



Cadeirydd /Chairman:
The Revd Canon Edward J Evans
15 St. Andrews Road,
Bridgend,
CF31 1RX

e-bost/e-mail: ejevans972@btinternet.com
ffôn/ tel : 01656 655511 / 07968 044583

Ysgrifennydd/Secretary:
Paula Webber
EAS Offices
Tredomen Gateway
Tredomen Park
Ystrad Mynach
Hengoed
CF82 7EH

e-bost/e-mail: WASACRE@sewaleseas.org.uk
ffôn/ tel: 07904 644728

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Dear Directors of Education,

At the recent meeting of the Wales Association of SACREs, members received feedback from the National Advisory Panel for Religious Education (NAPfRE) and were made aware that increasing numbers of schools in Wales are looking for alternative approaches to meeting their statutory provision for Religious Education (RE) at Key Stage 4.

Currently in Wales there is only one specification for GCSE Religious Studies (RS), which has made it more challenging for schools to offer a qualification for both option RS learners and statutory RE learners that also offers schools value, in terms of achieving performance targets. As a result NAPfRE is seeing a growing trend in schools replacing the short course RS qualification (and in some cases the full course RS qualification) with an 'easier' skills based, unitised NCFE course in Equality and Diversity (or similar), that carries a higher number of performance points for schools (we believe as much as two Level 2 equivalent GCSEs). However, we also know from our NAPfRE colleagues that these courses only offer a superficial overview of some aspects of the current agreed syllabus and would require extensive planning and inclusion of significant, additional content by an RE specialist in school to ensure that the requirements of the agreed syllabus are met fully.

WASACRE is extremely concerned about this and at its last meeting, held on 21st November 2019, it was agreed that the Chair should write to all local authorities in Wales asking them to remind all schools in their authority of their legal responsibilities toward the teaching of RE.

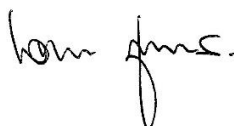
As such you are respectfully reminded that it is a legal requirement that every learner registered at a school in your local authority be taught RE according to the locally agreed syllabus, unless a pupil has formally been withdrawn from RE at the request of a parent or guardian, and it would be appreciated by both WASACRE and NAPfRE if this message could be reinforced in your authority's schools. The current agreed syllabus for your local authority is the National Exemplar Framework for Religious Education (2008). Pages 28 to 30 of the framework set out what should be studied at Key Stage 4. The framework states that all learners should be given fair access to qualifications based on the learning set out in the framework. The Equality and Diversity qualification does not

adequately assess the learning stipulated in the framework for RE and therefore, cannot be considered as a qualification which assess pupils' learning of RE.

As a result, if any schools in your local authority choose to substitute Key Stage 4 RE in favour of teaching this qualification alone (or one similar) it would mean that the school will not be fulfilling its legal obligation to provide RE for all registered learners (other than those withdrawn) according to the locally agreed RE syllabus. WASACRE and NAPfRE hopes therefore that before such a decision is taken, those responsible for curriculum design at the schools in your local authority will consider the implications of such a decision. Should any school wish to teach the Equality and Diversity NCFE course (or similar), it should be offered in addition to KS4 RE.

I hope that this letter is received in the supportive spirit in which it has been written. My colleagues and I at WASACRE and NAPfRE would be happy to discuss the contents of this letter with you in person, and indeed we would welcome an opportunity to do so.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Revd Canon Edward J Evans'.

Revd Canon Edward J Evans
Chair of WASACRE