

Attendance

<p>Ynys Môn / Anglesey Rheinallt Thomas (RT) Phil Lord (PL)</p> <p>Blaenau Gwent Chris Abbas (CA) Kathy Riddick (KR)</p> <p>Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr / Bridgend Alice Parry (AP) Edward Evans (EE)</p> <p>Caerffili/ Caerphilly Jayne MacFarlane (JM) Sarah McErlaine (SM) Eifion ap Llwyd Dafydd (ELD)</p> <p>Caerdydd / Cardiff Rheinallt Thomas (RT)</p> <p>Sir Gaerfyrddin / Carmarthenshire Jennifer Harding-Richards (JHR)</p> <p>Ceredigion Rhianydd James (RJ)</p> <p>Conwy Phil Lord (PL)</p>	<p>Sir Ddinbych / Denbighshire Phil Lord (PL) Jennie Downes (JD)</p> <p>Sir y Fflint / Flintshire Vicky Barlow (VB) Trevor Dobson (TB) Dave Mackie (DM)</p> <p>Gwynedd</p> <p>Merthyr Tudful / Merthyr Tydfil Donna Graves (DG)</p> <p>Sir Fynwy / Monmouthshire Louise Brown (LB) Rachel Buckler (RB)</p> <p>Castell-nedd Port Talbot / Neath and Port Talbot Nia Jenkins (NJ) Rachel Samuel (RS)</p> <p>Casnewydd / Newport Neeta Baicher (NB) Huw Stephens (HS)</p>	<p>Powys</p> <p>Rhondda Cynon Taf Matthew Maidment (MM)</p> <p>Torfaen Hayley Jones (HJ)</p> <p>Bro Morgannwg / Vale of Glamorgan Naomi Marshallsea (NM) Elizabeth Jones (EJ) Tyler Saunders (TS) Fran Wright (FW) Rhiannon Birch (RB)</p> <p>Wrecsam / Wrexham Tania ap Siôn (TS) Libby Jones (LJ)</p> <p>CSC Donna Graves (DG)</p> <p>EAS Hayley Jones (DG)</p> <p>Mike Head</p> <p>Alison</p>	<p>NAPfRVE Phil Lord (PL) Donna Graves (DG)</p> <p>EFTRE Phil Lord (PL)</p> <p>Observers</p> <p>WJEC Andrew Pearce (AP) Chris Owens (CO) Paul Morgan (PM)</p> <p>ESTYN Gwawr Meirion (GM)</p> <p>REC Kathy Riddick (KR) Libby Jones (LJ)</p> <p>Church in Wales Lisa Taylor (LT)</p> <p>Catholic Education Service Angella Keller (AK)</p> <p>WLGA Elin Stock (ES)</p> <p>Qualification Wales (QW) June Jenkins (JJ)</p> <p>Interfaith Network</p> <p>ADEW</p> <p>Minutes (from recording) Jo Nicholls (JN)</p> <p>Translator: Sioned Jones (SJ)</p>
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Minutes of the meeting

1. Introduction and welcome

EE welcomed members to the autumn meeting and thanked Vale of Glamorgan LA and its SACRE for hosting the meeting. EE welcomed the representatives from Vale of Glamorgan; Councillor Naomi Marshallsea, Mayor of the Vale of Glamorgan, Liz Jones, Director of Learning and Skills and Rhiannon Birch, Cabinet Member for Education Art of the Welsh Language.

Councillor Marshallsea gave the following welcome:

I am delighted and truly honoured to open today's meeting and welcome the Wales Association of SACREs to the Vale of Glamorgan local authority. We are hosting today's meeting, and I'd like to hand over to Liz Jones, Director of Learning and Skills, who will be welcoming you all today.

Liz Jones gave the following introduction:

Today brings together a community deeply committed to shaping the educational experiences of our children and young people. A community that understands the profound significance of the curriculum for RVE within our national mission for education. RVE is about more than just subject content. It is about operationalising our moral purpose, creating inclusive schools that are genuinely welcoming, appreciative of diversity and eager to provide optimum learning environments, where every learner, whatever their background, beliefs or life experiences, feels recognised, respected and able to thrive in a world where identities, beliefs and values intersect in complex ways. Our work has never been more important, and through thoughtful, well-designed curricula, we can foster curiosity rather than fear, empathy rather than division, and understanding rather than assumption. We help learners encounter difference with confidence, engage in dialogue with respect and contribute to communities with kindness. This is the essence of inclusive education, and it is a responsibility we all share. Central to this is the pivotal role of our own local authorities, and undoubtedly, the leadership guidance and steadfast commitment enable schools to receive the support that they need. Without partnership expertise and advocacy, the aspirations of the RVE could not be realised in practice. Today is a celebration of that shared purpose. I think it's an opportunity to reflect on our active achievements.

I just want to thank everybody for the passion, the dedication and professionalism that you all bring to this vital work, because together, we are shaping not just a curriculum, but a Wales that is more understanding, more inclusive and more compassionate.

EE thanked the Vale of Glamorgan for hosting.

2. Quiet reflection

EE led a reflection on the creation of the world and continued with a reflection on times of despair and thanks, emphasizing the importance of gratitude.

3. Apologies

Apologies received from Keith Evans, Jon Mitson and Emily Lloyd.

4. Minutes of the last meeting, Zoom, (2nd July 2025)

The minutes were reviewed and are to be amended as follows:

- Jennifer Harding-Richards, Carmarthenshire to be added to the apologies.
- RT mentioned that Non Dafydd (ND) is a County Councillor and the Chair of Anglesey SACRE / SAC, and not an adviser as stated in the minutes.
- Rhys Evans confirmed as a member of Caerphilly SACRE / SAC.

With these amendments made, RS proposed and PL seconded that the minutes are a true accurate record.

EE, the Chair, will sign the minutes to indicate that it is the final version and provide this signed copy to AP for filing

5. Matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting, (2nd July 2025)

No new matters arising outside of the current meeting's agenda.

6. NAPfRVE presentation

Presentation on GCSE Religious Studies

Chris Owens, WJEC, provided an overview of GCSE religious studies, the legacy 2017 specification, highlighting the core subjects of Christianity and Catholic Christianity with Islam and Judaism having the larger entries for world religions studied. CO shared statistics on entry figures and centre numbers, over the past 6 years, emphasising the importance of the qualification.

CO mentioned that RS teachers should be rightly proud of the number of candidates that have completed the qualification.

WJEC works in partnership with Welsh Government (WG) and Qualifications Wales. (QW). Christianity or Catholic Christianity remains a core within the new specification; with all students to study one world religion. The one key difference between what will now be the legacy qualification and the new qualification is the focus on NEA.

A question was raised about the reasons for the decline in Sikhism entries. CO responded that there is no data available to explain the decline.

JHR: Asked if there is any data to compare entries of RS GCSE with geography and history. CO mentioned that data is available on the internet and that he will investigate this.

LB: Expressed concern about the fact that there isn't the short GCSE available, is there any possibility of that ever being reintroduced?

CO: The Welsh Government decided to withdraw the GCSE short course. There was a consultation.

RS: Confirmed with the development of new qualifications, short courses will not exist in any subject within the Welsh curriculum.

MM: Asked whether WJEC has links with BBC in terms of the 'BBC Bite Size', and are WJEC likely to produce resources for the new specification?

CO: Yes, WJEC have links with BBC and BBC's plan is to develop new resources.

Presentation on AS and A Level Religious Studies

Andrew Pierce, WJEC, discussed the impact of COVID-19 on entry numbers for AS and A level religious studies and the subsequent recovery.

AP highlighted the popularity of Buddhism at A level following by Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism and shared statistics on A level results, noting the higher A star rates achieved post-COVID.

Thanked RS teachers for their dedication and hard work in achieving these results.

EE thanked CO and AP for their support at the WASACRE meetings

ACTION: Both presentations to be forwarded to LJ for circulation to WASACRE Committee members.

7. Welsh Government [WG] matters

Usual termly meetings with Welsh Government (WG) colleagues

A meeting was held on 5th November. It was a very full meeting attended by WASACRE representatives: EE, RS, LJ, AP and TaS. The WG representatives were Sam Clinton, Clare Hubberfield and Pauline Smith.

The following agenda points were discussed:

1. **SACRE Annual Reports** - the WG identified that there were differences in the reports received. WG agreed to rewrite the guidance on the content of the annual reports. This is now in the hands of the Minister. WG agreed to liaise with WASACRE and NAPfRVE.
2. **The restart of the work with Max White** - how to increase the number of RS teachers and how to retain teachers. LJ is in touch with MW and will follow up with more detail when available.
3. **National help for planning the local curriculum and assessment** - WG is opening training to partners and local authorities. WG will share further information, WASACRE will have the opportunity to become a partner.
4. **Approval panel for professional learning** - approval will continue by WG but needs to investigate further how it will happen. WASACRE is awaiting more details.

5. **Schools publishing their provision for RVE** - WG confirmed that there is no specific guidance. It is the schools' decision whether to publish. WG suggested it is good practice to share information with parents.
RS reminded the group of the legal position that Circular 10/94 still exists but only relevant to those aspects that don't fall under the new legislation. Collective worship still sits within Circular 10/94, nearly everything else to do with RVE and SACREs / SACs is under the new legislation.
6. **Complaints about RVE and the right to withdraw received by WG** - WG acknowledged misinformation has been shared through social media. WG responds to all complaints individually in a factual way, citing the guidance. WG commented that schools are responding to complaints in a positive way. WG made it clear that LAs are to respond in their own way.
A meeting is to be held with PL and Sam Clutton to continue the discussion on handling complaints.
7. **Mandatory RVE to years 10 and 11** – WASACRE mentioned to WG that two of the awarding bodies of the skills suite had asked WASACRE to provide feedback on the content of the units relevant to RVE. (LJ will discuss this at Item 9). WASACRE have raised concerns regarding:
- Some of the content and the confusing messages which don't apply to RVE.
 - The fact that the skills units for RVE are very scarce in the whole suite.
 - The fact that schools don't have to offer RVE.
 - The risk that schools won't be addressing the mandatory requirement as a whole and the subsequent implications.
 - If mandatory RVE does not take place in schools, what evidence can be used to prove these concerns?
 - The right of students in years 10 and 11 to continue to study RVE.
 - The new performance measures being developed by WG are in draft form. Once consultation is completed, WG will ask WASACRE for feedback (estimated in the new year). Consider if there is something there for the mandatory requirements in the curriculum and RVE in years 10 and 11 that schools can report back on. This discussion is ongoing.

TD: How big an issue is the complaints on the right to withdraw?

RS: No figures provided but as WG doesn't want to publish standardised responses, it suggests it is a small number of complaints.

HS and RB: Expressed their concern about year 10 and 11 RVE teaching and how difficult it will be to motivate learners.

RS: Agreed and confirmed that WASACRE Exec is very concerned and continues to discuss this with WG. Suggested it would be good to have evidence from SACREs on what is happening locally.

RS mentioned that WASACRE is on the Directory of Advisors for the awarding bodies who are developing the skills suites.

RS thanked RB for sharing the letters he has sent to Welsh Government. WASACRE have forwarded RB's concerns directly to Sam Clutton and awaiting further response from her. It is a continuing discussion.

LJ: Confirmed that it is the SACRE's responsibility to advise the LA and it is the local authority's responsibility to conduct the monitoring. SACRE's can advise the local authority on what they should be doing, and it is the LA that should be offering the support for schools and monitoring mandatory RVE. If there are any issues with the local authority not being able to do that e.g. not having a dedicated advisor, etc, this needs to be taken up by the SACRE with the LA. If needed WASACRE can provide SACREs with support.

8. WASACRE supported research - The Teacher Voice Project: RVE in the Curriculum for Wales

The teacher's voice project survey on RVE is being supported by WASACRE in two main ways. Firstly, WASACRE has been promoting and distributing the survey and secondly, WASACRE will be helping to disseminate the findings through Wales.

The aim of the survey is to gain insights into how teachers in Wales involved in RVE are engaging with the curriculum changes at this early stage of the curriculum rollout. It is hoped that the research is going to contribute to professional dialogue and professional learning. It is an inductive qualitative study and will shape future research questions locally and nationally.

A full bilingual report is to be published at the end of the Spring term, plus two or three articles in peer reviewed journals.

There will also be presentations at conferences and symposia in Wales and beyond Wales. Three have already been conducted:

- 23rd June 2025 - A research learning community which meets regularly at Liverpool cathedral.
- 28th July 2025 - International Seminar on Religious Education and Values
- 9th September 2025 - British Educational Research Association Annual Conference

The survey is closed and a general analysis of the closed responses by school type has been undertaken. Currently the open questions are being coded and analysed.

There will be an online launch of the report for WASACRE members and WASACRE associates w/c 23rd March 2026. An invite to an online seminar is to be sent to SACREs and WASACRE associates.

9. Qualifications

June Jenkins (QW) thanked WASACRE for the opportunity to report at the meeting.

JJ reported the following:

The six awarding bodies that will be offering all the units of the Skills for Life and Work Qualifications are:

- Agored Cymru
- King's Trust
- Open Awards
- Pearson
- TLM
- WJEC

The awarding bodies have gone through a robust process to show that they can offer the qualifications. The qualifications are in development. The timeline for delivery varies depending on the awarding body. QW will receive the first submissions from now until the end of March 2026. QW will provide regulatory feedback, which will be very detailed, and will explain where there is non-compliance with the approval criteria.

All approvals are to be made by September 2026. Specifications for the qualifications are to be published in September 2026, allowing schools and centres a year to plan and to understand the specification. Everything is on track at the moment.

In terms of the qualifications that currently exist, we have gone through a process which determined which qualifications would or wouldn't be available going forward, and we have issued that information, and it is published on the QW website.

In terms of the end dates of the qualifications that will no longer be allowed, schools, colleges, etc, will be able to take these qualifications right up until the cohort that begins in 2026. With the proviso that the awarding bodies themselves choose to do so. The end dates of qualifications are displayed on QW website <https://www.qiw.wales/>.

In terms of each of the units within the skills for life and skills for work suite, each unit is a graded pass or fail. Learners can take a various number of units, and they can take them at entry level one, entry level two, entry level three, level one or level two.

This means that once the learners have taken the range of qualification units depending on the levels that they have achieved, and the number of units that they have achieved, an aggregated result will take the form of either an award, a certificate or a diploma. The award being half a GCSE size 60 guided learning hours, a Certificate being 120 guided learning hours, or the equivalent to a GCSE in size and a Diploma being the equivalent of a double GCSE in terms of the number of guided learning hours and the size of it.

If a learner is unable to achieve the requisite number of units to achieve a single award, unit certification is to be offered.

The Directory of Advisory Partners has been given to all awarding bodies. JJ suggested that WASACRE contact any bodies that have not been in touch.

JJ confirmed that it is up to schools which of the six awarding bodies they choose for a qualification.

MM: In terms of the grading, with the Agored Cymru, we have been told that a pass at level two is the equivalent of a B grade at GCSE. Will there be something to compare a grade to a pass in the new suite?

JJ: For various reasons QW is unable to compare different qualification types.

MM: We are currently delivering the Agored Cymru Exploring World Views and thought their final entry date was 2027.

JJ: September 2026 is the last cohort of existing qualifications. Confirmation can be found on the QiW database <https://www.qiw.wales/>.

LJ: WASACRE has only been approached by two awarding bodies so far to give feedback on the RVE related units.

ACTION: WASACRE to email the other awarding bodies offering its support and feedback.

EE: Thanked JJ for the update.

LJ: The WASACRE officers have been approached to give feedback to Agored Cymru and to Pearson and have received outlines of the skills units that are relating to RVE, which are Faiths and Beliefs in the Community, Values for Life and Ethical Choices.

After reviewing, WASACRE has given feedback and has offered examples to include and examples of reading to consider.

WASACRE has kept WG updated in terms of the concerns regarding whether the skills suite units are sufficient for mandatory RVE plus WASACRE's concerns regarding the fact that they are optional for schools to offer and optional for learners to take. In terms of mandatory RVE for all year 10 and year 11 students, the issues remain.

The fact that Agored Cymru Exploring World Views Qualifications has been chosen by QW not to be designated for 2027 is extremely disappointing for schools. It is a new qualification, some schools have only just taken it on this year, and some have been doing it for the past two years. It is the fastest growing qualification, and it has become extremely popular. Teachers have worked extremely hard on producing quality resources and developing rich and purposeful teaching and learning experiences for this set of qualifications. It is a real issue that in 18 months' time they will no longer be needed, it is devastating to our teachers that have put in the hard work and effort.

Some schools are using the suite qualification for PSHE, or the Jigsaw qualification for PSHE throughout the school and in years 10 and 11. Will these two qualifications be designated for use for schools in 2027 as there is some opportunity within those existing qualifications for some RVE themes to be explored.

JJ: Confirmed QW's remit is publicly funded qualifications, and if these qualifications are commercially funded, they are outside of QW's remit.

10. EFTRE Conferences

Tyler Saunders, teacher in Swansea, Head of RS in Bishop Gore and a member of the WASACRE Exec shared a presentation on her experience at the EFTRE conference in Budapest.

TS attended with a fellow teacher and the trip was funded by WASACRE.

The conference theme was 'The Art of Empowerment in RE', focusing on community, complexity, compassion, and commitment. Delegates included teachers, academics, and lecturers from across Europe.

The key takeaways were:

- Wales is comparatively advanced in RE provision.
- Identity, values, and worldview education are central across Europe.
- Teachers everywhere struggle with controversial issues.
- Interfaith understanding—especially Jewish/Muslim relations—needs more nuanced teaching.
- Networking and cultural immersion were among the most valuable aspects.

ACTION: Circulate the TS's presentation to the WASACRE members.

PL: Wales is preparing a bid for EFTRE's 2028 conference alongside four other countries. Cardiff Metropolitan University has provided WASACRE Officers with a quote for a conference hosting package for this event.

There is ongoing interest in supporting a Cynefin-style project, exploring identity, nationality, and religious belief. We hope to find schools across Europe willing to partner and compare how "Cynefin" or a sense of place and identity is understood in different countries. More information will follow once we hear back from EFTRE.

11. Report by the Executive Committee held on 14-5-25

The agenda for the Exec. Committee meeting was similar to the items on today's agenda.

There has been no response from Cardiff Met. to WASACRE's correspondence expressing concern regarding the University cuts.

The Exec has agreed that WASACRE does not need a separate code of conduct. WASACRE has taken further advice and established that the Nolan principles do not apply in Wales. What does apply is the

Ethical Framework of Wales, established by part three of the Local Government Act 2000. This is the code of conduct to which WASACRE can refer. This is now removed from the agenda.

12. Updates

• **REC (Kathy Riddick)**

- The REC has been heavily occupied with England's proposal to add RE to the national curriculum. This move is entering further consultation and will only proceed if there is broad agreement within the RE community. The proposal is based on the REC's national framework, using a religion and worldviews approach. While it shares similarities with RVE in Wales, its implementation is expected to differ.
- REC met with Sam Rowlands MS, after discussions in the Faith Cross-Party Group. SR wanted to understand: Why GCSE and A-level RE entries have dropped more sharply in Wales than in England. The impact of the removal of the RE teacher-training bursary in both nations. SR will be questioning the education minister about actions to stabilise GCSE/A-level RVE and strengthen the teacher pipeline. Calling for the bursary to be reinstated and holding an End-of-Day debate in the Senedd on the importance of RVE. The aim is to get supportive statements on record ahead of next year's Senedd elections, rather than expecting immediate policy change.
- The REC held its SRGM, where PL contributed to a valuable panel discussion.
- LJ's term as the Wales co-opted representative on the REC board has ended. LJ's contribution was highly valued. The REC is now seeking a new co-opted member from Wales to maintain Welsh representation.

• **NAPfRVE (Phil Lord)**

- Yvonne Roberts Adler, who supports curriculum design for Welsh Government, delivered training on a purpose-led, process-orientated curriculum. This approach emphasises process and school context, rather than prescribing specific content. England, by contrast, is moving toward a content-standard model, which may form the basis of a national curriculum if consensus is reached. A previous OECD report suggested Wales should define knowledge more explicitly, but Yvonne confirmed that Welsh Government intends to maintain its process-led approach. She stressed the importance of ensuring advisors and school-support staff are well trained in this model. There is interest in bringing advisors together to explore this approach in more depth.
- Deborah Weston, who is in regular contact with Andrew Pierce at WJEC gave a presentation on the decline in A-level entries across Wales. The discussion focused on:
 - o How to improve student numbers
 - o How to support areas where uptake is stronger
 - o How to share and promote effective practice
- Updated contact details for advisors are being gathered. Once permission is received from a few remaining advisors, these will be passed on for inclusion on the WASACRE website.
- A meeting is scheduled with Sam Clutton (WG) to discuss issues she has framed as community cohesion. The discussion is relating more directly to concerns arising from the removal of the right of withdrawal. WG is seeking insight into any anecdotal evidence from parents regarding this issue. PL welcomes feedback to be presented at the meeting.

• **Estyn (Gwawr Meirion)**

GW reported the following:

Estyn has recently published its early insights into the annual report. These insights, available on the Estyn website, offer initial sector-wide messages about strengths and areas for improvement. Sharing these early findings is intended to support schools sooner in the academic year, as the full annual report is not released until late January or early February.

Humanities and RVE:

- Early insights for secondary schools note some shortcomings in the breadth and sequencing of learning in the humanities, often linked to curriculum planning changes.
- The full annual report will include a dedicated chapter on the humanities, covering primary, secondary, and non-maintained sectors. This chapter will contain messages relevant to RVE, but these cannot yet be shared because the content is still undergoing Estyn's internal quality assurance process.

References to RVE in Inspection Reports:

GW addressed the concerns that RVE is not always explicitly mentioned in inspection reports.

- Estyn evaluates the quality and standards of education but does not inspect compliance, nor act as a regulator but does look at mandatory requirements.
- Estyn does not favour any particular curriculum design model; what matters is the impact on pupils' progress.
- Inspectors consider all statutory elements, including RVE, when evaluating Curriculum for Wales.
- Reports are written by exception, meaning RVE is mentioned only when there are notable strengths or weaknesses.
- The absence of explicit reference does not mean RVE was overlooked; it remains part of the evidence base.

Next Steps

- Once the humanities chapter is published in early spring, GM suggested to return to discuss the key messages in more detail.

EE: Mentioned that compliance is the LA's responsibility.

GW: Due to time constraints, GW offered to respond to questions in more detail post meeting.

- **Local matters / enquiries**

- WASACRE received a request from Ceredigion on how they can review their syllabus within the 5-year statutory period. WASACRE responded with advice.
- RJ: Ceredigion had conducted a survey amongst schools on the use of the current local syllabus, 9 responses received and some are not using it or not finding it very useful. This led to a joint meeting with SACRE members and teachers to understand from the frontline.
Decided to retain the current syllabus until the official 5-year review and provide links to resources to help support teachers. RJ appreciated WASACRE's advice.

13. Correspondence

Central South Consortia asked for advice regarding a Christian Union which has been set up in a school. WASACRE is in discussion with WG regarding this matter.

14. Any other business (to be agreed in advance of the meeting with the Chair)

JN, the transcriber of the WASACRE meetings, is no longer able to produce the meeting minutes.

EE thanked JN for the valuable support in the production of the minutes and also thanked SJ for translation.

15. Date for next meeting (AGM) – via zoom, hosted by Cardiff, provisional date Thurs 19th March 2026.

Meeting ended at 13.05.