

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL (SAC)

Minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2024

PRESENT: Councillor Non Dafydd (Chair)
Councillor Arfon Wyn (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Dylan Rees

The Religious Denominations

Mrs Elaine Green (Presbyterian Church in Wales)
Mr Huw Owen (Presbyterian Church in Wales)
Mrs Collette Owens (The Catholic Church)

Teacher Representatives

Mr Richard Jones (St Mary's Catholic School,
Holyhead) (from 2:30pm)
Mrs Mefys Jones-Edwards (Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones,
Amlwch)
Mrs Manon Morris-Williams (Ysgol Santes Dwynwen)
(from 3:00pm)

Non-Religious Group Members

Sarah Lloyd (Humanists Society) (from 2:10pm)

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr Owen T Davies (Primary Senior Manager, Education) (Clerk
to the SACRE)
Mr Phil Lord (Professional Consultant to the SAC)
Mrs Shirley Cooke (Committee Officer)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Gwilym O Jones
Mr Edward Morus Jones (Union of Welsh Independents)
Rev Neil Ridings (The Church in Wales)
Rev Deborah Stammers (The Baptist Union of Wales)
Mr Owain Roberts (Ysgol Cybi)
Mr Rheinallt Thomas (Co-opted Member)

ALSO PRESENT: Dr Gareth Evans-Jones (National Centre of Religious
Education for Wales) (for Item 5) (from 2:10pm)

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None received.

2. MINUTES

The draft minutes of the previous SAC meeting held on 17 July 2024 were presented and confirmed as correct.

Matters arising from the minutes: -

- A presentation on the work of the National Centre of Religious Education for Wales has been itemised in Item 5 on today's agenda.
- It was confirmed that a copy of the Pilgrimage Project presentation has been shared with the SAC.
- The SAC's draft Annual Report for 2023/24 will be presented to the SAC in Item 4 on today's agenda.
- It was confirmed that discussion is ongoing between the Head of Democracy and Group Leaders regarding the appointment of two new members to the vacant seats on the SAC.

3. WALES ASSOCIATION OF SACRES (WASACRE)

The report on the WASACRE's activities during 2023 and 2024 and Annual General Meeting on 13 June 2024 were presented for information and noted.

The SAC's Professional Consultant attended the WASACRE RVE Conference Day on 13 June 2024 at Wrexham University in collaboration with NAPfRE.

The following points were highlighted from the meeting: -

- Professor Graham Donaldson reported on the importance of RVE within the Curriculum for Wales.
- Lynn Neagle reported on the place RVE has within the Curriculum for Wales and outlined her priorities.
- Breakout seminars were held by schools on the Curriculum for Wales. Reference was made to one school that was participating in an Arts Council Project looking at 'Cynefin'. The school was exploring diversity within its community, and had partnered with a school in Wrexham to work on an art piece on 'identity'. This theme enabled the pupils to explore their identity, who they were, their beliefs, where they had come from, and where they call 'home'.

It was noted that the WASACRE RVE Conference was attended by teachers and practitioners from across Wales. Discussion had focused on governance within SACs, and how SACs provide support and monitor their own schools.

RESOLVED to note the information presented.

(Sarah Lloyd and Dr Gareth Evans-Jones joined the meeting at 2:10pm)

4. THE STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL'S DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2023/24

The SAC's draft Annual Report for 2023/24 was presented before the SAC for

comment.

The Chair introduced the report, and paid tribute to the late Miss Bethan James, the SACRE's RE Advisor, who sadly passed away in January this year. The SAC's Professional Consultant, who worked with Miss James in GwE, thanked the Chair for her kind words.

The Chair highlighted the following points in her summary: -

- Recent changes to the SAC's membership have widened the scope for new members.
- Estyn inspection reports over the past 12 months have shown that standards in RE in Anglesey schools have been excellent.
- The Chair and a SAC member visited Ysgol Bodffordd, and were impressed with how RVE has blended in with lessons naturally at the school. Other SAC members were encouraged to visit schools during the coming year.
- The number of pupils taking GCSE RVE has increased.
- To make a positive contribution to the curriculum by producing a collection of spiritual locations for schools, to be published online.

The SAC's Professional Consultant referred to the following points in the report: -

- The Chair's Summary will be included in Section 1.1 of the report.
- Links to Welsh Government Guidance on the Curriculum for Wales have been included in the report.
- Years 10, 11, 12 and 13 in Anglesey schools are currently using the National Exemplar Framework as their Locally Agreed Syllabus.
- The number of learners taking A Level Religious Studies has dropped since last year.
- Estyn inspected and reported on 7 schools last year.
- The Local Authority has acted on actions requested by the SAC, outlined in Section 2.4 of the report.
- Schools have a duty to provide collective worship sessions in schools. There are resources for schools on the WASACRE website to meet statutory requirements on collective worship.
- The SAC'S template in Section 3.3 for schools' self-evaluation of RE standards refer to RE in the old Estyn Inspection Framework. Estyn has modified its Framework and now has 3 inspection areas compared to 5 previously. The template is outdated and will need to be removed for the next annual report, but may need to be re-written, if schools are looking at RVE through the Estyn lens.
- The inspection area criteria on Page 28 for schools' self-evaluation of RE was relevant during the period of the report but will need to be updated.

The Chair thanked the Director of Education, Primary Senior Manager (Clerk to the SAC), and the SAC's Professional Consultant for their work in preparing the SAC's Annual Report.

RESOLVED: -

- **To note the information presented in the SAC's Annual Report for 2023/24.**
- **To include the Chair's Summary in Section 1.1 of the report.**
- **That the Primary Senior Manager updates the self-evaluation template presented in the report, and,**
- **presents amendments to the template in the SAC's next meeting.**
- **That a copy of the final version of the Anglesey SAC's Annual Report for 2023/24 be forwarded to Welsh Government for information.**

(Mr Richard Jones joined the meeting at 2:30 pm)

5. THE NATIONAL CENTRE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR WALES

Dr Gareth Evans-Jones gave a presentation on the National Centre for RE, which has been supporting teachers and RE since the 1970s. He reported that together with Mrs Mefys Jones-Edwards, he was a part of a team who relaunched the Centre in the National Eisteddfod in 2023. The Centre now represents many different religions and faiths and works to promote education related to those faiths.

The Centre offers many opportunities to engage with schools and faith organisations, which are all free. Recent events include the following: -

- An Easter School was held offering revision sessions for pupils studying GCSE's and A Levels.
- A conference was held in a Carmarthenshire College, which was attended by learners from 7 schools.
- The Vicar of the Anglican Church in Trawsfynydd gave a talk at the Centre, which was attended by 4 schools who joined virtually.
- The Centre has worked with Cardiff University on the Holocaust, where a virtual panel discussed remembering the Holocaust in a digital age. Points raised included whether it is acceptable to use holograms and AI to discuss the Holocaust.

It was noted that the Centre shares information about different thinkers, philosophers and theorists on Instagram. During black history month, information on important black religious figures is posted on Instagram, which link to the opportunities offered by the Curriculum for Wales in creating wider diversity.

On Earth Day quotes are published by different environmentalists. A representative from the Centre is involved in the Peace in Education Project, which was held in the Llangollen Eisteddfod.

The aim of the Centre is to continue to support teachers across Wales and support RE. In addition, the Centre is working with Welsh Government on advisory roles and faith and worldviews establishments. Discussions have also taken place on ways for closer collaboration with the SAC.

Mrs Mefys Jones-Edwards reported that the staff at the Centre have been very helpful in offering support to Anglesey schools, Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones specifically. She stated that secondary school teachers appreciate the support and training sessions that are offered to schools, which are delivered in a fun way. It was noted that the Centre provides excellent resources, which YSTJ pupils have benefitted from by attending sessions. The teacher thanked Mr Evans-Jones and his staff for their work.

A question was raised on how non-religious values are linked with the Centre's work in a positive way? Dr Evans-Jones responded that the staff at the Centre work closely with Humanists UK and have a healthy relationship with the organisation. He stated that the Centre acknowledges and incorporates non-religious worldviews into their work, as an integral part of the New Curriculum. It was noted that a Humanist representative will attend the Interfaith Panel Day at Bangor University on 13 November 2024, where lesser worldviews will also be represented.

A question was raised as to whether the Centre was involved in teaching contextual theology at degree or postgraduate level? Dr Evans-Jones responded that he lectures in Theology and Comparative Theology in the Philosophy, Ethics and Religion Department of Bangor University. He stated that the subjects are so diverse that they enable lecturers to align with the new Curriculum for Wales. He stated that this year he is teaching Christian Theologies in the Modern World. Next year, he will be teaching Humanism, and the following year Paganism in the post-modern world.

A question was raised as to whether there are any projects on the theme of Peace in Education, or whether the children do artwork on the topic? Dr Evans-Jones reported that there has been a Peace in Education Project specifically for pupils in Year 7, 8 and 9. He stated that he would like to expand the project with the Peace Academy for Wales and would take the proposal to the Centre's Board members. It would enable schools to engage with the community and the whole Island to ensure that learners can reflect on the theme in a creative manner.

The Chair thanked Mr Gareth Evans-Jones for his informative overview of the Centre's work and what it has to offer, which is a very useful resource for Anglesey schools.

RESOLVED to note the information presented.

6. ANGLESEY SAC MEMBER'S VISIT TO A SECONDARY SCHOOL

The Primary Senior Manager reported that arrangements had been made for a member of the SAC to visit a secondary school on Anglesey. Unfortunately, the school was unable to accommodate that visit and withdrew their invitation.

The Chair and Vice-Chair reported that they would be happy to attend a school visit.

RESOLVED that the Primary Senior Manager arranges a visit to a

secondary school on Anglesey in due course.

(Mrs Manon Morris-Williams joined the meeting at 3:00pm)

7. SECONDARY SCHOOLS UPDATE AND GCSE RELIGIOUS STUDIES DRAFT SPECIFICATION

Mrs Mefys Jones-Edwards reported on her experience of teaching Religious Studies in Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones, Amlwch. She stated that her school has a high uptake in the number of pupils choosing the subject for GCSE and A Level.

In terms of the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience subjects, the teacher reported that the big question is dealt with in a disciplinary manner. She stated that she teaches Religion, Values and Ethics, whilst the History and Geography specialists teach their individual subjects, and the Business teacher provides input on the subject. It was noted that in YSTJ pupils do a lot of work on the subject: they look at books, the teacher questions the pupils and listens to them, which creates strong foundations in preparation for GCSEs.

The teacher reported that to introduce the big question in Humanities requires a lot of planning. Every Humanities teacher needs to be up to date on what the other teachers within the subject are teaching, to enable the subjects to tie in together to get the big picture. At the end of each big question, different teachers can respond to every Humanities subject. Teachers will need to see the link between subjects to meet the requirements of the New Curriculum. She stated that it is possible to choose your direction, and discussions are held regularly between teachers and pupils. The teacher stated that she is very passionate about RS and wants the new specification to be implemented correctly, so that her pupils reach the standard.

The teacher expressed concern that the new Draft Specification for GCSE is heavy and detailed, although some elements tie in with the Curriculum for Wales. She invited members of the SAC to visit YSTJ to speak to the learners and observe their work.

The SAC's Professional Consultant reported that WJEC has kept the Religious Studies aspect, rather than change the qualification to RVE GCSE. He stated that concerns have been expressed that pupils are not prepared for GCSE in Years 7, 8 and 9, and miss out on the breadth of the lenses because they are being prepared for GCSE. This could narrow the curriculum and pupils could miss out on exciting opportunities in Years 7, 8 and 9 because Christianity and the 5 big belief systems are still currently in use. It was noted that there will be an opportunity in one of the units to discuss Paganism, for example, but not across the whole GCSE.

RESOLVED to note the information presented.

8. ANY OTHER ISSUES SPECIFIC TO THE SAC

A question was raised regarding the Anglesey SAC reporting on Section 50 inspections for RE, as voluntary aided denominational schools have separate

inspections for RE.

The SAC's Professional Consultant stated that reporting on Section 50 inspections is not within the remit of the SAC but would now be welcome due to the relationship between the different sectors as a result of the Curriculum for Wales and guidance document. In terms of SACRE voting, approval would need to be sought from the Church in Wales, the Catholic Sector and the SAC. It was noted that the Church in Wales schools have not been inspected since before Covid.

- The Chair reported that she has received an e-mail from a teacher on Anglesey seeking clarity of the statutory requirements for RE in Key Stage 4.

The SAC's Professional Consultant reported that the statutory entitlement is up to 16 years of age. He stated that all pupils in Years 10 and 11 must be taught RVE or Religious Studies. If a pupil is taught RVE then that replaces RS. If pupils are not taking RS, then they would have to abide by the Agreed Syllabus.

- The Chair reported that there has been an increase in hate crime and religion. She suggested that a member of the North Wales Police be invited to give a presentation on hate crime. She stated that she had received communication from the Diversity, Equality and Hate and Crime Officer, and requested the Committee's views.

RESOLVED

- **That the Primary Senior Manager contacts Jenny Downs from the Church in Wales to seek approval for the SAC to include the Church's Section 50 reports as part of SAC's evaluations of school inspections.**
- **That the Primary Senior Manager invites the Diversity, Equality and Hate Crime Officer to attend the SAC's next meeting in February to present an overview of the Police Officer's work.**

9. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the SAC's next meeting will be held on Thursday, 13 February 2025 at 2:00 pm.

The meeting concluded at 3:40 pm

**COUNCILLOR NON DAFYDD
CHAIR**