

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Minutes of the meeting held on 18 February, 2014

PRESENT:	Councillor Dylan Rees (Chair) The Education Authority Councillor R.Llewelyn Jones Religious Denominations Kirsty Williams (The Church in Wales) Mrs Catherine Jones (The Baptist Union of Wales) Stephen Francis Roe (The Methodist Church) Professor Euros Wyn Jones (Union of Welsh Independents)
IN ATTENDANCE:	Mr D.Gareth Jones (Primary Education Officer) Ann Holmes (Committee Officer)
APOLOGIES:	Councillors Gwilym O.Jones, Alun Mummery, Peter Rogers, Mefys Edwards (Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones), Bethan Ll.Jones (Ysgol y Graig), Rev. Elwyn Jones (Co-opted Member)
ALSO PRESENT:	Miss Bethan James (Systems Leader – GwE), Christine Hunt (St Mary's School, Holyhead)

The Chair welcomed all those present and he extended a particular welcome to Miss Kirsty Williams to her first meeting of the Anglesey SACRE as the representative of the Church in Wales on the SACRE body. The Chair also pointed out that as no representative from the Teachers Group was present the meeting was inquorate meaning that decisions could not be taken. It was therefore suggested and agreed that the business of the meeting be conducted on the basis of discussion only.

1 PRESENTATION

Christine Hunt of St Mary's Catholic School, Holyhead gave a presentation on the approach to the teaching of Religious Education at St Mary's School as a faith school with particular reference to the following points:

- The status of Religious Education as a core subject at the school and its delivery in a very structured way as prescribed by the Come and See scheme of work which was introduced approximately 4 years previously. At junior level the subject is taught for 2½ hours each week; at infant level it is taught for 2¼ hours each week and at nursery it is taught for 2 hours each week.
- The themes and topics which are covered in the teaching of Religious Education at the school across year groups and how these link into and are informed by relevant sections of scripture – “the scripture grid.”
- Levels of attainment in Religious Education in relation to knowledge and understanding and reflection on meaning and how these are evaluated. Moderation happens on a diocesan basis.
- Topic overview in terms of the various sections that contribute to and support a particular topic e.g. the scripture that will be used in the teaching of the topic, the learning resources to be drawn upon; the learning outcomes and attainment targets; cross curricular links with other areas of learning as well as supporting materials in the form of prayers and songs/hymns. Examples of assessments at each level were circulated for the Members' information.

Members of the SACRE were afforded the opportunity to ask questions on the contents of the presentation and the following matters were amongst those raised and debated in the ensuing discussion –

- How the school accommodates other faiths and the response to what is essentially a Christian based curriculum.
- Given that Religious Education has less prominence in relation to the National Curriculum, whether there is any noticeable impact on the general attitudes and behaviour of children in a school in which there is greater focus on Religious Education.
- The transition from a primary faith school to a mainstream secondary.
- How the RE scheme of work at St Mary's School with its emphasis on scriptural content and church terms and the time devoted to the teaching of RE compare with the Local Agreed Syllabus for RE in the Authority's schools.
- The arrangements at the school for reflecting the Cwricwlwm Cymreig and education for sustainable development and global citizenship and whether that is done within RE or elsewhere in the curriculum.
- The level of interaction with other primary schools in the Holyhead catchment area and the potential for co-operation, sharing and working together.

The Chair thanked Christine Hunt for her time in attending this meeting of the SACRE and in sharing with its Members examples of the work and practices at St Mary's School.

2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest was received.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting of the SACRE held on 26 November, 2013 were presented and confirmed as correct subject to amending the reference to "collective workshop" under the third bullet point of item 4 to read, "collective worship."

Arising thereon –

- The Education Officer confirmed that the self-evaluation reports of Ysgol y Tywyn and Ysgol Gynradd Llanddona had been re-submitted fully completed.
- The Education Officer said that he would circulate a copy of the guidance document entitled People, Questions and Beliefs - Religious Education in the Foundation Phase to the Authority's primary schools as forwarded to him by the Systems Leader. It was explained that the document was no longer available via the Welsh Government's website. The Systems Leader said that the objective in recommending that this information be disseminated to schools is for the schools to use it as a source of ideas but not as a basis for changing practices.
- The Education Officer confirmed that Ysgol Gyfun Llangefni and Ysgol Uwchradd Bodedern had made available their RE KS3 performance data.
- Mr Stephen Francis Roe informed the SACRE that the meeting of the Gwynedd and Anglesey Local Safeguarding Board on 28th January which he had been nominated to attend had been cancelled because of a prospective North Wales Safeguarding Conference to be held in March. Mr Roe confirmed that he had registered for the North Wales conference.

4 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ANGLESEY SACRE

The Systems Leader made a presentation to the SACRE based on the recommendations made by the SACRE to the Local Authority as set out in its Annual Report for 2012/13 in relation to promoting good practice and maintaining standards in RE Provision and collective worship arrangements across the county's schools and in relation to facilitating access for RE teachers and practitioners to guidance and supporting materials. In her presentation the Systems Leader focussed on how the SACRE can be assured that those recommendations are implemented fully by the Local Authority and how subsequently it can evaluate its own effectiveness as an advisory body.

In discussing the role of the SACRE in supporting Religious Education co-ordinators and subject leaders the following points were made –

- That given the national focus is on Literacy and Numeracy as priority areas in the school improvement agenda, the emphasis placed on improving these skills across all subjects in the National Curriculum and RE can have potential implications for the teaching of subject contents.
- The need for schools/ head teachers to ensure that provision for RE is made in teacher training arrangements.
- The need to consider ways of enabling the SACRE to monitor whether training has taken place and its effectiveness. e.g. by canvassing views via an annual teacher questionnaire which would address the range and number of opportunities provided for RE training and the activities undertaken.
- The need to consider potential sources of training provision in the form of the Churches and third party organisations such as the Religious Education Movement Wales. It was noted that the REMW is currently considering what part it might play as a training co-ordinator across Wales subject to agreeing funding and other arrangements with the LEAs; education consortia and or/schools.
- The possibility of the SACRE's members visiting individual schools as observers as a means of discharging the body's monitoring responsibility in relation to collective worship arrangements in schools and how such visits might be effected in practice. It was suggested that Members of the SACRE be matched with their local schools and that any visits conducted should be on the basis of an invitation made by the school.
- The need to develop a protocol for gathering information on visits to schools and subsequently for feeding the information back to the SACRE forum. It was suggested that a questionnaire be developed exclusively for the use of the SACRE's Members to ensure uniformity of approach and reporting in such visits.
- That consideration be given to the formulation of an Action Plan to enable the SACRE to regularly monitor progress on fulfilling the aims and objectives of the Annual Report.

ACTIONS ARISING:

- **Systems Leader to report back to the SACRE on possible options for addressing the following:**
 - **To identify means of facilitating and supporting training courses for RE teachers/Co-ordinators.**
 - **To identify ways of obtaining feedback from teachers on opportunities for accessing training and sharing good practice and the effectiveness thereof.**
 - **To identify ways of enabling the SACRE to obtain information and understanding of collective worship arrangements in schools to enable the body to fulfil its monitoring responsibilities with regard to the same.**
- **Education Officer in consultation with the Systems Leader to develop an Action Plan to enable the SACRE to track progress on achieving the objectives of the Annual Report.**

5 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STANDARDS

5.1 The self-evaluation reports of Ysgol y Fali and Ysgol Pentraeth were presented and their contents were noted by the SACRE's Members.

5.2 The report of the Education Officer incorporating the relevant findings from Estyn inspection reports on Ysgol Ffrwd Win, Ysgol Caergeiliog and St Mary's' School was presented and the information was noted by the SACRE.

6 THE NATIONAL LITERACY AND NUMERACY FRAMEWORK AND THE REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM WALES

- The Systems Leader gave a presentation on the requirements of the NLNF by reference to the National Support Programme which provides support to schools in implementing the

Framework. She explained how the requirements translate into expectations on teachers of Religious Education as follows –

- The Framework to be integrated within lesson plans.
- Teachers to utilise a range of teaching strategies to teach and adapt numeracy, reading, writing and oracy to the full range of skills and ability levels.
- Teachers to have the expertise to teach and set appropriate tasks so as to enable literacy and numeracy skills to be assessed side by side with the contents of each subject area.
- Teachers to be able to interpret the findings of assessments and use them to formulate individual learning plans.
- Teachers to understand that literacy and numeracy tests are based on the Framework and they should be able to prepare learners accordingly.

The Systems Leader proceeded to show how Religious Education as a subject area can be used to develop numeracy skills for example by utilising experience of a visit to a chapel to calculate capacity, and how the subject may be used to develop literacy skills for example by drawing a poster to explain the meaning of the Hindu festival of Diwali which task evidences skills in the form of sentence construction, grammar, spelling, punctuation and handwriting. The Officer said that the challenge in terms of numeracy particularly lies in trying to identify a numeracy context within RE that is pitched at an appropriate level of the Numeracy Framework i.e. that is not too simplistic.

- With reference to the review of the National Curriculum, the Systems Leader confirmed that she and other former humanities advisors had met as a group in early January to form a response on behalf of NAPfRE and also the SACRE to the first phase of the review to the effect that Religious Education should be included in any developments and/or examples shared with teachers. The second phase of the review involves curricular content and reflects the Welsh Government's aim that the curriculum should have variety and should teach pupils the skills and knowledge required to enable them to progress in the world beyond school. The Systems Leader proceeded to explain how the expectations might relate to RE which has a statutory basis and is governed by an agreed syllabus determined locally, in terms of ensuring that RE reflects the developments occurring in other parts of the Curriculum. She said that she would respond to the second phase of the consultation which is expected to have very tight time limitations by emphasising the need to include Religious Education in any developments, guidance and exemplar materials.

In the following discussion, Members considered the matter of engaging outside organisations to increase interest within the classroom to which the Systems Leader had made reference in her presentation and specific mention was made of the Open the Book charity which involves groups of volunteers who visit primary schools to provide a dramatisation of Bible stories. The SACRE considered whether schools locally make use of this service and whether more schools might wish to tap into this resource if they were aware of its availability.

7 WASACRE

7.1 The draft minutes of the meeting of the WASACRE held in Cardiff on 10th October, 2013 were presented and noted.

Miss Bethan James and Mr Rheinallt Thomas, the Vice-Chair confirmed they would be attending the next meeting of the WASACRE in Caerphilly on 27th March.

The Chair referred to the practice at meetings of the WASACRE of holding a period of quiet reflection and he suggested that the SACRE as a body might wish to consider replicating that practice or similar at its own meetings subject to confirmation by the Monitoring Officer regarding the propriety of doing so. The Chair said that he would raise this matter with the Officer and he asked the Members to consider the following options with a view to reaching a consensus at the next meeting –

- Retain the status quo
- A prayer to be said prior to the commencement of the formal meeting
- A period of quiet reflection

- Thought for the day

7.2 Correspondence from the Secretary of the WASACRE dated 5th February, 2014 inviting SACRE bodies to consider making nominations to the WASACRE Executive Committee was presented for Members' consideration.

The Vice-Chair pointed out that whilst the Anglesey SACRE could not nominate one of its own Members to the Executive Committee since it was already represented on the Committee, it was however permitted to make another nomination if it so wished.

Members of the SACRE noted that Mr Rheinallt Thomas, the Vice-Chair of the Anglesey SACRE and a serving member of the WASACRE Executive Committee had one year remaining on his period of service.

8 CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondence from the Rev. Canon Robert Townsend and the Office of Rhun ap Iwan, AM was presented and noted.

Councillor Dylan Rees
Chair