
S.A.C.R.E – STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION 08/11/17

Present: Councillor Paul J. Rowlinson (Chair)
Councillor Elin Walker Jones (Vice-chair)

Gwynedd Council Members: Councillors Menna Baines, R. Medwyn Hughes, Dewi Wyn Roberts, Mike Stevens

Christians and Other Faiths: Dr Gwyn Lewis (Presbyterian Church of Wales), Elizabeth Roberts (Union of Welsh Baptists), Eirian Bradley Roberts (Catholic Church), Anest Gray Frazer (The Church in Wales).

Teachers: Miriam Amlyn, Cathryn Davey

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

GwE: Bethan James (Supporting Improvement Adviser)

Apologies: Cllr. Judith Humphreys, Cynrig Hughes (Congregationalists), Alwen Watkin, Heledd Jones (Teacher Unions)

The Chair welcomed Anest Gray Frazer, Church in Wales representative, to her first meeting of SACRE.

1. PRAYER

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

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Councillor Dewi Wyn Roberts declared a personal interest in Item 8 - Schools' Self-Evaluation as he was a member of the Ysgol Abersoch Governing Body. 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.

3. URGENT ITEMS

(The following items had not been included on the Agenda; however, the Chair agreed to consider them under Section 100 (4)(b), Local Government Act 1972).

- (a) The Chair explained that he had received a questionnaire from ESTYN to be completed by 27 October 2017, but that he had asked for an extension in order to receive SACRE members' opinions on the responses before sending it immediately to ESTYN.

A copy of the questionnaire was presented to the Members, and the following amendments were agreed:

- (i) Add the following sentences to the boxes in the relevant places (this was done by GwE's Supporting Improvement Adviser whilst at the meeting):

"Every Councillor has a right to be a member of a Governing Body, and therefore are in a position to discuss religious education with their school's teachers and pupils.

Word of mouth suggests that the provision for primary pupils is more limited by now, *e.g. recalling a Biblical story*, rather than studying the impact of religious teachings on the lives of believers or undertake a 'project' or investigation based on a large or basic question.

Ensuring sufficient time for the subject was challenging for primary schools.

Opportunities for RE departments to work with other departments on overlapping issues are rare."

- (ii) Delete the sentence which referred to staff absences as it was irrelevant.

Resolved: Approve the questionnaire and ask the Assistant Area Education Officer to send the questionnaire to ESTYN.

- (b) The Chair reported that he had received an application from a Humanist to serve on the Gwynedd SACRE as a voting member. In the meantime, the Chair had referred the application to the Council's Monitoring Officer to ensure compliance with SACRE's constitution.

The GWE Supporting Improvement Adviser reported that there were guidelines to follow for the formation of SACRE and at the Education Committee in 1996 it had been agreed to establish the groups as follows:

- Group A - Christians and Other Faiths
- Group B - Teachers
- Group C - The Education Authority
- Group D - Co-opted Members

It was further explained that the 1993 Act which amended the 1944 Act and the 1988 Act had made it a requirement for the LEA to ensure that there was a committee constitution AND syllabus conference agreed upon by the SACRE Group A (Christian denominations and other faiths and the denominations of those faiths) representing the local community. It is a requirement for the number of representatives from each denomination and faith to broadly reflect the proportional strength of said denomination or faith in the local area, provided that it was consistent with the efficient delivery of the committee or group functions. Therefore, the statutory provisions recognised that there may be some occasions when the efficiency benefits would exceed the requirement to secure proportional direct representation.

Resolved: To note the above and await a response from the Monitoring Officer.

4. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the meeting of this Committee held on 14 June 2017, as a true record subject to the following amendments:

(a) In Welsh:

7 (c) - “fel yn y sector cynradd...” instead of “fel yn y sector ...” in the third paragraph

8 (b) (b) “7 Gorffennaf 2017 yn Wreccsam” instead of “23 Mehefin 2016 yn Rhyl”

(b) In English:

In the apologies - “Presbyterian Church of Wales” instead of “Union of Welsh Baptists”

6 (b) - Add “Talysarn” in the first paragraph

“Agreed” instead of “Cytûn” in the second paragraph

“was not fully meeting” instead of “was fully meeting” in the third paragraph

7 (a) “illness and confusion” instead of “confusion and error”

8 (b) (b) “7 July 2017 in Wrexham” instead of “23 June 2016 in Rhyl”

5. GWYNEDD SACRE DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17

The Gwynedd SACRE Draft Annual Report for the 2016-17 academic year was submitted for the members’ approval, prior to the publication of the final report.

The GwE Supporting Improvement Adviser reported that the report was a summary of SACRE discussions during the previous year from September 2016 to August 2017, and that it was before the members in order to give them an opportunity to express an opinion on the draft report.

It was explained that the function of SACRE was to advise the Education Authority on matters involving the provision of Religious Education and Collective Worship and the Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education.

Members were guided through the report and reference was made to the methods used to give constant attention to monitoring the standards of Religious Education, by scrutinising the self-evaluations of schools and it was seen that the quality of the self-evaluations had improved during the year; ESTYN’s inspection reports together with monitoring examination results.

Attention was drawn to Gwynedd SACRE’s action plan which outlined four priorities.

It was agreed for the future for schools to submit their self-evaluations during the term following an inspection.

Minor amendments were made to the draft report whilst at the meeting, and the GwE Supporting Improvement Adviser promised that she would check the document carefully prior to submitting the final report.

The GwE Supporting Improvement Adviser was thanked for preparing the Draft Annual Report.

Resolved: **RESOLVED to accept the Draft Gwynedd SACRE Annual Report for 2016-17 with thanks, and to ask the GwE Supporting Improvement Adviser to make**

any corrections and editorial amendments agreed in the meeting before publishing the final report.

6. COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

ESTYN and the Wales Association of SACREs' Supplementary Guidance in relation to collective worship in non-denominational schools was submitted.

Clarity was given on what exactly collective worship means from GwE's Supporting Improvement Adviser and it was noted that the 1988 Education Reform Act and the Wales Office's 10/94 Newsletter determined the legal requirements for collective worship at schools in Wales. Schools were asked to provide collective worship every day to every registered pupil by mainly, or completely following the Christian pattern. Collective worship could be held at any time during the school day, and did not have to be a mass - it could be provided to a class or a school year. It was explained that parents had a right to exempt their children from collective worship with schools having to agree to such cases.

SACRE Members were asked to what extent they were eager to monitor collective worship in schools. It was emphasised that there was no need to reach a conclusion on the quality of the worship, instead, the exercise would improve the Members' understanding of what was presented by the schools during worship.

It was suggested by the Members that they would be willing to attend those schools where they served on the Governing Bodies, and that it would be courteous for the education authority to contact those schools to inform them of the intention and then for the schools to invite the SACRE Members to attend when conducting collective worship.

Resolved: (a) To accept and approve the six elected members who serve on SACRE to monitor collective worship at those schools within their wards where they are governors.

(b) Ask the Assistant Education Quality Improvement Officer to contact the schools to inform them of the above intention in order for the Headteachers and Members to arrange to attend a collective worship session.

7. SCHOOLS' SELF-EVALUATIONS

(a) The Assistant Education Quality Improvement Officer guided Members through the handout submitted in which a summary of school findings was set out, drawing attention to the fact that four primary schools, and no secondary schools or special schools, had been inspected by ESTYN during the 2017 Summer term. Reference was made to ESTYN's observations under the Care, Support and Guidance paragraph, stating that religious education is given very little detail.

In regards to Ysgol Rhosgadfan and the unsatisfactory judgement under the Care, Support and Guidance paragraph, it was noted that reference was made to the provision for students with additional learning needs with pupils' spiritual, moral and social development and that it was good.

(b) Members were guided through the self-evaluations of the schools of Ysgol Abersoch and Feilnwnda in regards to the standards, the good education provision and it was pointed out that the Schools had identified elements to be addressed, such as:

- Develop pupils' extended writing skills as they would learn about another religion apart from Christianity
- More opportunities for the pupils to gain confidence when asking and answer specific questions in order to express opinions about relevant moral issues
- Ensure that regular opportunities would be provided for visitors to take part in collective worship sessions

RESOLVED: (a) 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.

(b) To ask the Assistant Education Quality Improvement Officer to correspond with those schools who have received an inspection in October to ask them to submit their self-evaluations to the next SACRE meeting in February.

8. UPDATE BY THE GWE SUPPORTING IMPROVEMENT ADVISOR

(a) Draft Self-Evaluation Form.

The GwE Supporting Improvement Officer referred to pages 32-33 of the Agenda which included the self-evaluation form sent to schools to be submitted for monitoring by SACRE.

Members were reminded that ESTYN's Inspection Framework had changed since September 2017, in co-operation with co-workers and SACRE officers, the Supporting Improvement Officer had adapted the form and a draft was submitted to the Members to ascertain their opinions on the contents.

It was explained that inspection area 1 in the new Framework referred to religious education standards, asking how well were the pupils progressing in religious education, namely being aware of the pupils' standards.

The second area referred to Well-being and attitudes towards learning - perhaps SACRE would be eager to learn how pupils felt towards religious education at School; did they enjoy the subject and did it contribute towards their development to become successful citizens.

Inspection area three referred to the children's experiences. There was an opportunity to refer to the lessons - whether the pupils had a cross-section of religions, and whether they went on visits that would help the children improve their religious education.

In terms of care, support and guidance in religious education - i.e. religious education's impact, schools were asked to note to what extent did religious education bring the community together, and whether the pupils got ample experiences in their communities.

In the context of guidance and management, it was asked to what extent did teachers scrutinise religious education, and whether they identified the strengths and weaknesses to ensure that religious education was consistently good.

The Committee's opinion was sought about the contents of the draft form above, and in response, the following points were highlighted:

- (a) That the form would be transferred to subject Heads to complete and would not necessarily be completed by the school's Headteacher.
- (b) That the request was too much for this year as Headteachers had to get to grips with the new Inspection Framework. The idea of retaining the form for another year was discussed as Headteachers had to cope with the new arrangement anyway.
- (c) Were the questions slightly generic? i.e. what evidence would be used to respond to the questions and would the child's self-development be lost?
- (d) That all other subject were banded within quartiles in KS3 except for religious education. However, schools submitted data to GwE but it was not easy to track at a wider level.
- (e) Religious education was not addressed annually in primary schools as a subject self-evaluation

One member noted that he/she would be willing to complete the form on behalf of Ysgol Eifionydd.

Resolved: To provide schools with the option of which form to complete, but perhaps choose some Schools to trial it in the New Year.

(b) The New Religious Studies GCSE

Concern was expressed in regards to the lack of textbooks for the GCSE and Higher Standard courses, namely that the books were late being published, nearly a year after the commencement of the course which added to the teachers workload.

It was mentioned that a letter was sent on 23 June 2017 to the Joint Education Committee expressing concern and requesting that schools would receive Welsh medium resources as soon as possible, but no response was received.

Further concern was expressed that teachers would be judged on the results.

Resolved: To ask the Assistant Education Quality Improvement Officer:

- (a) To correspond with the Education Minister and the Welsh Language Commissioner to express concern about the above situation.**
- (b) To refer the matter to be addressed further by the Council's Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee.**

(c) Religious Education and the new curriculum

GwE's Supporting Improvement Adviser reported that in preparation for the new curriculum that a group of innovative schools, that are responsible for the development of the Humanities curriculum, had researched other countries' curriculums and had received guidance from external experts. It was further noted that the Government had commissioned experts to prepare papers on "what's important" in religious education (Barbara Wintersgill), History (Dr Elin Jones), Geography (Elinor Rawling) and Business (Cardiff University). The Wales Association of SACREs was also commissioned to prepare a report, and Miss Bethan James noted that she had contributed to this work. It was noted that Barbara Wintersgill had identified six ideas including:

1. Parhad, Newid ac Amrywiaeth / Continuity, Change and Diversity
2. Geiriau a Thu Hwnt / Words and Beyond
3. Bywyd Da / A good Life
4. Gwneud Synnwyr o Brofiadau Bywyd / Making Sense of Life's Experiences
5. Dylanwad, Cymuned, Diwylliant a Phwêr / Influence, Community, Culture and Power

6. Y Darlun Mawr / The Big Picture

The Wales Associating of SACRE's Working Group had identified three important things:

1. Awareness of life experiences and the questions raised from them
2. Beliefs, education and exercises
3. Audit and personal responses

and a report would be submitted to the Humanities Group on 13 November.

(ch) Religious Education's E-magazine

It was noted that the fourth issue related to the environment on the HWB website.

Resolved: **To accept, note and thank GwE's Supporting Improvement Adviser for the above update.**

9. WALES ASSOCIATION of SACREs

(a) Minutes of the previous meeting

The draft minutes of the previous Association meeting, held on 7 July 2017, were submitted.

(b) Note the dates of the next meeting of the Wales Association of SACREs:

- Friday, 10 November 2017 - Civic Centre, Bridgend
- Friday, 9 March 2017, Civic Centre, Swansea

(c) An update on the process of amending the curriculum was submitted by Manon Jones, Welsh Government.

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

(b) To note the following dates.

(c) To note the update.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 4.10 pm.

CHAIR