

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Minutes of the meeting held on 28 June 2013

- PRESENT:** Mr Rheinallt Thomas (Presbyterian Church of Wales) (In the Chair)
- The Education Authority**
- Councillors Jim Evans, W T Hughes, R LI Jones, Alun W Mummery and Dylan Rees
- Religious Denominations**
- Mrs Catherine Jones (The Baptist Union of Wales)
Professor Euros Wyn Jones (Union of Welsh Independents)
- Teachers**
- Mrs Bethan Ll.Jones (Ysgol y Graig)
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Mr D.Gareth Jones, Primary Education Officer)
Ann Holmes (Committee Officer)
- APOLOGIES:** Stephen Francis Roe, Mefys Edwards, Alison Jones, Martin Wise and Rev. Elwyn Jones
- ALSO PRESENT:** Miss Bethan James (GwE)
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1 CHAIRPERSON

The election of Chairperson for the SACRE was considered. The serving Vice-Chair informed Members that the Gwynedd and Anglesey SACRE bodies has retained the right to elect a Chairperson from among the LEA's elected member representatives on the SACRE forum and that to propose otherwise would be unconstitutional. Moreover the Chairperson historically has been appointed by consensus by the LEA.

Following discussion, it was resolved to defer the election of Chairperson to allow the LEA's elected representatives to come to an agreement regarding the appointment to the office of Chair of the SACRE.

2 VICE-CHAIRPERSON

Mr Rheinallt Thomas, Presbyterian Church of Wales was re-elected Vice-Chairperson of the SACRE.

3 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest was received.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting of the SACRE held on 13th March, 2013 were presented and confirmed as correct.

Matters arising –

- The Education Officer referred to the three primary schools whose Religious Education self-evaluation documents were outstanding from the previous meeting and he informed the Members that Ysgol Penysarn's self-evaluation (tabled at the meeting) had now been received. He explained briefly that it is through scrutiny of RE self-evaluation reports which the Island's schools are asked to provide that the SACRE body fulfils its advisory function in relation to Religious Education standards and the quality of collective worship. However, the self-evaluation reports of Ysgol y Fali and Ysgol Pentraeth remain outstanding. The Officer said that in addition, the self-evaluations reports of Ysgol Gynradd Llanbedrgoch and Ysgol Tywyn which schools had been the subject of inspection in the Autumn, 2012 term have been received and are presented as part of the matters arising documentation. As has been the pattern previously there is some variation in the quality and contents of the information presented by the schools in question in terms of their self-evaluations with only one of the schools adopting the Ysgol Corn Hir model.

The Vice-Chair emphasised that it is essential that the SACRE is provided with this information as the only means currently whereby the body is able to discharge its monitoring responsibilities. The Education Officer said that whilst he would continue to pursue the matter with the two schools whose self-evaluations had not yet been received, he believed there were mitigating circumstances in relation to why the reports had not been made available to the SACRE this time which he explained to Members.

The SACRE's Members noted the information and the position in relation to the two schools whose self-evaluations remained outstanding.

Action Arising: The Education Officer to continue to make enquiries regarding the self-evaluation reports not yet made available to the SACRE.

- The Education Officer drew Members' attention to the response of the Chief Inspector of Estyn to correspondence sent to her following the previous meeting of the SACRE to highlight inaccuracies in the Inspector's report regarding Ysgol y Tywyn in relation to the use of terminology which the SACRE had noted. In her reply, the Chief Inspector makes reference to Estyn's supplementary guidance for inspectors in relation to collective worship and to the distinction made in the guidance between collective worship and morning assembly and to the fact that morning assembly may incorporate an act of collective worship. The guidance also addresses the relationship between collective worship and moral, spiritual, social and cultural development. Inspectors do not have to refer to collective worship in inspection reports unless the school in question does not conform to the statutory requirements in this respect or unless the school's morning assemblies or act of collective worship contributes significantly to the pupils' welfare. If an opinion is given in an inspection report it is important that the correct terms are used. The Chief Inspector invites the SACRE to bring to the inspection body's attention any other reports in which in the light of the guidance, it believes there are anomalies and states that the supplementary guidance on inspecting collective worship will be amended to include a general question on the matter.

The SACRE's Members noted the Chief Inspector's response and the comments made.

Action Arising: The SACRE to continue to monitor inspection reports for consistency in the use of terminology.

- The Education Officer presented for Members' information, correspondence dated 14 June, 2013 from Trinity St David's College publicising the launch of the Religious Education website for Wales as a bilingual resource for both primary and secondary schools. As reported to the SACRE's meeting on 13th March the website replaces the RE News journal. The Officer went on to say that as a paying subscriber to the website the letter provides the Authority with access information and asks that it disseminates information about the website to all parties involved with Religious Education including schools, advisors and SACRE members.

Miss Bethan James said that she would encourage teachers to contribute articles and information about projects and good practice to the website so they can be shared with other RE practitioners accessing the website. She added that there is particular scope for the website to reflect the Welsh curriculum and Welsh culture.

Action Arising: Education Officer to circulate information regarding the RE Wales website to the Island's schools and relevant personnel.

- The Education Officer drew the Members' attention to information received from the Education Co-Ordinator Wales of Christian Aid regarding the organisation's July assemblies and related activities along with the report of the Christians in Parliament Group entitled Faith in the Community.

The SACRE noted the information.

5 ANGLESEY SACRE ANNUAL REPORT 2011/12

The definitive version of the Anglesey SACRE's Annual Report for 2011/12 was presented and noted for information purposes only.

6 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STANDARDS AND COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The Education Officer informed the SACRE's Members that one school, namely Ysgol Llanfachraeth had been inspected during the Spring term and that the overall inspection report is good. In the context of Religious Education the Inspector comments that *the school provides a wide range of rich learning experiences that gain most pupils' interests and meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase, the National Curriculum and Religious Education fully.* With reference to pupils' spiritual and moral development, the Inspector goes on to describe the school *as a friendly and caring community and that all staff promote high values. Provision for promoting moral, social, cultural and spiritual development is effective.* The Officer said there were no recommendations arising from the inspection report with regard to RE and/or collective worship.

Members welcomed the information and congratulated the staff and pupils of Ysgol Llanfachraeth on their attainment.

It was agreed to accept and to note the information.

Action Arising: The Education Officer to send a letter on behalf of the SACRE to the Headteacher of Ysgol Llanfachraeth in recognition of the school's efforts and success as reflected by the Estyn inspection report.

7 HOW CAN THE SACRE FULFIL ITS RESPONSIBILITIES IN FUTURE

The Education Officer presented a briefing report which he had circulated to the Island's Head teachers seeking their views on a proposal to assist the SACRE body to fulfil its statutory duties in monitoring standards of Religious Education and collective worship in schools whereby the SACRE would collect self-evaluation reports within a 3 year cycle meaning that individual schools present a report to the SACRE every 3 years based on the pattern suggested in the paper. The Officer said that primary head teachers had considered the proposal and were amenable to the request but would appreciate advanced notice of when the reports were required. Secondary head teachers had yet to consider the matter. The intention was that the Education Officer would liaise with 16 primary and 2 secondary schools in each year to ask for their self-evaluation reports to be made available to the SACRE. Miss Bethan James said that the proposal meant that the SACRE would be able to scrutinise 5 school self-evaluation reports each year and could also consider inviting a head teacher to address the SACRE the following term.

It was agreed to accept the proposal as a means of assisting the SACRE to fulfil its statutory duties in monitoring standards of Religious Education and collective worship in Anglesey's schools.

Action Arising: The Education Officer to put the system into practice subject to obtaining the agreement of the secondary head teachers.

Miss Bethan James provided Members with a presentation based on a draft model on how the SACRE can monitor standards given that under the new system under the GwE, there is no mechanism for officer contact with schools for the purpose of providing the SACRE body with feedback on the provision of Religious Education and arrangements for collective worship. She made reference to the following considerations:

- The means by which the SACRE can gather information and the sources available
- The self-evaluation proforma which the SACRE has adopted to obtain information from schools on their own assessment of the outcomes in religious education; the quality of the RE provision and the quality of the arrangements for collective worship
- The need for school self-evaluations to mirror inspection language in the use of evaluative terms and to reflect an understanding of what Estyn means by reference to quantities and proportions
- Publications which are designed to support teachers in their understanding of RE standards and activities
- A questionnaire which she asked the SACRE's Members to complete to demonstrate their understanding of RE and how standards might be monitored.
- The thematic review of Religious Education undertaken by Estyn based on a sample of schools throughout Wales (schools from Gwynedd and Anglesey were not part of the sample) which focused on RE provision in KS3 and the provision of statutory RE to pupils aged 14 to 16, under the title Religious Education in Secondary Schools. The report makes six recommendations specifically for schools and two recommendations for the Welsh Government.
- Miss Bethan James proceeded to update the SACRE's Members on the position with regard to the RE Quality Mark. The quality mark system has been developed in England and consent has been given to adapt the criteria for Wales and the WASACRE has agreed to undertake this work. The Officer said that it is a means for schools to gain external recognition for their work in RE is a useful tool in terms of self-evaluation. A fee in the region of £400 to £500 is payable for the accreditation and once schools have been through the process they are then eligible to act as accreditors themselves.
- Miss Bethan James confirmed that the WASACRE Conference would be held in Treforest, Cardiff on 10 October, 2013.

Members of the SACRE considered the information presented and the ensuing discussion focused on the availability of professional support to the SACRE under the new regional body the GwE to help it undertake and discharge its statutory responsibilities with regard to RE and collective worship and the form and nature which the support might take. Members were informed that support arrangements for the Gwynedd and Anglesey SACREs remain under discussion. Members considered possible models and there was consensus that the Anglesey SACRE body is of the opinion that in order to be able to fulfil its responsibilities effectively it requires support through feedback from school visits. It was therefore agreed that the SACRE requests the LEA to endeavour to ensure that the professional support arrangements it commissions from the GwE for the SACRE body include officer contact with schools. Members were also keen that the Island's secondary schools be alerted to the recommendations of the Estyn thematic review report on RE in secondary schools and that they give the recommendations their consideration. The Education Officer suggested that the five secondary head teachers discuss the aforementioned recommendations collectively.

Members discussed the SACRE's representation at the WASACRE Conference in October. It was agreed that Professor Euros Wyn Jones would attend on behalf of the Religious Denominations Group and that the LEA Elected Members group be represented by the Chair once appointed.

It was agreed –

- **To note the developments to date.**

- To request the LEA to endeavour to ensure that the professional support arrangements it commissions from the GwE for the SACRE include officer contact with schools.
- To ask the Education Officer to bring to the attention of the Island's secondary schools, the six relevant recommendations arising from the Estyn Thematic Review of RE in secondary schools with the recommendation that the secondary Head teachers meet to consider the recommendations.
- That Professor Euros Wyn Jones attends the WASACRE Conference in October 2013 on behalf of the Religious Denominations group and that the LEA councillor group is represented at the Conference by the Chair once appointed.

Actions Arising:

- Education Officer to inform the Director of Lifelong Learning of the SACRE's wishes with regard to the nature of the professional support arrangements for the body.
- Education Officer to forward information about the recommendations of the Estyn Thematic review report regarding RE in secondary schools to the Island's secondary Head Teachers with the recommendation that they meet to discuss the recommendations pertaining to schools.

8 WALES ASSOCIATION OF SACRES (WASACRE)

The minutes and associated papers of the meeting of the WASACRE held on 22nd March, 2013 in Newport were presented and noted.

Professor Euros Wyn Jones said that whilst he had not attended the WASACRE meeting held in Caernarfon on 19th July he was able to present information regarding the principal discussion points from the meeting as provided by another attendee. These included the RE Quality Mark and Estyn Thematic review of RE in secondary schools as discussed above. In addition, the response of the Education and Skills Minister to correspondence sent to him in respect of the lack of consideration given to RE in the current review of the Curriculum was presented and considered. In his reply the Minister emphasises that only those subjects within the National Curriculum are subject to review at present; that he is convinced that RE has a key role to play in developing literacy and numeracy skills in schools; that SACRE bodies will be added to the circulation list for the review report and that he would welcome feedback from SACRE bodies in adopting its recommendations.

The Vice-Chair updated the SACRE on appointments to the WASACE Executive and to the posts of Chair and Vice-Chair.

No further action arising.

9 REVIEW OF THE LOCAL AGREED SYLLABUS

The Vice-Chair informed the SACRE's Members that it is the WASACRE's suggestion that a scheduled review of the Agreed Syllabus be deferred until after the completion of the National Curriculum subjects review.

Professor Euros Wyn Jones on behalf of the Religious Denominations groups proposed that this course of action be adopted and Mrs Bethan LI.Jones on behalf of the Teachers' group seconded the proposal. Councillor Alun Mummery on behalf of the LEA elected representatives group indicated his concurrence with the proposal.

It was agreed to defer the review of the Agreed Syllabus until after the completion of the current review of National Curriculum subjects.

No further action arising.

10 HANDBOOK FOR SACRE MEMBERS

Information regarding the Handbook for SACRE Members in Wales was circulated as part of the agenda for the meeting. The Committee Officer confirmed that those LEA Elected Member representatives new to the SACRE had received a copy of the handbook directly.

No further action arising.

11 NEXT MEETING OF THE SACRE

It was noted that the next meeting of the SACRE would be held at 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday, 8th October, 2013.

**Mr Rheinalt Thomas
(Vice-Chair in the Chair)**

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