
S.A.C.R.E – STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION 20/06/18

Present:

Gwynedd Council Members: Councillors Menna Baines, Judith Humphreys, Elin Walker Jones, Dewi Wyn Roberts and Paul Rowlinson.

Christians and Other Faiths: Dr Gwyn Lewis (Union of Welsh Baptists), Eirian Bradley Roberts (The Catholic Church).

Officers: Mai Bere (Assistant Education Officer and SACRE Clerk), Sion Huws (Senior Corporate Solicitor) and Glynda O'Brien (Members' Support and Scrutiny Officer).

Apologies: Councillors R. Medwyn Hughes and Mike Stevens, Anest Gray Frazer (Church in Wales, Alwen Watkin, Cathryn Davey, Miriam Amlyn and Heledd Jones (Teachers' Unions).

- (a) The Members' Support Officer reported that there was no quorum at the meeting due to the absence of members of the education sector. It was discussed whether or not SACRE should carry on without a quorum and in accordance with the guidance of the Senior Solicitor it was agreed to continue but to note that the meeting did not have the power to make decisions, in accordance with the SACRE Constitution.
- (b) It was suggested that an e-mail be sent to all SACRE Members to explain what happened in terms of not meeting not being quorate and to appeal to Members in future to contact the Members' Support Officer in good time if they were unable to attend.

1. PRAYER

The meeting was commenced with a prayer by Dr Gwyn Lewis.

2. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Recommended: To re-elect Councillor Paul Rowlinson as Chair of this Committee for the year 2018/19 subject to the Committee's approval at its next meeting.

3. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Recommended: To re-elect Councillor Elin Walker Jones as Vice-chair of this Committee for the year 2018/19 subject to the Committee's approval at its next meeting.

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

There were no declarations of personal interest.

4. URGENT ITEMS

No urgent items were received.

5. MINUTES

Submitted - the minutes of this committee held on 8 November 2017.

Resolved: To defer approving the minutes until the next meeting in light of the fact that the meeting was not quorate.

5.1 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Submitted - a copy of a letter dated 21 November 2017 that had been sent to the Minister for Education, Welsh Government, along with her response dated 6 December 2017 regarding the lack of Welsh language resources for the new Religious Education GCSE course.

The letter referred to a further meeting and it was suggested that we should receive feedback from the outcome of the Minister for Education's meeting with the WJEC Chief Executive.

It had been given to understand that Welsh copies were still not available.

Recommended: To note the above and ask the Assistant Education Resources Officer and the SACRE Clerk to look into the latest on the situation and to report back to the next meeting of SACRE.

6. SACRE SUPPORT

It was reported that GwE had sent a notification of the withdrawal of the support provided to Gwynedd SACRE by Miss Bethan James, Supporting Improvement Adviser, from now on.

The Assistant Education Resources Officer explained the background and noted that it was the CYNNAL company that had provided the Service and that GwE had inherited the work. It had been given to understand that providing support to SACREs was not within the national model. It was added that it was Miss Bethan James who provided the annual report to SACRE and also attended Wales Association of SACREs meetings. This involved approximately 12 - 15 days' work for her in a year.

The Members expressed their concern of losing the invaluable contribution of the Improvement Support Advisor and her guidance was crucial to SACRE discussions. Without her contribution, SACRE would be a committee without any real direction, and there was a need to press for some way to get the support back, be that on a commission basis but more specifically to provide the annual report for 2017/18.

It was suggested that the Chair should write to the Head of Education Department to convey SACRE's concern and to ask him to look into ways of being able to receive the support of the GwE Supporting Improvement Advisor or to buy in expertise from the field of religious education to provide guidance to SACRE.

Recommended: To ask the Chair to write to the Head of Education Department to convey SACRE's concern as outlined above and to ask him to look into ways of supporting SACRE.

7. MEMBERSHIP

- (a) An application had been received from a Humanist to serve on Gwynedd SACRE as a voting member.
- (b) The Senior Solicitor explained that local authorities had a statutory responsibility to create SACREs and the Constitution was the responsibility of the Cabinets of those Authorities. Of course, SACRE was allowed to co-opt Members. He referred to circular 10/94 (published by the former Welsh Office in 1994) which noted that "including the representatives of belief systems that were not tantamount to religion or a religious denomination, on SACRE A Group, was contrary to the legal provisions referred to in paragraph 102 of the circular." It was noted that the membership / constitution had not been reviewed since 1996 and therefore it was asked whether or not there was need to hold a review in light of the questions raised as to allowing people of non-religious beliefs (such as Humanists) to be full members of Group A based on the Human Rights Act 1998. It was suggested that the natural step would be to submit a report to Cabinet outlining statistics of the situation and to ask the Cabinet Members to consider reviewing the Membership and the constitution.
- (c) The Chair referred to the following figures of Gwynedd statistics deriving from the 2011 Census:

Christianity 59.5%
 Buddhism 0.3%
 Hinduism 0.2%
 Judaism 0.0%
 Islam 1.1%
 Sikhism 0.0%
 Other religion 0.5%
 No religion 29.7%
 Religion not noted 8.6%

Recommended: To ask the Senior Solicitor / Education Department to submit a report to the Cabinet with a request that they review the membership / constitution.

- (d) It was reported that Mr Gwyn Rhydderch, who was a co-opted member, had resigned from CYSAG due to his role at Coleg y Bala. It had been given to understand that Nia Williams, the Education Resources Officer for Children and Young People for the Presbyterian Church, was eager to serve on SACRE as a co-opted member.

It was further suggested that it would be useful to invite young people from School Councils to be co-opted members. It could be possible, initially, to arrange for pupils to be invited from the schools of the teachers who represented the Unions and who served on SACRE so they could travel together, and then in time, arrangements could be established for representatives to vary from area to area.

Recommended: That the Assistant Education Resources Officer:

- **Contacts Nia Williams, Education Resources Officer for Children and Young People of the Presbyterian Church, to ascertain her intentions to be a co-opted member of SACRE.**

- **Contacts the teachers representing the Unions on SACRE to ascertain whether any pupils at their schools would be interested in being co-opted to serve on SACRE.**
- **Contacts Reverend Aled Davies to ascertain whether he wishes to continue as co-opted member**

8. IMPLICATIONS OF ESTYN'S NEW FRAMEWORK ON SACRE MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

Submitted - a report outlining examples of what SACRE could monitor in light of changes to the ESTYN inspection framework that was based on five fields, namely

1. Standards
2. Welfare and attitudes to learning
3. Teaching and learning experiences
4. Care, support and guidance
5. Leadership and management

Recommended: To note the above.

9. SCHOOLS' SELF-EVALUATIONS

(a) Submitted - the school self-evaluations over two terms, namely autumn 2017 to spring 2018:

Ysgol y Moelwyn
Ysgol Friars
Ysgol Baladeulyn
Ysgol Cwm y Glo
Ysgol Sarn Bach
Ysgol Nebo
Ysgol y Gelli
Ysgol O M Edwards
Ysgol Abererch

Particular attention was drawn to the Ysgol Abererch self-evaluation which was especially good.

(b) Suzanne Roberts of Ysgol y Moelwyn was welcomed to the meeting and she guided the Members through the School self-evaluation and noted that the departmental development plan intertwined with the self-evaluation and the School's priorities. Attention was drawn to the five questions and the evidence gathered in response such as the pupils' forum, scrutiny of written and practical work and lesson observation.

It was noted that the self-evaluation was based on the subject head's knowledge of the Department's staff and pupils.

In response to questions, the following was noted:

- In terms of contact with the governing body, that governors had a discussion with the Department on what was being done to gain a better understanding which included looking at work plans, observing books and tasks.

- In terms of the Professor Donaldson Report, it was felt that Religious Education fitted into some elements but that more training and more time was needed to plan.

Recommended: (a) To accept and note the contents of the inspections and self-evaluations and in accordance with procedure to request that the Education Resources Officer sends a letter to the above schools congratulating them on their success and to note SACRE's appreciation of the efforts made by them in achieving the grades.

(b) To note and thank Suzanne Roberts for attending the meeting and for her presentation.

10. UPDATE REPORT

Submitted - an update on Religious Education and the Humanities Learning and Experience Field which was being developed as part of the New Curriculum for Wales.

During the meeting, Members were presented with the comments made by NASUWT on the proposals noting that Religious Education, History, Geography and Business should receive equal attention in terms of time and resources such as the number of lessons, specialist teachers etc. It must be ensured that the qualification requirements of Religious Education received priority and that provision was made for the Donaldson principles at secondary schools. The principles to meet were suggested as follows:

- Endeavour to get schools to appoint Religious Education subject teachers
- Ensure that religious education was a Key Stage 3 subject and not a supplement for other subjects
- Ensure that religious education received the same resources and time as the other humanities subjects
- Ensure that qualification requirements (GCSE etc.) received priority on Donaldson requirements

Recommended: To ask the Assistant Education Resources Officer to send a letter to Manon Jones, Curriculum, Assessment and Education Sub-division, Welsh Government, to convey the above-mentioned comments, and to approve them at the next SACRE meeting.

11. COLLECTIVE WORSHIP - FEEDBACK FROM MEMBERS

Submitted - the feedback form of Councillor Mike Stevens after he attended collective worship at a school in his ward.

Councillor Dewi Roberts reported that he had also attended two Schools and the worship in both schools was very different. There was a need to revisit one other School.

Recommended: To accept and note the above.

12. ANNUAL REPORT – GWYNEDD SACRE 2016/17

The Gwynedd SACRE final Annual Report for the 2016-17 academic year was submitted for members' information, as they had adopted the report at the last SACRE meeting.

A copy would be sent to the Wales Association of SACREs.

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

13. WALES ASSOCIATION of SACREs

(a) Minutes of the previous meeting

The draft minutes of the previous Association meeting, held on 9 March 2018, were submitted.

(b) To note that the next meeting of Wales Association of SACREs would take place on 6 July 2018 at Orel Môn, Llangefni, and members were encouraged to attend.

(c) Submitted - draft constitution of the Wales Association of SACREs

(ch) One nomination was submitted for a seat on the Wales Association of SACREs Work Committee.

Recommended: **To note all the above-mentioned matters.**

14. MANAGING THE RIGHT OF WITHDRAWAL FROM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Submitted - for information, a copy of the above-mentioned document that had been published recently.

15. ESTYN REPORT ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Submitted - a thematic report published by ESTYN on 12 June 2018 and attention was drawn to the recommendations.

It was reported that an e-mail would be sent to all Gwynedd schools to draw their attention to the report.

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

The meeting commenced at 2:00 pm and concluded at 3:30 pm.

CHAIR

Note: It was intended to hold an Agreed Syllabus Conference following the CYSAG meeting to determine whether or not to retain the Gwynedd Agreed Syllabus until more information is received from the Government regarding the new curriculum deriving from Professor Donaldson's report.

As the meeting was not quorate it was recommended that a discussion should be held at the start of the next meeting of CYSAG which is to be held on 7 November 2018.

