

**STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
(SACRE)
Minutes of the meeting held on 17 June, 2014**

PRESENT: Councillor Dylan Rees (Chair)

The Education Authority

Councillors Gwilym O.Jones, R.Llewelyn Jones, Alun Mummery

Religious Denominations

Mr Rheinallt Thomas (The Presbyterian Church of Wales) (Vice-Chair)
Kirsty Williams (The Church in Wales)
Mr Christopher Thomas (The Roman Catholic Church)
Mrs Catherine Jones (The Baptist Union of Wales)

Teacher Representatives

Mrs Mefys Edwards (Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones)
Mrs Alison Jones (Ysgol Parch. Thomas Ellis)

Co-opted Member

Rev.Elwyn Jones (Sunday Schools Council)

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D.Gareth Jones (Primary Education Officer) (Clerk to the SACRE)
Ann Holmes (Committee Officer)

APOLOGIES: Deacon Stephen Francis Roe (The Methodist Church)

ALSO PRESENT: Miss Bethan James (Systems Leader – GwE)

The Chair welcomed all those present and he extended a particular welcome to Mr Christopher Thomas to his first meeting of the Anglesey SACRE as the representative of the Roman Catholic Church.

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest was received.

2 MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting of the SACRE held on 18 February, 2014 were presented and confirmed as correct subject to the inclusion of Mr Rheinallt Thomas (Vice-Chair) in the list of attendees.

Arising thereon –

- The Systems Leader reported with respect to identifying means of facilitating and supporting training opportunities for RE Teachers and Co-Ordinators to raise RE standards where that is required that three considerations had emerged, namely –
 - The need to come to an understanding in principle that the Anglesey SACRE along with the Authority in Anglesey is willing to work collaboratively with other SACRE bodies in Wales to formulate a training programme. The Systems Leader referred to the training course for KS3 teachers on understanding standards in KS3 which was held last year, as an example

of the advantages of working collaboratively to deliver training at a time when groups traditionally responsible for delivering teacher training in RE are no longer available. The course involved in terms of arrangement, contribution and participation - the North Wales SACRE bodies; the WASACRE; Anglesey and other North Wales councils and their schools. The Officer said that she and her fellow members of the NAPfRE are looking to build on the success of this model of collaborative working and to further develop it in future. Her recommendation would be that Anglesey Council supports other councils and SACRE bodies as regards working jointly to deliver a training programme. It is also felt that consideration should be given to developing a programme of courses over 2 to 3 years which are - accessible locally; which allow teachers some time to plan for them and which will give due attention to the needs of the primary and secondary sectors and will address current requirements such as literacy and numeracy.

- As regards facilitating and supporting teachers to come together to discuss areas related to Religious Education with a view to sharing good practice and ideas, the Systems Leader said that with regard to the primary sector especially, the SACRE might need to accept that this has to be a low cost joint provision not involving outside groups and which builds on current groups locally. The SACRE as a body might be asked to consider bearing some of the administrative support work and a rota of facilitators could be established with perhaps the Anglesey Council funding an initial session. Perhaps it might subsequently be possible to prompt RE Co-ordinators in the primary sector to set up their own network within the county.
- To establish after school surgeries at the start of each term for those schools due to present their self-evaluation reports to the SACRE to remind them of some of the key considerations in so doing.

The Vice-Chair informed the Members that a letter on behalf of the Wales Free Churches Council had been sent to the Welsh Government's Minister for Education congratulating him on his address to the Conference held in Cardiff recently for the recognition he gave to Religious Education whilst at the same time bringing his attention to two key considerations –

- The future of SACRE bodies in Wales. The letter asks the Minister to re-state and remind each local authority that they are statutorily required to establish a SACRE body.
- Due to the local requirement on RE, that steps are taken to re-establish some system of direct support and advice for schools and teachers following the demise of the previous system of subject advisors as a result of the introduction of system leaders as part of the GwE, and to ensure support for that system.

The Vice Chair said that the letter had been forwarded to all the religious denominations with a request that they pursue the matter.

The secondary school teachers' representative supported the suggestions made for strengthening the provision of support and advice for schools and for RE teachers and she said that given the current emphasis on improving literacy and numeracy skills there is now less opportunity for subject based training.

The Chair referred to the Action Plan which the Systems Leader had tabled at the meeting and which was intended to ensure that the aims and objectives of the Anglesey SACRE's Annual Report for 2012/13 are delivered in a timely and effective way and he suggested that it be considered as part of the agenda for the next meeting. The Systems Leader said that in light of the comments made in the Review of SACREs' Annual Reports that SACRE bodies adopt a more self-evaluative approach to their work she would suggest that the Members consider what is practical within the Action Plan and that they identify outputs against which they can assess themselves as a SACRE body within one or two years in order to demonstrate the body's effectiveness.

It was resolved –

- **To endorse the suggestions made by the Systems Leader for facilitating and supporting training opportunities for RE Teachers to raise RE standards in schools.**
- **That the Action Plan be included for consideration on the agenda for the SACRE's next meeting.**

ACTION ARISING: Committee Officer to include the Action Plan on the agenda for the SACRE's next meeting.

- The Chair referred to the suggestion which he made at the previous meeting that a spiritual element be introduced to the SACRE's meetings by way of a prayer or pause for reflection and he said that this had raised some legal considerations which he had clarified with the Council's Monitoring Officer. In light of the Monitoring Officer's advice he now suggested that each meeting of the Anglesey SACRE be closed with a prayer after the meeting's formal business has been concluded to allow anyone wishing to leave to do so. Members of all three representative groups of the SACRE were in concurrence with this suggestion.

It was resolved that each meeting of the SACRE be closed with a prayer following the conclusion of the meeting's formal business.

3 WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Kirsty Williams made a presentation to the SACRE in her capacity as the Children, Youth and Families Ministry Enabler for the Church in Wales and tabled a report which provided a summary of the ideas presented. In her presentation Ms Williams suggested the following as ways in which the Church in Wales might be able to offer practical support for schools in RE –

- Facilitating training sessions for teachers in relevant themes in RE within or without the school.
- Provision of education packages for teachers which are accessible and easy to use e.g. Resource Boxes containing artefacts, lesson plans and other supporting materials which teachers can sign in and out.
- Mentoring systems for children in relation to what they are learning in Religious Education which could in turn inform a mentoring project throughout the school.
- Provision of prayer spaces to be used individually by children or as part of a classroom exercise as appropriate.
- Provision of volunteering placements for young people who might be finding it difficult to access volunteering opportunities.
- Counselling to supplement existing provision within schools.
- Moving on days for children and young people to equip them with skills in moving on to the next stage of their lives.

Members of the SACRE acknowledged the suggestions made and they emphasised that the SACRE as a body can only facilitate the dissemination of information about services and resources to schools for them to act upon as they deem appropriate, and that it is a matter for individual schools whether or not they accept the offer of a service.

The Systems Leader drew attention to the fact that some of the services which the Church's Children, Youth and Families Ministry Enabler suggests the Church can offer are already provided within schools and she highlighted the following as areas which the Children, Youth and Families Ministry Enabler might wish to consider in order to avoid duplicating provision and resources:

- The Welsh National Resource Centre for Religious Education provides a range of resources including resource boxes that address some of the themes mentioned.
- The Children's Department of Anglesey's Library Service loan artefact boxes as well as books to schools.
- That there is a shortage of resources available to schools that reflect the Cwricwlwm Cymreig in terms of defining faith and adherence to faith within Wales from a Welsh perspective. Resources provided by the Church in Wales should reflect that dimension.

- Some services such as counselling, mentoring and coaching services are already well-established in many of county's secondary schools. The Church in Wales might therefore wish to consider what specific needs it is able to respond to and that its representative makes young people and their parents aware that it is the Church that is providing the support to schools where that applies.

The Chair suggested that the Church's Children, Youth and Families Ministry Enabler review the report in light of the comments made and re-present it to the SACRE's next meeting.

It was resolved –

- **To note the information and to thank Kirsty Williams as the Children, Youth and Families Ministry Enabler for the Church in Wales for her suggestions and,**
- **to ask her to review the proposals in light of the comments made during the subsequent discussion.**

4 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STANDARDS – REPORTS BY ESTYN

Information about the relevant findings from Estyn inspection reports in relation to Ysgol Beaumaris and Ysgol Goronwy Owen was presented.

The Primary Education Officer confirmed that there were no issues arising with regard to the schools inspected. However, the Officer drew the SACRE's attention to the variation in the inspectors' use of terminology in describing the provision for promoting pupils' social, moral, cultural and spiritual development and he said that whilst the inspector in the case of Ysgol Beaumaris refers to "Collective worship sessions" the inspector in the case of Ysgol Goronwy Owen refers inaccurately to "regular assemblies." The Primary Education Officer reminded Members that the SACRE has previously brought inaccuracies in school inspectors' use of terminology to the attention of ESTYN and a response was received at the time by the inspecting body's Chief Inspector which sought to clarify that whilst Estyn's supplementary guidance for inspectors on collective worship distinguishes between collective worship and morning assembly it also notes that morning assembly may incorporate an act of collective worship. The response did also invite the SACRE to highlight any other anomalies which it identifies.

The Vice-Chair pointed out that as well as the erroneous use of the term "morning assembly" there is also an inconsistency between the English term and the corresponding Welsh translation thus leading to inconsistency in terms of language as well as meaning. He suggested, and it was agreed, that the anomaly be brought to the attention of the Chief Inspector of Estyn.

The Systems Leader said that it could also be a case of the inspector drawing on the school's self-evaluation and that it might therefore be beneficial, to remind schools of the need to use the correct terminology in drafting their self-evaluation reports.

It was resolved –

- **To note the information presented.**
- **That the instance of the erroneous use of terminology in the inspection report on Ysgol Goronwy Owen be brought to the attention of the Chief Inspector of Estyn.**

ACTION ARISING: Primary Education Officer to draft a letter to the Chief Inspector of Estyn in accordance with the SACRE's resolution.

5 FULFILLING THE SACRE'S MONITORING RESPONSIBILITIES

A copy of correspondence sent to the county's Head Teachers requesting their co-operation with the provision of school- self-evaluation reports in accordance with a specified timetable and in facilitating collective worship visits was presented for the SACRE's information.

With reference to collective worship visits to schools by Members of the SACRE the Primary Education Officer explained that he had in his correspondence placed emphasis on the fact that any member of the SACRE that would be attending a collective worship session in a volunteering school would be doing so with a view to obtaining an impression of the pupils' experiences in this area and not to lead in any way. The Officer said that he had already received a response from several schools putting themselves forward to receive a visit.

The Systems Leader suggested that it would be helpful if the WASACRE Guidance on Collective Worship be re-circulated to Members to assist them in their preparations for their visit.

Following discussion, it was resolved that collective worship visits to those schools that had proposed themselves would be undertaken by SACRE Members as follows and that the individual members would contact the school to arrange a mutually convenient time and date:

Bodedern Secondary School – Councillor G.O.Jones

Ysgol Parch.Thomas Ellis – Mr Rheinallt Thomas

Ysgol y Parc, Holyhead – Councillor R.Llewelyn Jones

Ysgol Kingsland, Holyhead and Ysgol Pentraeth – Kirsty Williams

Canolfan Addysg y Bont – Mrs Catherine Jones

Ysgol Parc y Bont, Llanddaniel – Miss Bethan James (as Systems Leader)

ACTION ARISING: Committee Officer to circulate the WASACRE Guidance on Collective Worship to Members.

6 WALES ASSOCIATION OF SACRES

The draft minutes of the meeting of the WASACRE held in Caerphilly on 27th March, 2014 along with the final nominations for the Association's Executive Committee were presented for the SACRE's attention.

The Vice-Chair pointed out that the RE News website will now be available free of charge as reported under item 5 (11) of the minutes. The Primary Education Officer said that he would inform the county's schools that the website is now freely available.

With reference to the Religious Education Quality Mark, the Systems Leader said that guidance for self-evaluation is now available on the REQM website (available to schools in Wales by clicking on the WALES tab) as are learner questionnaires for the primary and secondary sectors which might be particularly useful for Department Heads and RE co-ordinators in circumstances where a group of schools come together in a catchment or cluster.

It was resolved –

- **To note the information.**
- **In respect of nominations to the Executive Committee, to delegate to the Vice-Chair the authority to vote on the day on behalf of the Anglesey SACRE.**

7 INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF ASSESSMENT AND THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM WALES

The Independent Review of Assessment and the National Curriculum Wales "Call for Evidence" document and questionnaire were presented for the SACRE's attention.

The Systems Leader explained the background and referred to the requirements in terms of the syllabus for Religious Education and how that differs from the National Curriculum in being determined locally. However all the SACRE bodies in Wales have adopted the National Exemplar Framework for RE which was developed by the Welsh Government meaning that there is now a common reference point with regard to skills, range and attainment levels for RE. The Local Agreed Syllabus must be reviewed every 5 years but it was decided locally in 2013 to defer the review until after the review of the National Curriculum is completed. The Welsh Government has commissioned a call for evidence on the Curriculum and has issued a questionnaire for parents, children and young people and all interested parties in education. Professor Graham Donaldson who has been commissioned to undertake the review has agreed to meet a group from the WASACRE on 20 June and has also allowed for a deferral of a formal response until after the WASACRE's meeting in Powys on 2nd July. She said that the SACRE needs to consider whether it as a body has a view on the National Curriculum review.

In the subsequent discussion, Members of the SACRE considered the Call for Evidence questionnaire and gave their response where relevant to the questions contained therein. The SACRE was agreed in delegating to the Systems Leader the authority to respond formally to the questionnaire on its behalf based on the views expressed during the discussion at this meeting.

It was resolved to delegate to the Systems Leader the authority to formally respond to the Call for Evidence document on behalf of the SACRE based on the views expressed during the discussion thereon.

ACTION ARISING: Systems Leader to formulate a response accordingly.

8 CORRESPONDENCE

A report by Deacon Stephen Roe (The Methodist Church) from the North Wales Safeguarding Conference held in Llandudno on 28th March, 2014 was presented for the SACRE's information.

The SACRE noted the information and was agreed in thanking Deacon Stephen Roe for attending the conference and for reporting back on the day's activities.

9 NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the SACRE's next meeting would be held at 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday, 7th October, 2014.

**Councillor Dylan Rees
Chair**

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