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# **S.A.C.R.E. – STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

## **09/03/17**

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**Present:** Councillor Selwyn Griffiths - Chairman

**Gwynedd Council Members:** Councillors Annwen Daniels, Tom Ellis

**Christians and Other Faiths:** Dr Gwyn Lewis (Presbyterian Church of Wales)

**Teachers:** Miriam Amlyn, Heledd Jones, Alwen Watkin

**Officers:** Mai Bere (Assistant Education Quality Improvement Officer), Glynda O'Brien (Member Support Officer)

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

**Apologies:** Cllr Jean Forsyth, Cathryn Davey (Teachers Union), Mr Cynrig Hughes (Congregationalists), Mrs Elizabeth Roberts (Union of Welsh Baptists).

### **1. PRAYER**

The meeting commenced with a prayer from Councillor Selwyn Griffiths.

### **2. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Since this would be the last meeting of SACRE before the Council Elections on 4 May 2017, the Chairman took the opportunity to thank his fellow members for the privilege of Chairing SACRE and for their service and contribution to the work of SACRE over recent years. Best wishes were extended to those who would be retiring as Members and to those standing for election in May. Likewise, he thanked officers for their support whilst he carried out his role as Chairman.

### **3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

Councillor Selwyn Griffiths declared a personal interest in relation to Item 6 (b) (ii), Ysgol Borth-y-Gest Self-evaluation, as he was a governor and also had a connection with the school.

He was of the view that it was not a prejudicial interest and did not withdraw from the Chamber during the discussion on this item.

### **4. MINUTES**

The Chairman signed the minutes of the meeting of this committee held on 2 November 2016 as a true record.

## 5. 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 three primary schools had been inspected by ESTYN during the 2016 Summer term, along with 6 primary schools during the 2016 Autumn term 2016.
- (b) In response to a comment made by a Member in relation to ESTYN terminology and the selection of "adequate" in the Ysgol Maenofferen self-evaluation, the GwE Challenge Adviser stated that the sentence "care, assistance and leadership" was part of a broader field. Attention was drawn to the fact that the words "effective, successful, robust, beneficial" referred to "good" which was relevant to Religious Education.
- (c) Reference was made to the self-evaluations of the following schools
  - (i) Ysgol Bodfeurig
  - (ii) Ysgol Borth-y-gest
  - (iii) Ysgol Bro Cynfal
  - (iv) Ysgol Cae Top
  - (v) Ysgol Llanbedr
  - (vi) Ysgol Maenofferen
  - (vii) Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn
  - (viii) Ysgol Rhiwlas
  - (ix) Ysgol Waunfawr

The GwE Challenge Adviser noted that the quality of the self-evaluations had improved but that some weaknesses persisted because schools had not scrutinised the guidances in sufficient detail and that clearer guidances were required.

In relation to Ysgol Maenofferen, attention was drawn to pupils' levels at the end of Years 3, 4 and 5.

It was noted that the Ysgol Cae Top self-evaluation was based on a different methodology and it had recently received an excellent inspection.

Reference was made to the Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn self-evaluation in which a taster of the lessons was provided.

**RESOLVED: To accept and note the contents of the inspections and self-evaluations and, in accordance with procedure, to congratulate the above schools for their efforts in achieving the grades.**

## 6. UPDATE BY THE CHALLENGE ADVISER

### (a) Religious Education and the Lifelong Curriculum

Members were reminded of the main recommendations by Professor Graham Donaldson as part of the "Successful Future" curriculum, or the Lifelong Curriculum, Curriculum for Wales. One of those principles was for the curriculum to be implemented from the ground up and for it to be relevant to the local area. To this end, local SACREs were a good example of the ability to influence a local curriculum.

She elaborated further on the four objectives at the core of the new proposed curriculum, namely supporting children and young people to be:

- 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 of Wales and the world
- Healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead lives in which they fulfil their ambitions as valued members of society.

One of the tasks to be addressed was to ensure that the curriculum be developed to respond to the above objectives.

The GwE Challenge Adviser explained that she was a part of the Consultative Panel which met to try to draw up guidance on "what religious education was". As a result of this work, statements on "what good Religious Education was" were presented to Members and they were asked to discuss, in pairs, whether the statements contributed to the four aims. The general consensus among Members was that the statements were sufficiently clear and applicable to the four aims.

As regards the next steps, teachers present were encouraged to put the above to the test at their schools to see whether they were comfortable with the statements etc. and to send any observations arising from feedback to the GwE Challenge Advisor.

### **(b) GCSE / A Level**

The Challenge Adviser explained that a delegation from the National Consultative Panel on Religious Education had met with Mr Gareth Pierce, WJEC. He had been given a clear message that there was concern surrounding the presentation of a GCSE specification last September which they had been put under pressure to postpone. It was noted that the specification had now been received. It was noted that the lead GwE teacher (Mefys Jones) was operating effectively in consultation with teachers in Gwynedd and Anglesey and that material would be available by June / July.

Responding to the above, concern was expressed among teachers about the changes to the GCSE specification and the fact that schools would shortly need to begin course work and that no Welsh language materials were available, and that schools' results would suffer.

It was understood that many schools in South Gwynedd offered Specification A as a selected course, and Specification B as a statutory one. It was emphasised that Religious Education was a statutory requirement for every pupil and that schools needed to interpret the requirements thoroughly in accordance with the Act. Furthermore, a study programme could be provided which referred to the requirements and which offered other relevant qualifications e.g. The Welsh Baccalaureate.

### **(c) Religious Education Resources**

Reference was made to the following publications for resources:

- Two editions of a Religious Education e-zine published for Key Stage 3.
- Podcasts - snippets from the BBC programme "Bwrw Golwg"
- Articles by three authors (Noel Dyer, Huw Dylan and Catrin Roberts) who had recently been collaborating

### **(ch) External Results**

The GwE Challenge Adviser reported that the results of Summer 2016 had been generally very good, with boys making good progress and the gap between the performance of girls and boys closing.

A member expressed concern that schools were losing teachers who specialised in religious education and, in this regard, the subject's status was being lost.

In response, the GwE Challenge Adviser noted that schools were required to collaborate mainly due to budgetary cuts and that some schools, consequently, lacked Heads of Department. In terms of the subject's status, the previous thematic review by ESTYN on Religious Education did not express any concerns about the quality of lessons by teachers who were not subject specialists.

**Resolved:**                      **To accept, note and thank the Challenge Advisor for the above information.**

## **7. GWYNEDD SACRE ACTION PLAN**

An action plan for the year 2016-17 was submitted.

In his absence, reference was made to a comment by Mr Cynrig Hughes about observing good practice at schools. He was of the opinion that an effort should be made quite soon to implement this as it had been a topic of discussion for Gwynedd SACRE for a number of years, yet no action had so far been taken on the matter.

In response to the above, the GwE Challenge Adviser suggested that a SACRE meeting be held in the summer term in a different format and that approximately four teachers be invited to the meeting to make a presentation on their best practice and / or concerns. In order to facilitate arrangements, it was suggested that a request be made to the Assistant Education Quality Improvement Officer to:

- Contact schools to find out whether Heads would be willing to release teachers to attend
- Investigate whether schools could be compensated for releasing teachers
- Find out whether teachers would be willing to invite SACRE Members to observe good practice in action in relation to collective worship

The GwE Challenge Adviser agreed to provide a relatively clear brief for schools in relation to the above.

**Resolved:**    **(a) Accept and note the action plan for 2016-17.**

**(b) Ask the Assistant Education Quality Improvement Officer to act in accordance with the bullet points above, once a brief had been received by the GwE Challenge Advisor.**

## **8. WALES ASSOCIATION of SACREs**

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

Submitted minutes the previous meeting of the Association that took place on 18 November 2016 in Carmarthenshire.

The GwE Challenge Adviser noted that the meeting had been beneficial and she referred to an item within the minutes regarding good practice implemented at Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Myrddin whereby all pupils were given the opportunity to partake and present a daily activity of collective worship.

**Resolved:**                      **To accept and note the above.**

The meeting commenced at 2:00 pm and concluded at 3:35 pm.

**CHAIR**