

**S.A.C.R.E – STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL  
ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION  
14/06/17**

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**Present:**

**Gwynedd Council Members:** Councillors Menna Baines, Judith Mary Humphreys, Elin Walker Jones, Paul J. Rowlinson, R. Medwyn Hughes, Dewi Wyn Roberts.

**Christians and Other Faiths:** Cynrig Hughes (Congregationalists), Elizabeth Roberts (Union of Welsh Baptists)

**Teachers:** Miriam Amlyn, Cathryn Davey

**Officers:** Mai Bere (Assistant Education Officer and SACRE Clerk) and Glynda O'Brien (Members' Support and Scrutiny Officer).

**GwE:** Bethan James (Challenge Adviser)

**Apologies:** Cllr. Mike Stevens, Dr. Gwyn Lewis (Union of Welsh Baptists), Eirian Bradley-Roberts (The Catholic Church), Alwen Watkin, Heledd Jones (Teacher Unions)

**1. PRAYER**

The meeting was commenced with a prayer by Mr Cynrig Hughes.

**2. ELECTION OF CHAIR**

**Resolved:** To elect Councillor Paul J. Rowlinson as Chair of the committee for 2017/18.

**3. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR**

**Resolved:** To elect Councillor Elin Walker Jones as Vice-chair of this Committee for 2017/18.

**4. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

No declarations of personal interest were received from any members present.

**5. MINUTES**

The Chairman signed the minutes of the meeting of this Committee held on 9 March 2017, as a true record.

**6. SCHOOLS' SELF-EVALUATIONS**

- (a) The Assistant Education Quality Improvement Officer guided Members through the handout circulated in which a summary of school findings was set out, drawing

attention to the fact that five primary schools and one secondary school had been inspected by ESTYN during the 2017 Spring term.

(b) Members were guided through the self-evaluations of the schools of Ysgol Glan y Môr, Bro Hedd Wyn, Llanllyfni and Bro Tegid.

The GwE Challenge Adviser praised Gwynedd schools for their readiness to share their self-evaluations of religious education and collective worship, and emphasised that monitoring the standard of religious education was one of Gwynedd SACRE's responsibilities. It was explained that they sought to accept the self-evaluations from schools during the inspection term or shortly thereafter. As religious studies was not a national curriculum subject, it can be seen from the self-evaluations that the schools were fulfilling the requirements of the Cytûn syllabus which was produced locally by the SACRE.

From the self-evaluations presented, it was seen that the schools had deemed that the standards and the education provisions were good and the collective worship was meeting statutory requirements. Ysgol Llanllyfni's self-evaluation was presented based on work conducted over a long period of time, but reference was made to ESTYN's recent inspection report which noted that the provision in key stage 2 was fully meeting the agreed syllabus. The school would be producing an action plan in order to tackle the work and it was hoped that SACRE would see an improvement will along with examples of work in October.

Reference was made to improvement issues that were noted by the schools:

- Ysgol Glan y Môr was eager to help boys to achieve improved standards in religious studies by developing literacy, reading and writing.
- Ysgol Talysarn was eager to ensure that pupils could demonstrate progress by studying various religions; ensuring that religious education was scrutinised regularly by the School's Curriculum Panel
- Ysgol Bro Hedd Wyn was eager to ensure that the Foundation Phase received a broader and richer experience

In response to an enquire regarding SACRE monitoring arrangements, the Challenge Adviser explained that this is carried out as follows:

- Scrutinise external results in October or in the Spring meeting
- Browse through inspection reports
- Invite schools to present self-evaluations by ensuring that the content is evaluative and quantitative
- Invite schools to give presentations on the work completed in the classroom

In terms of collective worship, it was explained that was was conducted daily, but that there is no requirement for a mass Assembly, it can be conducted in classes and there was no specific time for it. In accordance with the Act, the sessions must mainly be Christian and schools were requested to be sensitive to other religions. It was explained that parents had a right to exempt their children from collective worship as they had the right to exempted them from religious education classes. Schools had a

right to conduct Christian collective worship, but from a religious education perspective, it was not the school's duty to make children religious.

Historically and traditionally, situations where staff had refused to lead collective worship in schools had been very rare, and it was noted that a stock of useful resources had been published and were available to help staff lead sessions. In addition, schools could invite local religious leaders to lead collective worship sessions and schools welcomed this link. It was also noted that some schools made use and appreciated the "Open the Book" scheme, where a group of people would tell a story or act out a biblical story to pupils.

**RESOLVED: To accept and note the contents of the inspections and self-evaluations and in accordance with procedure to request that the Assistant Education Quality Improvement Officer sends a letter to the above schools to note SACRE's appreciation of the efforts made by them in achieving the grades.**

## **7. A. PRESENTATIONS**

(a) The Challenge Adviser explained that she had invited the four following teachers to give a presentation to the Committee on the work of religious studies in the key stages:

Nia Hughes, Ysgol Talysarn	-	Foundation Phase
Heulwen Jones, Ysgol Bro Hedd Wyn	-	KS2
Miriam Amlyn	-	KS3
Heledd Jones	-	KS4

but unfortunately, due to confusion and error about location, only two teachers were present.

(b) Nia Hughes from Ysgol Talysarn, Foundation Phase Teacher who was responsible for teaching religious studies to the Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and 2 classes, was welcomed. An interesting presentation was received, and good examples were seen of the work that was done in Ysgol Talysarn based on language, experience, empathy, morning assemblies etc.

It was noted that the Foundation Phase required teachers to have significant skills which were to follow the child, decide upon different areas in the classroom, which are all based on their experiences.

In response to an enquiry from an individual member, she noted that it was very rare for nursery children to have knowledge of biblical stories when they began at the school, and that the school did not work with the Church or Chapel in Talysarn. She added that it was challenging for some schools that were eager to use local resources as it was not always easy if the communities did not have many places of worship or were not faith communities.

The Member noted, when looking at future education arrangements in the Bangor area, that it might be an idea for the Committee to give input into the discussions so that any new school would be inclusive from the perspective of taking the faith backgrounds of Bangor's population into account.

- (c) Miriam Amlyn from Ysgol Eifionydd (who was a member of SACRE as a representative for the NASUWT Union) was welcomed to share information about cross-curriculum presentation as a Head of Department of Religious Education.

She noted that the situation was slightly different in the secondary sector as the subject was presented for an hour a week in KS3, but varied from school to school and the pupils experiences differed, but, on the whole a regular academic lesson was presented teaching about religion.

A unit of work completed with Year 7 on the subject of Hinduism was seen, which had then been developed into a series of lessons about worship, worshipping and the buildings. Stemming from this work, 85 pupils created a film and an example was shown to the Committee. Attention was drawn to the fact that there was an emphasis in the secondary sector, as in the primary sector, on developing work which can develop cross-curricular skills (literacy, numeracy and digital competence) and the teachers successfully collaborated in order for the work to correctly intertwine and contribute towards religious education.

**Resolved:**                    **To accept, note and congratulate the teachers for the interesting presentation and thank them for their work and dedication to the subject.**

#### **B.UPDATE BY THE GwE CHALLENGE ADVISER**

- (i) Submitted to the Members

- Booklet by the title of "You are joining your local SACRE"
- Gwynedd and Anglesey Agreed Syllabus
- Successful Future

- (ii) The New Religious Studies GCSE

Reference was made to the fact that Religious Education teachers within GwE's region, under the leadership of Mefys Jones, Head of the Religious Studies Department at Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones, Amlwch, had met three times and had received guidance from external experts in regards to the above. It had been agreed that the work of preparing resources would be shared between them and they would be available on GwE's website. It was further noted, in terms of the A Level Religious Studies course, that Mefys Jones had coordinated cooperation between Gwynedd and Anglesey teachers.

In response, the Teachers representative noted that the course was heavy and would be challenging as the teaching hours indicated on the specification varied from school to school. Stemming from the discussion, it was suggested that correspondence should be sent to the Joint Education Committee in regards to the lack of Welsh-medium resources in addition to sending correspondence to all Gwynedd schools to ensure that teachers across the county received the time indicated by the WJEC to present and complete the new GCSE course.

- (iii) Religious Education and the new curriculum

It was noted that Religious Education was a part of the Humanities learning and experience field and that there were four purposes to the curriculum and that the following was a basis for everything:

- Ambitious, capable learners who are prepared to learn throughout their lives;
- Enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work;

- Ethical, informed citizens ready to be citizens of Wales and the world;
- Healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead lives in which they fulfil their ambitions as valued Members of society.

It was explained that innovative schools were responsible for developing this field. Thus far, they had researched other countries' curricula and had received guidance from external experts. Every group tried to outline the extent of the learning and experience field and to consider what the subjects "big ideas" were. It was noted that no decisions had been made yet regarding assessment. The cross-curricular skills would continue - literacy, numeracy and digital competence.

The Challenge Adviser noted that she had attended one meeting of the Humanities group as a representative of the Wales Association of SACRE and had presented the document "What is a good religious education?" to Manon Jones, Welsh Government Officer who was facilitating the Humanities group. The draft document was shared with the SACRE Members for information.

(iv) ESTYN

Attention was drawn to the fact that ESTYN had noted in some school inspections that the religious education provision was weak, and it was understood that ESTYN would conduct a thematic "KS2 and KS3 Religious Studies" inspection and would likely visit a cross-section of around 20 schools across Wales. The Challenge Adviser presented a 'Key guidelines for religious studies in primary schools' handout for the members' attention in order to receive their approval before sharing with primary school teachers..

(v) Collective Worship

Attention was drawn, and Members of the Committee were encouraged to take a look at the following two petitions on the National Assembly for Wales' website, which had been triggered by young people:

- Remove the obligation for schools to conduct acts of collective worship
- Keep current guidelines for Religious Services

(vi) KS3 Religious Education E-magazine

In addition, Members' attention was drawn to the following magazines on the Hwb website:

- Issue 1: Organ Donation
- Issue 2: Refugees
- Issue 3: War and Peace

**Resolved:** (a) To accept, note and thank the Challenge Adviser for the update as outlined above and approve the 'Key guidelines for religious education' handout for primary school teachers.

(b) To request that the SACRE Clerk sends correspondence as follows:

- (i) to the Joint Education Committee to ensure that schools receive the Welsh medium resources in good time in order to present the new Religious Studies GCSE
- (ii) to all Gwynedd schools to ask them to ensure that an appropriate amount of time is available to present and complete the new course

**8. WALES ASSOCIATION of SACREs**

**(a) Minutes of the previous meeting**

The draft minutes of the previous Association meeting, held on 3 March 2017, were submitted.

It was noted that the above Association's next meeting would be held on 7 July 2017 in Wrexham and that Gwynedd SACRE had the right to nominate one representative from amongst the Elected Members, one representative from amongst the denominations and one representative from amongst the teachers, to attend this meeting.

**(b)** Nominations for the Wales Association of SACRE's Executive Committee were submitted.

**Resolved: (a) To accept and note the contents of the minutes.**

**(b) To note that the Association's next meeting will be held on 23 June 2016 in Rhyl.**

**(c) To request that the GwE Challenge Adviser votes on behalf of Gwynedd SACRE as follows:**

**Executive Committee: Gill Vaisey  
Alison Lewis**

**Vice-chair Gill Vaisey**

The meeting commenced at 2:00 pm and concluded at 3:50 pm

**CHAIR**