Mefys Edwards, Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones and Mrs Heledd Hearn, Ysgol Uwchradd Bodedern, was presented before the SACRE.

Mrs Mefys Edwards, raised awareness that there is a lack of available resources for teaching RE through the medium of Welsh in schools in Wales. She also expressed concern that the workload of the new curriculum on RE teachers and pupils is excessive, and that teachers are struggling to finish the course in time. Mrs Edwards showed concern that there may be a decline in the number of pupils wanting to study 'A' Level in RE in the future, due to the heavy workload.

Mrs Heledd Hearn raised concerns that the new GCSE course is too voluminous in terms of content, and cannot be condensed into the two lessons available per week for RE. It was noted that schools who have three lessons of RE per week are also finding it difficult to complete the course. Reference was also made to the 'A' Level syllabus, that the school has not yet received textbooks.

Mrs Hearn requested that the SACRE write to the WJEC to express concern at the lack of resources that are available for teaching through the medium of Welsh.

Action:

- **Education Officer to write to the Welsh Government Minister and WJEC expressing the SACRE's concerns noted above.**
- **A copy of the letter to be forwarded to Rhun ap Iorwerth, the Welsh Assembly Member for Anglesey.**

6. WALES ASSOCIATION OF SACREs (WASACRE)

A proposed amendment to the WASACRE's Constitution was presented to the SACRE for comment.

The Chair of the WASACRE has requested a minor change be made to the SACRE's Constitution ie that each member SACRE shall be entitled to send up to four representatives to WASACRE meetings.

RESOLVED to accept the amendment to the WASACRE's Constitution.

Action: None

7. GUIDANCE ON MANAGING THE RIGHT OF WITHDRAWAL FROM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

A copy of WASACRE's Guidance booklet by Gill Vasey was shared with the SACRE.

The Education Officer reported that the booklet is a guidance for schools, and has been circulated to every school in Anglesey.

It was noted that Gill Vasey has sent a questionnaire to all Anglesey schools, questioning how many parents have used this right to withdraw a child from collective worship in school. The Education Officer reported that only one school has responded to date.

RESOLVED to note the Guidance booklet for information.

Action: None

8. CORRESPONDENCE

The Chair reported that Mrs Einir Morris has notified the SACRE that she will be retiring as SACRE's representative on the Presbyterian Church of Wales from today.

The SACRE conveyed their best wishes to Mrs Morris.

Action:

Education Officer to write to the Secretary of the Anglesey Presbyterian Church of Wales, asking the Church to nominate a representative for the SACRE role.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The SACRE noted that the next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for 2.00pm on Tuesday, 13th June, 2018.

The meeting concluded at 3.10pm

**COUNCILLOR DYLAN REES
CHAIR**