
S.A.C.R.E. – STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
08-10-08

Present: Councillor Pat Larsen, (Chairman)
Councillor Huw Edwards, (Vice-chairman)

Gwynedd Council Members: Councillors Selwyn Griffiths, Aeron Jones, Guto Rhys Thomas, Stephen Churchman.

Christians and other religions: Mrs. Ruth Davies, (Baptist Union of Wales), Mr Cynrig Hughes, (The Independents), Mr Gwyn Hefin Jones, (Presbyterian Church of Wales), Mr Wyn Myles Meredith, (The Methodist Church), Rev Canon Tegid Roberts, (The Church in Wales, Bangor Diocese)

Teachers: Mr Noel Dyer, (UCAC), Mr Paul Mathews Jones, (ASCL).

Co-opted Members: Mr Rheinallt Thomas,

Officers: Mr Owen Owens, (Senior Schools Service Manager), Miss Bethan James (Humanities Adviser), Mr Ioan Hughes, (Committee Officer)

Apologies: Councillor Dafydd Roberts, Carol Llywelyn Jones, (Advisory Teacher - Humanities) and Eirian Bradley-Roberts, (The Roman Catholic Church),

1. PRAYER

The meeting was opened with a prayer from Mr Rheinallt Thomas.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

The following members declared a personal interest for the reasons noted:

- Councillor Pat Larsen in item 10 on the agenda - School Inspections, because her son was the Head Teacher of Ysgol Rhostryfan.
- Councillor Aeron Jones in item 10 on the agenda - School Inspections, because he was a member of the Board of Governors of Ysgol Rhostryfan.

Members were of the opinion that it was not a prejudicial interest. They did not withdraw from the meeting and took full part in the discussion on the item.

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a) The Chairman took advantage of the opportunity to welcome several new members to the meeting and they were all given an opportunity to introduce themselves.
- b) Kindest regards were sent to Mr John Blake, the Education Officer, who had suffered an injury in a recent accident and to Carol Llewelyn Jones, who was recovering after receiving surgery.

4. TRIBUTE

A tribute was paid to Mr Hywel Evans, who had died recently, by Mr Rheinallt Thomas, who referred to his exceptional contribution to Religious Education throughout Wales.

Mr Evans had initiated the work of leading Religious Education courses at Bangor University in 1962, and later in his career he was Head of Ysgol Aber Conwy and Cartrefle College.

Mr Thomas referred specifically to the work of Hywel Evans as the first Chairman of the Curriculum Council for Wales and the way in which he had established strong foundations, thus ensuring that Wales went her own way.

Up to his death, Mr Evans had been the Vice-secretary of the Wales Association of SACRE's and was the Honourable President of the Religious Education Movement Wales.

Underlining his innovative work, Mr Thomas referred to Hywel Evans's contribution as the person responsible for all Youth Leaders courses in the 60's and early 70's when he worked in the College in Bangor.

Mr Evans leaves five children. Sympathy was extended to his family in their bereavement and everyone stood for a minute's silence as a mark of respect.

5. MINUTES

Submitted: Minutes of the meeting of SACRE held on 18 June 2008.

RESOLVED: To accept and approve the minutes as a true record.

6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Reference was made to item number 5 in the minutes, Guidance on Inspecting Collective Worship in Non-Denominational Schools.

Concern was expressed that the document had been prepared by ESTYN in English, prior to sending it for translation to the Trosol company. Some members were of the opinion that members of staff of a body such as ESTYN should be able to prepare such documents in Welsh.

Others were of the opinion that priority should be given to the quality of the final document.

The Humanities Adviser noted that she had not been involved with the preparation of the document or discussions regarding the appointments. However, she was aware that the Religious Education Advisers Group had been continuously corresponding, inviting the Inspector in charge of Religious Education to attend meetings, however, thus far no one who was competent had turned up.

RESOLVED to request that efforts should be made to strengthen ESTYN resources so that they are able to prepare documents in the field of Religious Education through the medium of the Welsh language.

7. DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT OF SACRE

The Humanities Adviser submitted the Draft Annual Report of Gwynedd's SACRE for the 2007-08 academic year for members' approval, prior to issuing the final copy.

She referred to methods used for continuous attention being given to standards of Religious Education. There were no longer inspections for every subject in the National

Curriculum and therefore not so many reports on Religious Education were received. However, in order to continue to monitor Religious Education standards, Gwynedd schools would be requested to submit a summary of their self evaluations during their inspection year.

This would outline successes and matters which would receive further attention by them in the subsequent year. Work had already started on the consideration of these reports.

Further reference was made to the various steps taken by the Education Authority in responding to the work undertaken by SACRE as the standards monitoring body.

Considering the connection with the Assembly Government, the Humanities Adviser believed that the work of DCELLS, which introduced the National Exemplar Framework for Religious Education, would be easier because the majority of Welsh Authorities had adopted the Exemplar Syllabus. This would make it easier for ensuring that Religious Education Standards were on a national rather than at a county level.

In response to an enquiry, it was confirmed that it was not proposed to rearrange the course for developing the oral skills of pupils in Religious Education lessons. The course had been cancelled because of illness and now it was proposed that the contents of the course would be applied to another course which was to be held in Arfon this term and in Meirion/Dwyfor next term.

It was also confirmed that a large number of Gwynedd teachers had attended primary courses held between April 2007 and March 2008, although details of the numbers were not available for inclusion in the agenda.

In response to an enquiry, the work achieved in promoting children's enthusiasm by the use of the 'Moodle' website on the computer was outlined.

RESOLVED to accept the report and to thank officers involved in its production.

8. 2008 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION RESULTS

The report of the Humanities Adviser was submitted on the results of Religious Education in 2008. With regard to KS3, it was noted that the report was submitted for information only because pupils had not faced the same tests or general assessment tasks across the county. Also, teachers had not received regular opportunities to moderate pupils' work with other departments.

Consideration was given to GCSE results in 2008 and amongst the matters noted was the increase in the number of candidates, - 79 in 2007 and 197 in 2008. It was added that girls achieved better results than boys but 74.6% of candidates achieved grades between A* and C. It was noted that 31.1% of candidates achieved an A* grade.

The candidates were from 12 Gwynedd schools and from the two remaining schools, the Humanities Adviser was confident that one school would have a candidate next year, since a new enthusiastic teacher had been appointed.

The Humanities Adviser referred to the future of Religious Education and the value of the 'Short Course' available to Year 10 pupils facing the statutory requirement to follow a Religious Education course, although they would not always be sitting an examination in the subject. The 'short course' provided half the GCSE course, leading to an examination which could acknowledge the work achieved.

It was emphasised that the Short Course was extremely up to date, with many pupils proceeding to studying the Religious Education course in the sixth form. It was added that the number of other courses offered in schools had increased and consequently, there would be a decrease in the number of those following Religious Education courses.

RESOLVED to accept the report.

9 TEACHING RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE CLASSROOM

a) A presentation was given by Mrs Eleri Moss, Head of Humanities at Ysgol y Moelwyn, providing an outline of what had led to the school receiving Excellent, Grade 1 in Key Stage 3 and 4, following an inspection by Estyn Inspectors.

The teacher referred to patterns followed in lessons, explaining that this included setting a specific aim at the beginning and a discussion on the success of achieving the aim at the end.

There had been constant developments from the aspect of introducing Religious Education at Ysgol y Moelwyn and by now there were no difficulties in attracting boys and girls to study the subject. The work undertaken to ensure that the activities at the beginning of lessons drew pupils' attention was outlined.

Also, tasks were arranged for mind development and the Inspector had given considerable praise to a Year 10 lesson on 'Is there a God?' In the lesson, pupils discussed the work in pairs. When an opportunity was given for a final opinion, only two pupils were certain that there was a God and a number submitted arguments in favour and against and others were certain that there was no God.

The Inspector referred specifically to the way every pupil had expressed an opinion. He also drew attention to the fact that only two pupils had stated definitely that there was a God, and yet, a high percentage of pupils in the school had chosen to study the subject.

The Inspector applauded the system used for assessing pupils' work, providing an opportunity for the teacher to praise the work and also what would have been desirable to include in the work. The teacher had noted that the Humanities Adviser had introduced this idea to them.

The teacher added that various activities, such as drama, had been arranged and she referred to the collaboration of other teachers in the school with this work.

Visits to a number of places of worship had been arranged so that pupils became aware of the customs of other religions. A special experience for Year 10 pupils had been a trip to Poland to visit Auschwitz. Various workshops and minor visits had also arranged for Year 11 pupils.

There were some shortcomings, including punctuation and spelling mistakes, there was a need to use more of the interactive white board and the failure of some pupils to contribute to discussions in full classes, although this was not true when working in pairs or groups.

It was noted that the Inspector had referred to the connection between SACRE and the school. Members of SACRE were eager to draw attention to this.

To close, the teacher thanked both members of SACRE and the Humanities Adviser for their assistance and constructive advice.

Mr Wyn Myles Meredith referred to the Dr Daniel Williams Trust which existed in Meirionnydd, and he suggested that Ysgol y Moelwyn could apply for financial assistance for various trips.

Mrs Moss was thanked for her presentation and she and all the department at Ysgol y Moelwyn were congratulated on the success.

b) CD's

The Humanities Adviser submitted information regarding CD's which were available as a resource which could be of benefit to both Primary and Secondary Schools. Already the CD 'What's It Like to be a Christian' produced by the R.E. Quest company, was in several schools. By now the CD had been modified and improved but was not available in Welsh.

Also, the Humanities Adviser referred to a CD entitled 'The Jewish Way of Life,' by the The Pears Foundation. It was noted that this CD was not available in Welsh and it was not proposed for it to be translated.

A number of members believed that CD's could be an added resource for schools but they were eager for them to be available bilingually.

It was also suggested that it would be better to release CD's to schools, and then they would be able to choose what they required to be translated.

RESOLVED to write to the Subject Officer of DCELLS, Denize Morris, asking her to enquire into the possibility of producing Welsh medium CD's.

10. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND DCELLS

The report of the Humanities Adviser was submitted on the conference held in Flint on 4 October 2008 on 'Religious Education for Young Adults 14-19' under the auspices of DCELLS and Wales Association of SACRE's.

It was extremely useful that it had been possible to attend a conference either at the St. Richard Gwyn Roman Catholic High School in Flint or at St. David's College, Cardiff. Video – conferencing equipment had been used to connect speakers attending both sites.

The officer referred to presentations received during the morning with special attention given to the following fields:

- i) Contribution of Religious Education to core learning for 14-19 year old learners – speaker, Denize Morris, DCELLS Subject Officer.
- ii) One day conference held by the DARE2ENGAGE movement as they encouraged 16-19 year old pupils to 'Deal with the Spiritual' – speaker Lat Baylock (RE TODAY)
- iii) The importance that police officers showed an understanding of the cultural and religious beliefs of the communities they were serving – speaker Pam Kelly, Detective Chief Superintendent Dyfed – Powys Police.

Also, Ian Russell, Professor of Public Health at Bangor University, had shown that professional training for health workers had not as yet fully explored the influence of beliefs and faith on health.

Emyr Williams and Alice Pyke, who were RE graduates, expressed their personal experiences of Religious Education. The response of members of the 'Funky Dragon' to questionnaires formulated to gather what were the perceptions of young people in Wales of Religious Education, was outlined.

Also present was Jane Hutt, Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, who welcomed the attempts of teachers and LA officers, DCELLS and the Wales Association of SACRE's attempts to work together.

During the afternoon, valuable teaching and learning materials were distributed with conference delegates given the opportunity to test some of the activities. Reference was made to bilingual material available. It was also noted that DCELLS had published 'Religious Education – Guidelines for learners between 14-19 years old' in order to ensure the provision of high quality Religious Education for this age range.

RESOLVED to accept the report with thanks to the Humanities Adviser for attending the conference and for the presentation.

11. SCHOOL INSPECTIONS

Submitted:

(a) Information on the contents of the school inspection reports under Section 28, Education Act 2005, in relation to Religious Education and the Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development.

(b) A summary of the self evaluation of the following schools:

- **Ysgol Gwaun Gynfi**
- **Ysgol y Ganllwyd**
- **Ysgol Y Gorlan, Tremadog,**
- **Ysgol Crud y Werin,**
- **Ysgol Beuno Sant, Y Bala**
- **Ysgol Tryfan.**

The Humanities Adviser reported that nine schools in Gwynedd had been inspected since the last meeting of this Committee. Only one of these, namely Ysgol Talsarnau, had received an inspection of Religious Education as a specific subject and the school received a Grade 2 with no important shortcomings noted.

With the remainder of schools, attention was given to Key Question 3, which referred to 'How well do learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?'

Seven of the schools received a Grade 2, with Ysgol y Gorlan, Tremadog receiving a Grade 1.

The Humanities Adviser noted that the observations made regarding the spiritual development of the children praised the schools' efforts.

Reference was made to the reports received on the Self Evaluation of Schools and they were thanked for their co-operation and the way in which they identified their targets for the forthcoming year.

RESOLVED: To accept and note the content of the inspections and self evaluations and to ask,(in accordance with procedure), the Education Officer to send a letter to the aforementioned schools, congratulating them on their success and to note SACRE's appreciation of the efforts made by them in achieving the grades.

12. WALES ASSOCIATION OF SACREs

a) Meeting of the Association

The minutes of the Association held on 26 June 2008 in Mold were submitted and it was confirmed that Mr Wyn Myles Meredith was present.

RESOLVED to accept the minutes as a true record.

b) Attendance

A letter was submitted which had been received from the Secretary of the Wales Association of SACRE's regarding attendances at meetings.

It was noted in the letter that concerns had been expressed because of the low attendance.

The letter was considered and it was noted that the attendance of the Gwynedd area had been weak at meetings in the past. Reference was made to the contribution of Mr Wyn Myles Meredith who had been one who regularly attended meetings of the Association.

Reference was made to the importance of the meetings and dates of forthcoming meetings were noted.

RESOLVED: that members should hold further discussions in an attempt to strengthen the representation of Gwynedd in meetings of the Association.

The meeting commenced at 2pm and concluded at 4:15pm

CHAIRMAN