

Committee :	SACRE
Date :	7 November 2018
Title :	SACRE Composition
Report by :	Sion Huws/ Mai Bere
Remit :	Seek SACRE's views

1. Background

1.1 The report's remit is to obtain SACRE's views on its composition prior to consideration by the Cabinet.

1.2 Under the 1996 Education Act the LEA has a duty to establish a standing council to advise on religious education.

1.3 The 1996 Education Act stipulates that SACRE should include the following groups:

- A group who represent the Christian nominations and the other religions that in the LEA's judgement, represent the area's main religious traditions ('group A')
- A group who represent the associations of those teachers whom the LEA judge should be represented, taking the area's circumstances into consideration.
- A group to represent the LEA

1.4 Only the above representative groups are entitled to vote, and every group will have one vote.

1.5 SACRE itself can also co-opt members (but will not have a vote)

2. Application from Bangor Humanists

2.1 Bangor Humanists have submitted an application for SACRE to appoint a humanist to be a fully affiliated member (Annexe)

2.2 This has been the subject of considerable discussion at a national level, with the Humanists arguing that refusal to include a humanist as a full member is contrary to the Human Rights Act and the European Convention on Human Rights.

2.3 Whilst a number of authorities are co-opted members, as a rule, they are not allowed to be full members. That follows guidance contained in Circular 10/94 regarding the situation of other faith systems, where paragraph 103 contains the proviso:

“Including faith systems representatives such as humanism, who do not equate to a religion or religious denomination on ...SACRE A group, would be contrary to the legal provisions mentioned in paragraph 102 of the circular”.

2.4 In response to a request submitted by Wales SACRE Association for advice and guidance to Kirsty Williams AM, Cabinet Secretary for Education Welsh Government, to LEA Directors on 3 May 2018 **[Annexe]**. She confirmed the views of the Welsh Government, that non-religious faith system representatives can be appointed to Group A so as to ensure that SACRE fully reflects the faiths of the communities they serve, and in compliance with current legislation. This letter specifically supersedes paragraph 103 Circular 10/94, and states:

“...that non-religious beliefs that are cherished by the individual to be appointed must be analogous with a religious faith, such as humanism. So as to be “analogous”, we consider that it is imperative that the non-religious faiths, in accordance with the cases law under the European Convention on Human Rights and 1998 Human Rights Act, reach the required level in terms of powers, responsibility, cohesion and importance in ensuring safety under the Convention’s Rights.

2.5 This allows the authority to give the Humanists representative full membership (as a member of Group A).

3. SACRE’s composition

3.1 Current membership is as follows

Christians and Other Religions (Group A)

- The Methodist Church (1)
- The Independents (1)
- Presbyterian Church of Wales (1)
- Baptists Union of Wales (1)
- The Catholic Church (1)
- The Church in Wales (1)

Teachers who represent the following Unions

- ASCL (1)
- NAS/UWT (1)
- UCAC (1)
- NUT (1)
- ATL (1)

Elected Members Membership (based on political balance) (7)

- Plaid Cymru (4)
- Independents (3)

3.2 The membership's composition was decided by Gwynedd Council Education Committee in 1996. As the composition of SACRE Group A has not been reviewed since its establishment in 1996, it would therefore be both appropriate and timely to consider the entire composition of SACRE, as well as the specific application from the Humanists.

3.3 The number of representatives appointed to Group A to represent every nomination or religion that require representation, roughly reflect the proportional strength of the nomination or religion in the local area, as far as is consistent in efficiently achieving the group's functions.

3.4 The Education Secretary's letter explains:

- *an appointment is conditional on the relevant LEA's view as to whether such a representative would assist to ensure that the relevant traditions in the area served by the LEA are appropriately reflected in Group A. Decisions on appointments are the LEA's responsibility, as it is best placed to assess whether SACRE has the required specialization and experience to appropriately fulfil its function."*

The LEA therefore has to decide whether the current composition of Group A meets this requirement.

4. Evidence

4.1 It appears that the decision taken on SACRE's composition in 1996 is based on the following information

The Roman Catholic Church	11.1%
The Church in Wales	18.4%
The Presbyterian Church in Wales	43.3%
The Methodist Church	5.6%
The Union of Independents	16.3%
The Baptists Union	4.3%
Other nominations	1%

4.2 The most recent figures we have are those from the 2011 Gwynedd Census, and a summary is provided below

	COUNTY	ARFON	DWYFOR	MEIRION
Christianity	59.5%	55.6%	64.6%	62.3%
Buddhism	0.3%	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%
Hinduism	0.2%	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%
Judaism	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Islam	1.1%	1.9%	0.4%	0.3%
Sikh	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other religion arall	0.5%	0.5%	0.4%	0.6%
No religion	29.7%	32.5%	25.8%	27.8%

Religion not given	8.6%	8.6%	8.4%	8.6%
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4.3 In addition to this evidence, requirement regarding representation to ensure that SACRE is effectively and efficiently achieved needs to be taken into consideration

- The committee would benefit from hearing the voices of various religions in their discussions that has a core role to the Religious Education Learning Field curriculum.
- It would promote contact between Headteachers, Teachers and Pupils with various faiths directly face to face rather than being limited to books only.
- It would provide an opportunity to create bridges and promote a more tolerant community consisting of various faiths.

5. Recommendation

5.1 SACRE's views are sought on its composition and specifically

- (a) whether the area's relevant traditions are appropriately reflected on GROUP A.
- (b) Humanists request for Group A membership