

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

Minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2020

PRESENT: Councillor Dylan Rees (Chair)

The Education Authority

Councillors Glyn Haynes, Gwilym O Jones,
Alun W Mummery, Alun Roberts

The Religious Denominations

Rev Jim Clarke (Union of Welsh Independents)
Mrs Anest Frazer (The Church in Wales)
Mr Gerald Hewitson (The Quakers)
Mr Christopher Thomas (The Roman Catholic Church)

Teacher Representatives

Mrs Mefys Jones-Edwards (Ysgol Syr Thomas
Jones, Amlwch)
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)
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:

Mrs Catherine Jones (The Baptist Union of Wales)
Mrs Heledd Hearn (Ysgol Uwchradd Bodedern)
Mrs Helen Bebb (Member of the Operational Panel
for Schools' SACRE)

The Chair reported that Mrs Catherine Jones, a member of the Ynys Môn SACRE who could not attend today's meeting, has sent a message to the SACRE stating that Mrs Debra Stammers from Holyhead, who is a part-time minister for the Baptist Union of Wales in Holyhead, is happy to attend schools or participate in any activities on behalf of the SACRE, by appointment. Mrs Stammers will be ordained to a Reverend in the near future.

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None received.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting of the SACRE held on 25 February 2020 were presented and confirmed as correct.

Matters arising from the minutes:-

- Mr Rheinallt Thomas reported that progress has been made since he raised the SACRE's concerns in the WASACRE's last meeting on 7 October 2020, regarding the volume of work schools have to undertake in the RE Agreed Syllabus. Mrs Mefys Jones-Edwards reported that WJEC have responded to the concerns raised, and modified the GCSE and AS Level syllabuses by reducing the workload for schools. She stated that pupils now have a choice of choosing 3 out of 4 units in the RE syllabus in Years 10 and 11, compared to 4 units previously. Although it is evident that schools were pleased with WJEC's response, the teachers expressed concern for the future of RE once the Covid-19 pandemic has passed, and what will happen post 2021. The teachers and the SACRE felt it will be necessary to relay their concerns again to WJEC.
- It was confirmed that Mr Richard Jones, the Head Teacher of St Mary's School, Holyhead will be joining the Operational Panel for Schools' SACRE.
- It was agreed that Rev Jim Clarke will represent both the Union of Welsh Independents and the Presbyterian Church of Wales on the SACRE.
- It was confirmed that the Operational Panel for Schools' SACRE will be contacting Rhoscolyn School to provide assistance on the correct terminology to use when preparing schools' self-evaluation reports.

RESOLVED:-

- **That the RE Advisor to the SACRE writes to WJEC thanking them for addressing the Ynys Môn SACRE's concerns, but also expressing the Committee's concerns for the future of RE in 2022.**
- **That a copy of the letter be sent to Linda Maddock, the WJEC's RE Officer.**

3. UPDATE BY THE RE ADVISOR TO THE SACRE

The RE Advisor reported that data for the Ynys Môn SACRE's Annual Report has been collated and analysed. She stated that progress has been slower than

anticipated, and the Annual Report will be different to previous years, due to Covid-19, and pupils not sitting examinations. It was noted that the Annual Report will be presented to this Committee's next meeting in February 2021.

Discussion focused on the Curriculum for Wales 2022, and the proposal to change the name RE to Religion, Values and Ethics as part of the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE). The new curriculum will be delivered with the aid of the new Supporting Framework for RE, and schools will need to design and implement their own curriculum. It was noted that currently the Framework is in the process of being finalised by Welsh Government.

Concerns were raised that there will be risks with the new curriculum if schools do not put sufficient emphasis on all subjects. With regard to RE, the subject will have to compete with History and Geography in the Humanities AoLE to have a place in schools, and there may be a danger that RE will be weakened further. It was noted that although the curriculum is positive in its thematic approach, the SACRE felt that themes are not sharp enough, and careful planning will be necessary to adapt the curriculum. It was further noted that RE is more at risk than other subjects, as there are fewer teachers who are specialists in this field, and there is less training provision for RE teachers.

The current timetable is continuing despite Covid-19, and the new curriculum will be implemented in 2022. The Operational Panel for Schools' SACRE will work to ensure that RE is not lost amongst the other subjects.

Discussion focused on the challenges facing SACREs in their role within the new curriculum. SACREs will need to monitor and advise schools, and offer their support to ensure that due time is given to the subject. SACREs should regard the new curriculum not as an obligation, but as an opportunity to help schools see a wider vision of the world.

RESOLVED to note the information presented.

4. SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

The RE Advisor reported on the following:-

- The Operational Panel for Schools' SACRE held its first formal meeting on 11 March 2020, and scrutinised self-evaluation reports presented by Ysgol Goronwy Owen, Valley Community School, Rhoscolyn School, Ysgol y Tywyn and Llanfawr School. Discussion also focused on the proposed new name for RE, to obtain the views of teachers and schools on the topic. It was noted that no further meetings have been held to date, but it is hoped that the Operational Panel can re-start the process soon.
- It was noted that the RE Advisor and co-opted member attended a NAPfRE meeting. The views of those present were sought on the consultation for a new name for RE, namely Religion, Values and Ethics. Resources for schools were shared at the meeting, which have now been circulated to schools on Anglesey.
- The SACRE responded to the Consultation on the curriculum by writing a letter to show the SACRE's dissatisfaction that the questions were difficult to

understand and were inconsequential.

- Mr Owain Davies, Education Officer has joined the Operational Panel to oversee the Panel's work.
- Mrs Helen Roberts, from Bangor University, who is also a member of the Operational Panel, will be invited to attend the next SACRE meeting in February to present an overview of the Panel's work within schools.
- Funds have been made available for members of the Operational Panel to be released from duties during meetings and training sessions.
- With reference to the SACRE's Action Plan 2020-22, it was confirmed that an electronic platform has been created for schools to share resources and good practice in RE, together with the SACRE and Operational Panel's work within schools. The SACRE agreed that the platform was an excellent idea, which would raise the SACRE and the Operational Panel's profile in schools, and provide schools with an opportunity to develop their work and share their ideas.
- The Church in Wales Diocese and GwE have been working together to share resources with schools. The Church felt that children need support with Collective Worship, as they are missing out on daily practices in schools. The Church have been recording Welsh medium Collective Worship sessions, which GwE have circulated to schools. Mrs Anest Frazer has agreed to forward the above resources to Owain Davies for the Operational Panel.

Concerns were raised that teachers no longer have the option to attend courses managed by WJEC, due to the pandemic. Instead, they are invited to attend two-hour Webinar sessions for GCSEs and A Levels, which are held on different days. It was noted that each Webinar session costs £100 to attend, which amounts to £300 per subject, which some schools cannot afford, and teachers lose out.

It was highlighted that since WJEC has been privatised, it is now run as a business rather than a service, which may not be as effective for schools. It was noted that WJEC have uploaded learning resources for schools on their website for each subject. The resources for GCSE are good, and continue to be developed, and are available for pupils to work from home.

A member raised a question as to whether the SACRE could get its own budget to help fund Webinars? It was agreed to wait for further feedback from teachers who have attended Webinar sessions before raising the question of funding.

RESOLVED:-

- **To note the information presented.**
- **To invite Mrs Helen Roberts from the Operational Panel of Schools' SACRE to attend the SACRE's next meeting.**
- **Mrs Mefys Jones-Edwards to provide an update on the use of Webinar sessions at the SACRE's next meeting.**

5. WALES ASSOCIATION OF SACRES (WASACRE)

Mr Rheinallt Thomas reported on the main points discussed in the WASACRE's virtual meeting held on 7 October 2020.

Reference was made to the Supporting Framework for RE. It was highlighted that the delay in publishing the Framework has been brought about by Welsh Government's Legal Department, who have had to respond to additional challenges with new legislation during the pandemic. It was noted that the Framework has been available since June, for circulation to SACREs. The WASACRE agreed to write to Welsh Government to express concerns regarding the lack of action and delay in sharing the Framework with the SACREs, and its subsequent publication. A question was raised whether the calendar for implementing the new curriculum in schools should be deferred, as the Framework will be the guideline for the curriculum.

There is uncertainty whether RE will be called Religion, Values and Ethics. The term Religion and Worldviews rather than Ethics is favoured by some.

Discussion focused on whether non-religious groups should be permitted to join SACREs? It was suggested by Welsh Government that an additional SACRE group might be formed and labelled Group Aa for non-religious groups, whilst the current SACRE would be known as Group A. Representatives from religious backgrounds have been in disagreement with Welsh Government in trying to resolve the issue of non-religious groups representing SACREs. Mr Thomas had put forward a suggested that the new draft of the local government act should reflect the locality and its community members.

The SACRE were updated on appointments to the WASACRE Executive, Annual meeting and Treasurer's report.

RESOLVED to note the information presented in the WASACRE minutes.

6. NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of the SACRE will be held on Tuesday, 16 February 2021.

7. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was RESOLVED:-

Under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, to exclude the press and public from the meeting during discussion on the following item on the grounds that it will involve the disclosure of exempt legal advice within the meaning of Schedule 12A (Category 16) of the said Act.

8. CORRESPONDENCE

The Chair reported that he has received a request by the Local Humanist Group to join the Anglesey SACRE.

The SACRE considered the Humanist request, and sought advice from the Solicitor (Corporate Governance) on the options available.

Having regard to the Solicitor's advice, the SACRE **RESOLVED** not to support the appointment on the following grounds:-

- **There are currently no vacancies for new members on the Ynys Môn SACRE;**
- **The Ynys Môn SACRE proposes to review its Constitution, when further details have been published on SACRE memberships in accordance with the legislative changes proposed as part of the Curriculum for Wales developments by Welsh Government.**

The Chair reported that Mrs Margaret Peters, the Clerk to the SACRE will be leaving the Council's Education Department soon, and will be taking up a post with Conwy Council. On behalf of the SACRE, the Chair thanked Mrs Peters for her excellent work as Clerk, and wished her well in her new position.

The meeting concluded at 3.30 pm

**COUNCILLOR DYLAN REES
CHAIR**