

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

Minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2020

PRESENT: Councillor Dylan Rees (Chair)

The Education Authority

Councillors Gwilym O Jones, Alun W Mummery,
Alun Roberts

The Religious Denominations

Mrs Anest Frazer (The Church in Wales)
Mrs Catherine Jones (The Baptist Union of Wales)

Teacher Representatives

Mrs Heledd Hearn (Ysgol Uwchradd Bodedern)
Mrs Mefys Jones-Edwards (Ysgol Syr Thomas
Jones, Amlwch)
Mrs Manon Morris Williams (Ysgol Santes
Dwynwen, Newborough)

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs Gwyneth M Hughes (Senior Welfare Manager,
Education) (RE Advisor to the SACRE)
Mrs Helen Bebb (Ysgol David Hughes, Menai Bridge)
(Member of the Operational Panel for Schools' SACRE)
Mrs Margaret Peters (Schools' Business Support Project
Officer) (Clerk to the SACRE)
Mrs Shirley Cooke (Committee Officer)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Glyn Haynes
Rev Jim Clarke (Union of Welsh Independents)
Mr Gerald Hewitson (The Quakers)
Mr Christopher Thomas (The Roman Catholic Church)
Mrs Amanda Earnshaw (Ysgol Cybi)

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None received.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting of the SACRE held on 15 October 2019 were presented and confirmed as correct.

Matters arising from the minutes:-

- The Chair confirmed that Councillor Aled Morris Jones has been appointed as a member of the SACRE.
- It was confirmed that Rev Jim Clarke is liaising with the Presbyterian Church for the Church to nominate a representative on the SACRE.
- The Chair reported that the Methodist Church nominated Rev Sue Altree as a SACRE representative, and the SACRE accepted the nomination.
- The Chair, Councillors Gwilym O Jones and Alun Mummery confirmed that they have visited local schools to observe Collective Worship.

Councillor Gwilym O Jones gave an informative account of his visit to Ysgol Kingsland, Holyhead where he observed the morning service at the school. He stated that the theme of the Collective Worship session was friendship, with emphasis on caring. He reported that the service was excellent, and raised awareness of values, meaning and purpose, and gave the pupils the opportunity to reflect on events that affect the school and the local community.

Councillor Alun Mummery reported that he attended a Collective Worship session at Ysgol Llanfairpwll, which had themes of house on the hill, and house on the sand. He stated that his visit was most enjoyable, seeing the pupils responding well at the school, and demonstrating a sound background in RE.

The Chair reported that he attended a Collective Worship session in Ysgol y Talwrn, which was excellent. The pupils celebrated the Hindu festival Diwali, and read Bible stories.

The Chair encouraged members of the SACRE to attend Collective Worship sessions in schools. Councillor Alun Roberts confirmed that he has arranged to observe a Collective Worship session at Ysgol Santes Dwynwen, Newborough.

- It was noted that the issue of disparity between examination papers and the volume of work in the RE Agreed Syllabus compared to other subjects was raised by the RE Advisor and other SACREs in the WASACRE meeting in Aberaeron. It was reported that WJEC still refuse to acknowledge the issue. With regard to a lack of teaching resources in Welsh, emails were shared with teachers to distribute resources and ideas.

The SACRE's teacher representatives reported that pupil numbers have decreased significantly in RE at GCSE level due to the heavy workload. It was reported that in one school, the uptake on pupils studying GCSE has decreased from between 50 and 60 pupils in previous years to 18 this year. It was highlighted that pupils discuss the subject together, and relay the message that the RE syllabus is too onerous compared to other subjects.

Members of the SACRE expressed concern regarding the downward trend in pupils studying RE. It was noted that the SACRE had raised concerns with Welsh Government two years ago regarding the volume of work in RE. To date, there has been no response from WJEC.

RESOLVED to request that Mr Rheinallt Thomas raises the SACRE's concerns again in the next WASACRE meeting regarding the RE GCSE Agreed Syllabus, as previous attempts have been inconclusive.

3. ANGLESEY SACRE'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2018/19

The Anglesey SACRE's Annual Report for 2018/19 was presented before the SACRE for adoption.

The Chair thanked the RE Advisor and Clerk to the SACRE for preparing the Annual Report, which was adopted by the SACRE, subject to minor changes being made.

RESOLVED:-

- **To accept the information presented and adopt the Anglesey SACRE's Annual Report for 2018/19.**
- **That a final copy of the Anglesey SACRE's Annual Report for 2018/19 be forwarded to Welsh Government for information.**

4. THE OPERATIONAL PANEL FOR SCHOOLS' SACRE - TERMS OF REFERENCE AND ACTION PLAN 2020/22

The RE Advisor reported that an Operational Panel for Schools' SACRE has been established to assist the SACRE in monitoring RE in schools. The Panel consists of seven teacher representatives from the primary and secondary sector, three of whom are SACRE members. The RE Advisor is looking into whether two members of the Panel from the primary sector, Mr Rhys Hearn and Ms Elin Owen can become non-church teacher representatives on the SACRE.

The Panel's Terms of Reference and Action Plan 2020/22 were presented before the SACRE for consideration.

Discussion focused on whether the Panel should review schools' self-evaluation reports, then report back to the SACRE. The SACRE agreed to the proposal.

It was noted that the Panel's role is to encourage the sharing of good practice between schools, thus raising the SACRE and the Panel's profile in schools, as well as for monitoring purposes. The RE Advisor and Clerk to the SACRE will provide guidance to the Panel and present new information and updates from WASACRE, Welsh Government, Estyn, and schools' self-evaluation reports.

The SACRE agreed that the Panel's input is a positive way forward to expand on the SACRE's knowledge and understanding of the work undertaken in schools,

and will provide an insight into what is happening between meetings, particularly in relation to the new curriculum. The RE Advisor reported that she has secured funding for the Panel's teacher representatives to be released from duties.

The RE Advisor reported that the Panel's first meeting was purposeful with regard to RE and the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE) in the new Curriculum for Wales. It was confirmed that the Panel's next meeting will be held in March, when the Panel will review the new Framework for RE and schools' self-evaluation reports, and report back to the SACRE on their findings.

Discussion focused on the need for teachers to have continuity in the transition between the primary and secondary sector. As the new Curriculum for Wales is relevant to pupils from ages 3 to 16 years, secondary school teachers need to be aware of the level of work that has been completed in primary schools. It was noted that good communication is essential between staff who will be delivering the Curriculum for Wales.

It was noted that St Mary's Catholic School, Holyhead has a different reporting process for RE, and is not represented on the Operational Panel for Schools' SACRE. It was suggested that the Clerk to the SACRE contacts Mr Richard Jones, the Head teacher, to ask whether Mr Jones would consider becoming a member of the Panel.

RESOLVED:-

- **To accept the Operational Panel for Schools' SACRE's Terms of Reference as presented.**
- **To agree that the Operational Panel reviews schools' self-evaluation reports, and presents its observations to the SACRE.**
- **That the Clerk to the SACRE writes to Mr Richard Jones, the Head Teacher of St Mary's School, Holyhead, to invite him to join the Operational Panel for Schools' SACRE.**

Copies of the SACRE's Action Plan were shared at the meeting. The RE Advisor reported that the Action Plan will be part of the Education Department's Business Plan, and will be monitored. With regard to the three priorities in the Action Plan, the following points were noted:-

- The Panel will need to establish whether all schools participate in RE and Collective Worship.
- The Panel will bring about positive changes by discussing RE matters within the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE) and Health and Well-being as part of the new curriculum, in common with a strong RE framework.
- It was noted that secondary teachers are proficient in RE, and can plan for the new curriculum with increased confidence when working jointly with the primary sector.
- It was suggested that a platform be created to share good practice and resources in RE and collective worship within Addysg Môn.

RESOLVED to note and accept the recommendations in the SACRE's draft Action Plan 2020-2022.

5. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STANDARDS

Estyn inspection reports undertaken at Ysgol Goronwy Owen, Benllech and Ysgol Rhyd y Llan, Llanfaethlu were presented for the SACRE's consideration.

The Clerk to the SACRE confirmed that standards are good in both schools, and that there were no issues arising.

The Clerk to the SACRE reported that Ysgol Goronwy Owen promotes pupils' spiritual, moral and social development successfully, and pupils develop as conscientious and confident learners with good independent working skills.

The Estyn inspection report for Ysgol Rhyd y Llan states that pupils interact well with each other and respect each other's views. Pupils have positive attitudes to their work and most make sound progress. Staff create a caring, happy and inclusive ethos at the school, in which everyone is respected and valued.

Recommendations for improvement were presented by Estyn for both schools, and each school will produce an Action Plan to address the matters raised.

RESOLVED to note the information presented in the Estyn inspection reports.

6. SCHOOLS' SELF-EVALUATION REPORTS

Schools' self-evaluation reports were presented by Ysgol Y Fali and Ysgol Rhoscolyn.

The Head Teacher at Ysgol y Fali reported that RE standards are good in the school. He stated that by the end of the Foundation Phase, most pupils can talk about their feelings, actions and opinions. By Year 5 and 6 in Key Stage 2, many pupils can explain how their feelings, actions and opinions impact on their lives.

Ysgol Rhoscolyn's self-evaluation report states that standards in RE are satisfactory at the school, and that some areas require attention. The Head Teacher explained that most pupils have a positive and healthy attitude towards RE, and willingly participate in discussions that include moral, well-being and spiritual themes. It was noted that the standard of RE teaching, and the contribution of RE towards pupils development is generally good at the school.

It was noted that some terminology used in Ysgol Rhoscolyn's self-evaluation report was incorrect. The SACRE suggested that the Operational Panel for Schools' SACRE offers its support to the school regarding the matter.

RESOLVED that the Operational Panel for Schools' SACRE informs Ysgol Rhoscolyn of the correct terminology to use in schools' self-evaluation reports.

The RE Advisor reported that although several self-evaluation reports have been received recently, only two have been presented before the SACRE to limit the workload on the agenda. She suggested that the Panel reviews the remaining schools' self-evaluation reports, and reports back to the SACRE with examples of good practice and excellence, and informs the SACRE of areas which may need improving.

It was noted that this methodology would enable the SACRE to focus and monitor specific areas and points raised by the Panel. Previously, when the SACRE reviewed schools' self-evaluation reports, no further action was taken. By utilising the expertise of the Panel to assess the reports, good points can be raised, and matters for improvement can be addressed.

Concerns were raised by the SACRE that there is a lack of evidence to support responses from schools in self-evaluation reports, and more evidenced based information needs to be presented, rather than a tick box exercise. It was noted that the SACRE can assist schools to develop and improve standards in RE by analysing feedback from schools. It was noted that currently, there is no certainty that the standards reported are correct.

The Chair suggested that the Panel observes best practice through WASACRE in relation to the accuracy of information presented in schools' self-evaluation reports. It was also suggested that the Panel reviews the format and narrative of self-evaluation forms in due course.

RESOLVED:-

- **To note the RE schools' self-evaluation reports presented.**
- **That the Operational Panel for Schools' SACRE reviews schools' self-evaluation reports in the first instance, and presents its observations to the SACRE.**
- **That the Panel observes best practice through WASACRE, to confirm that standards reported in schools' self-evaluation reports are correct.**

7. THE NEW CURRICULUM FOR WALES 2022

The RE Advisor reported that the draft version of the new Curriculum for Wales 2022 has been published, and members of the SACRE will be forwarded a link to access the document.

It was noted that the SACRE has already consulted on the draft Framework for RE, but will need to consult further on a public consultation once the Framework is published.

The Chair reported that Libby Jones, the RE Advisor for Wrexham has arranged an extraordinary meeting in Wrexham for North Wales SACREs to meet to discuss the Framework for RE on 26 March 2020. The Chair responded that SACREs need support from specialists with subject expertise to explain the Framework, and prepare a response for all the North Wales SACREs.

RESOLVED that the Clerk to the SACRE invites the SACRE's members to attend a meeting at 10.30am on 26 March 2020 in Ysgol Clywedog, Wrexham.

8. WALES ASSOCIATION OF SACRES (WASACRE)

The draft minutes of the WASACRE meeting held in Aberaeron on 21 November 2019 were presented for information.

The Chair thanked the RE Advisor for attending the WASACRE meeting.

The Chair requested nominations for the WASACRE's Executive Committee. No nominations were received from the Anglesey SACRE.

The SACRE discussed and noted the contents of letters from the Chair of the WASACRE in relation to RE at Key Stage 4, and the RE Framework for 2022.

RESOLVED to note the information presented by the WASACRE.

9. CORRESPONDENCE

Mr Chris Thomas, a SACRE member, who was absent from the meeting, had forwarded information to the SACRE on the Catholic Education Service (CES) and Worldview and Religions.

The Chair thanked Mr Thomas for his input, and stated that he had raised a number of goods points.

10. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the SACRE is scheduled for Tuesday, 23 June 2020 at 2.00pm.

The meeting concluded at 3.30 pm

**COUNCILLOR DYLAN REES
CHAIR**