

# STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

## Minutes of the meeting held on 13 March, 2013

**PRESENT:** Councillor E.G.Davies (Chair)

**The Education Authority**

Councillor Alun Mummery

**Religious Denominations**

Mr Rheinallt Thomas (Presbyterian Church of Wales) (Vice-Chair)

Mrs Catherine Jones (The Baptist Union of Wales)

Professor Euros Wyn Jones (Union of Welsh Independents)

**Teacher Representatives**

Alison Jones (Ysgol Parch.Thomas Ellis)

Bethan Ll.Jones (Ysgol y Graig)

Rev.Elwyn Jones (Co-opted Member)

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Mr Gary Jones (Primary Education Officer)

Miss Bethan James (Humanities Advisor)

Ann Holmes (Committee Officer)

**APOLOGIES:** Stephen Francis Roe, Mefys Edwards

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The Chair welcomed all those present to this meeting of the Anglesey Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education.

### 1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest was received.

### 2 MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting of the SACRE held on 9<sup>th</sup> October, 2012 were presented and confirmed as correct.

Arising thereon –

- The Chair extended a warm welcome to Mrs Alison Jones and Mrs Bethan Jones to their first meeting of the SACRE. The Primary Education Officer informed the SACRE's Members that Mrs Alison Jones and Mrs Bethan Jones were present as the nominated representatives of primary head teachers and primary school teachers on Anglesey respectively and that there was also a substitute representative should either nominee be unable to attend a meeting of the SACRE. Furthermore Mrs Mefys Edwards had been confirmed as the secondary teachers' representative and Mr Martin Wise remained as the representative of secondary Head teachers.
- The Committee Officer confirmed that no feedback had been received from either the Church in Wales or the Roman Catholic Church in terms of their providing the name of a nominee to serve on the SACRE; therefore these two Church places on the Council remain unfilled.
- The Humanities Advisor updated the SACRE in respect of her contact with Holyhead Secondary School and Ysgol Uwchradd Bodedern since the previous meeting of the SACRE

in accordance with the resolutions under item 4 of the minutes. She described the nature of the support provided to the former including by way of the provision of the Agreed Syllabus, KS2 and KS3 guidance as well as information regarding the legal status of RE as a subject, and learning resources. WASACRE had also since arranged a training session for KS3 teachers of Religious Education on conducting assessments and planning classroom work and learning activities. Ysgol Uwchradd Bodedern had addressed the issue arising from the school's submission of an RE portfolio to the external moderator in relation to understanding the level characteristics and had adapted its work plan accordingly.

- With regard to school self-evaluations, the Primary Education Officer informed the SACRE that Ysgol Corn Hir had agreed that its own school self-evaluation of Religious Education could be used anonymously as an exemplar for other schools in formulating their own self-evaluations. Since the previous meeting of the SACRE, one further school self-evaluation from Ysgol Brynsiencyn has been received although three remain outstanding. The Officer provided the SACRE's Members with a synopsis of the contents of Ysgol Brynsiencyn's self-evaluation by reference to the school's attention to moral aspects; the provision of opportunities for pupils to meditate and to participate in concerts etc. and the attendance and participation of the local Vicar and Minister at morning services and annual Christmas Service. In addition the school conducts an annual baptism service.

The Chair observed that he was disappointed by the non-response of the other three schools whose self-evaluations had not been available to the SACRE at this meeting. The Primary Education Officer said that he would pursue the matter. The SACRE'S Members were agreed in emphasising their primary role as one of monitoring standards of Religious Education and collective worship within the Island's schools and that the only means currently at their disposal to be able to fulfil this responsibility is by scrutinising the self-evaluations provided by schools. The non-presentation of self-evaluations is therefore not acceptable.

The Humanities Advisor suggested that the sample of a self-evaluation report which she had presented at the SACRE's October, 2012 meeting along with the pattern provided by Ysgol Corn Hir could be sent to the three schools in question as a brief model of what they could submit as an illustration of RE provision at their schools.

**It was resolved to note the information presented.**

**ACTION ARISING: Primary Schools Officer to contact the three schools whose self-evaluation reports remain outstanding to ascertain their availability, and to forward to those schools for illustrative purposes, the model self-evaluation report prepared by the Humanities Advisor and the example provided by Ysgol Corn Hir.**

- The Humanities Advisor informed the SACRE's Members that the Thematic Review of Religious Education which Estyn was preparing to conduct as reported to the previous meeting had now taken place and that the focus of the review had been KS4 and KS5. No school from within Gwynedd or Anglesey had been called upon as part of the review.

### **3 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STANDARDS**

A report by the Primary Education Officer in respect of those schools inspected during the 2012 autumn term was presented for the SACRE's consideration. The report provided a summary of the commentary within the Estyn reports pertaining to moral and spiritual development and activities and provision for collective worship at Ysgol Cemaes; Ysgol Llanbdergoch and Ysgol y Tywyn. The Officer confirmed that there were no recommendations arising within the reports concerning Religious Education/collective worship. The Humanities Adviser suggested that the three schools be asked to forward their self-evaluation reports for the attention of the SACRE – the Primary Schools Officer confirmed that the request had been made.

The SACRE's Members considered the information presented and they highlighted certain inaccuracies within the reports in relation to the terminology used by the inspectors e.g. the Welsh translation of "collective worship" and the use of "daily assemblies." It was further pointed out that the matter of the incorrect usage and/or translation of terminology has been raised previously with Estyn via the WASACRE, and it was suggested that on this occasion, a letter be sent directly to

Estyn to bring to the inspection body's attention the fact that the SACRE has noted one or two anomalies in the inspectors' use of terminology in the inspection reports referred to.

**It was resolved to accept the report and to note the information presented.**

**ACTION ARISING: Primary Education Officer to write to Estyn to draw the inspection body's attention to inaccuracies which the SACRE has noted within the inspection reports referred to in relation to the use and/or translation of terminology.**

#### **4 SACRE'S RESPONSE AND GUIDANCE**

- The Humanities Advisor updated the SACRE on the activities undertaken by the Advisory Service in the period since the previous meeting of the SACRE as follows –
  - Secondary Sector RE Teachers were given the opportunity to attend two training courses one on the subject matter of Closing the Gap – Effective Teaching and Learning which involved scrutinising pupils' work and teachers' standards in teaching RE and also in the broader context of improving literacy and numeracy. The course addressed issues such as the language and terminology to be used in self-evaluation reports so that they are more closely aligned with the language and terms in which Estyn inspection reports are couched; the meaning and definition of the quantitative terms used by Estyn such as "majority" and also the considerations in arriving at one of the four judgements – excellent, good, adequate, unsatisfactory. Given that KS3 RE teachers do not have available to them the same level of performance data as that produced for other subjects, the RE teachers came together with samples of work to which the Humanities Advisor added other documentation e.g. a report for a newly qualified teacher and a report on observing literacy and they were asked to come to a viewpoint on the quality of the learning and teaching. Work was also undertaken using samples of pupils' work to better understand both the levels and level characteristics. The teachers on the course also looked at the General Framework and the expectations as regards Year 9 in relation to writing skills and they were asked to identify whether or not the work reflected expectations in terms of spelling, grammar, punctuation etc.
  - The second course for secondary RE Teachers was held under the auspices of the WJEC and offered guidance on assessments in relation to Religious Studies external examination. The Humanities Advisor prepared a course for those teachers not present at the WJEC session which included Reading Data and involved making use of charts, graphs, tables and diagrams as evidence.
  - With regard to the primary sector, a course was held prior to Christmas at Beaumaris Church and school which considered the meaning of Christmas, and specifically the relevance of the activities undertaken during the visit to the Church in the context of the Agreed Syllabus.
  - As part of the 5 day Teachers Training and Development Course for the Humanities, one day was reserved for Religious Education. This year attention was given to the SACRE's self-evaluation template and the need to make these available to the Advisory Council. Examples of good practice from schools in Anglesey and Gwynedd were shared with the course attendees.
- The Humanities Advisor gave the SACRE a visual presentation on Understanding Standards in KS3, namely a course funded by the WASACRE for KS3 teachers and she outlined the course contents and themes which were divided into 4 separate sessions which covered the following aspects –
  - Understanding the level descriptions and the key messages from WJEC/DFES Central Moderation 2010/12
  - The three core skills and progression between levels
  - Recognising standards in pupil work
  - Setting tasks and internal moderation
  - Questions, issues and possibilities

On behalf of KS3 Teachers she expressed thanks to WASACRE for supporting and funding the course and to Anglesey for its contribution to the course costs.

- The Humanities Advisor informed the SACRE's Members that the advisory support service provided by Cwmni Cynnal will be coming to an end in April when the new GWE (Schools Effectiveness Service) comes into operation and takes responsibility for that element of the school support service. As part of the transition arrangements subject advisor posts will be replaced by system leaders who will cover the region including Anglesey and Gwynedd. The System Leaders will be responsible primarily for co-ordinating subjects rather than for directly providing training or delivering courses and also for providing support to groups of schools in terms of completing self-evaluations, preparing for inspections and liaising with the local Education Office regarding relevant issues arising. She informed the SACRE that it is likely that LEAs will ask the regional service to provide some support for SACRE bodies in light of the statutory nature of their duties.

The Primary Schools Officer said that he understood that the Directors of Education/Lifelong Learning of the six authorities across North Wales had raised this issue with the regional service with a view to putting in place an agreement to provide support for SACRE bodies. The role of the SACRE in ensuring Religious Education standards needs to be considered within the new arrangements and also within the context of the consultation which Estyn is undertaking on proposals for changing and extending the current 6 year inspection cycle as from September, 2013 with an option that reduced notice of an inspection is given - the idea being to develop inspection ready schools i.e. schools that are always prepared for inspection whenever that may take place. The Officer commented that in light of this prospective changes, there may be grounds for the SACRE to consider asking schools for their self-evaluation reports on a regular basis e.g. 16 primary school self-evaluations each year over a 3 year timescale and 2 secondary self-evaluations each year. The support currently provided by Cynnal will no longer be available post April, 2013.

The Vice-Chair supported the notion of the SACRE formulating its own schedule for scrutinising schools' self-evaluation reports. He informed Members that the issue of RE support under the new consortia arrangements and the delivery of that support by the LEA via SACRE bodies will be discussed at a meeting between the Education Minister and faith groups on 20 March, 2013. With regard to the provision of training, there is potential for the Religious Education Movement Wales to provide courses through the education authorities that subscribe to it and to make a contribution where that provision will no longer be available through Cynnal.

The Humanities Advisor suggested that the SACRE might wish to consider different models for receiving self-evaluation reports and that the Primary Education Officer could discuss the feasibility of various options with primary and secondary head teachers e.g. to target 5% or 10% of schools each year in order to scrutinise a sample of reports. She said that whatever arrangements are adopted, they need to be sustainable.

**It was resolved to note the information.**

**ACTION ARISING: Primary Schools Officer to prepare a briefing paper to consult with primary and secondary head teacher groups on the feasibility of various options for providing the SACRE with RE self-evaluation reports to enable it to fulfil its statutory duty to monitor standards in RE and collective worship, and to report back to the SACRE at its next meeting.**

## **5 WALES ASSOCIATION OF SACRES**

- A summary of the main messages from correspondence received from the WASACRE was presented for the SACRE's information. With reference to nominations for the WASACRE's Executive Committee and for the position of Vice-Chair, the SACRE's Vice-Chair informed Members that Gwynedd had nominated W.M Meredith for the post of Vice-Chair and that a nomination had been made for the Executive Committee. The Anglesey SACRE was not eligible to offer a nomination given that its Vice-Chair had been appointed to serve on the Executive Committee for a period of 3 years and no SACRE body is permitted to have 2 representatives on the Executive Committee.

The Primary Schools Officer drew Members' attention to correspondence dated 27 February, 2013 received from Trinity St David's College giving notice that due to limited finances, the RE Newsletter will only be published on line from the summer 2013 onwards. LEAs subscribing to the Newsletter are asked to contribute £500 towards the publication costs and will be provided with a password to access the on line version.

**It was resolved –**

- **To note the information from the WASCARE correspondence.**
- **To support continued subscription to the RE Newsletter at the prescribed fee.**
- The minutes of the meeting of the WASCARE held in Merthyr Tydfil on 22 November, 2012 were tabled for the SACRE's information.

The Vice-Chair drew the Members' attention to the principal highlights of the meeting as follows –

- The presentation given by Jonathan Martin and Andrew Morton on Religious Education and Chaplaincy in Further Education which matter SACRE representatives were asked to take back to their own SACRE bodies.
- RE Council report by Tania ap Sion.
- The presentation on Religious Education in the Higher Education Sector by Lynda Maddock and Sue James. The Vice-Chair reminded Members that the SACRE is also tasked with monitoring the provision of training RE teachers within its area.
- The Thematic Review of RE conducted by Estyn the report on which is expected to be issued sometime during the summer, 2013. The significance of the WASACRE as a body representing and promoting the interests of RE as demonstrated by the review was emphasised at the meeting.
- The Religious Education Quality Mark. The REQM is to be piloted in Wales and the results will be reported to the WASACRE to allow an informed decision to be made regarding the Quality Mark.
- The Humanities Advisor informed Members of a proposed WASACRE National Conference to be held on 10 October, 2013 at a venue to be confirmed which the WG's Education Minister will be attending.
- A copy of the WASACRE's review report and recommendations regarding SACREs and the Local Community was presented for the SACRE's information. Given the limitations in Anglesey in terms of an interfaith community and opportunities for local interfaith interaction and involvement, the SACRE was agreed that some of the report's recommendations were not applicable to Anglesey and **they resolved to accept the report and to note its contents.**
- The SACRE's Members were informed that the next meeting of the WASACRE will be held on 22 March in Newport and that the meeting thereafter will be held on 19 June, 2013 in Caernarfon. **It was resolved that Professor Euros Jones would attend the 19<sup>th</sup> June meeting in place of Mr Rheinallt Thomas who tendered his apologies for that meeting.**

## **6 ANGLESEY SACRE ANNUAL REPORT 2011/12**

An updated version of the Anglesey SACRE's Annual Report for 2011/12 was presented for Members' information. The Chair tabled his preface to the Annual Report which would be incorporated in the copy to be forwarded to the Welsh Government.

The Chair thanked the Humanities Advisor for her work on the Annual Report and also for her and valuable support and commitment to the SACRE in her role as Humanities Advisor.

**Councillor E.G.Davies  
Chair**

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