
S.A.C.R.E. – STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION 20.02.13

Present:

Councillor E. Selwyn Griffiths - Chairman
Councillor Gareth Thomas - Vice-chairman

Gwynedd Council Members: Councillors Tom Ellis, Huw Edwards, Jean Forsyth, Louise Hughes

Christians and Other Faiths: Mr Wyn Myles Meredith (Methodist Church), Mr Cynrig Hughes (Independent Church), Eirian Bradley Roberts (Catholic Church) and the Reverend Robert Townsend (Church in Wales).

Co-opted Member: Mr Rheinalt Thomas

Teachers: Mrs Alwen Watkins (ASCL), Mr Noel Dyer, (UCAC) and Mrs Miriam Amlyn (NAS/UWT)

Officers: Mr Ken Robinson (Assistant Education Officer and SACRE Clerk), Miss Bethan James (Humanities Adviser) and Ioan Hughes (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer)

Apologies: Cllr. John Brynmor Hughes, Rev. Deian Evans (Presbyterian Church of Wales), Mrs Ruth Davies (Wales Baptists Union).

1. PRAYER

The meeting was commenced with a prayer by Mr Noel Dyer.

2. THANKS

The Chairman thanked the Vice-chairman for his willingness to chair the previous meeting on 24 October 2012 when he had been absent due to ill-health.

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Huw Edwards to the meeting who had been suffering a period of ill-health.

The Chairman thanked everyone for the support he had received when he had been going through a period off ill-health and he noted that this emphasised the value of friendship.

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any members present.

4. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee, held on 24 October 2012, as a true record.

5. SCHOOLS' SELF-EVALUATIONS

The Assistant Education Officer and SACRE Clerk guided Members through the following self-evaluations and noted that seven schools had responded to his request to submit self-evaluations following recent inspections.

i) Ysgol Abercaseg

The school noted above was an Infants School in Bethesda and it was noted that the school had received an excellent inspection. Specific reference was made to the fact that the school had been awarded 'excellent' in connection with every Key Question.

It was noted that this standard was relatively unique and the officer noted that the Chief Inspector had stated that this school was one of the best he had ever inspected.

In relation to Key Question 1, it was noted that the spiritual, personal, social and ethical development was excellent.

In terms of Collective Worship, it was noted that the school provided an excellent service for the pupils.

The officer added that the Authority was extremely proud of the school's success. In addition, Estyn was pleased with the standards, and consequently the school had been invited to offer three case studies that would be used by Authorities and in other schools all around Wales.

The Humanities Advisor explained that the requirements of Religious Education were different for children in the foundation phase and that it was identified as 'People, Beliefs and Questions'.

The members emphasised that they were pleased to hear about the school's excellent results.

ii) Ysgol Abererch

The school noted above was a small rural school with a relatively inexperienced Head teacher.

In relation to Key Question 1 the Head teacher noted that obtaining real life artefacts (rather than pictures) would enrich the learning as was likely to be more memorable for the pupils.

It was noted that the Head teacher had decided to employ a teacher who had vast experience of learning and coordinating Religious Education and it was noted that this was a strength.

iii) Ysgol Borth-y-gest

It was noted that one of the strengths of the abovementioned school during the inspection was the work to enrich the children's experience through a combination of good work on and off the site through various visits and extra-curricular activities.

Furthermore, the Head teacher expressed his desire to look for opportunities to teach Religious Education on a cross-curricular basis.

A member noted that there were several things in the self-evaluation which deserved high praise and that the Head teacher had been modest in giving the school a score of 'good' rather than 'excellent'.

iv) Ysgol Felinwnda

The school noted above was a very rural school with approximately two dozen pupils attending the school. The Assistant Education Officer and SACRE Clerk noted that the Chief Inspector had noted that the welfare attitudes were a strength in the school.

In terms of Key Question 1, it was noted that questionnaire replies indicated that children felt safe in the school and knew that there was someone there to listen to their problems. The Assistant Education Officer and SACRE Clerk noted that this was a reflection of the homely atmosphere that existed in the school.

The Humanities Advisor referred to the fact that the children were aiming towards level 4 and 5 in the field of Religious Education by the end of Key Stage 2 with the remainder of the class working at levels that corresponded with their personal development.

v) Ysgol Llandygai

The school noted above was a church school and reference was made to the very thorough self-evaluation. It was noted that considerable attention was given to collective worship in the school.

The Humanities Advisor noted that the standards were good in the school but that regular efforts were being made to ensure improvement. She added that examples of the school's work had been used on a national level in the past for the Government's Key Stage 2 Religious Education guidelines.

The Representative of the Church in Wales said that work was being undertaken in the school in order to discover whether attending a Church School had a positive or a negative impact on the pupils' education.

The school had already established a link with St Mary's Centre in Abergwyngregyn who specialised in this field. Consequently, some changes had been made in the school and they had begun studying the impact of these changes.

The member expressed his willingness to give a presentation on the background and work of Church Schools, if his fellow members wished.

vi) Ysgol Foelgron

It was noted that the school was arranging educational visits, which enriched the pupils' work, not only to local places of worship but also to Bardsey Island.

It was added that collaborating with another school was an obvious element in this school. They were collaborating with Ysgol Llanystumdwy, which was also a Church School. This collaboration provided the Foundation Phase teachers with an opportunity to discuss various issues with the Religious Education Advisor.

The Chairman noted that the two schools were quite a distance away from each other and that it was nice that the collaboration existed.

In terms of collective worship, it was noted that there was a special atmosphere and ethos during the services. Specific attention was drawn to the fact that the older children were responsible for this as they played appropriate music when entering and leaving the hall, obtained the relevant resources and adorned a relevant stained window with a cross, candle and other religious symbols.

It was noted that some of the school's work had been used in the latest editions of Religious Education Concepts.

Reference was made to the work that was being undertaken by *Cyfeillion Coleg y Bala* in schools.

vii) Ysgol Tudweiliog

Reference was made to the observations that had been made in the Estyn inspection report held in January 2012, which had stated that the pupils were 'polite' and showed respect and care towards adults and towards their peers.

In terms of Key Question 2, it was noted that the learning was consistently good throughout the school.

RESOLVED:

a) To accept and note the contents of the inspections and self-evaluations and in accordance with the procedure to request that the Assistant Education 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) That a presentation is given by the Reverend Robert Townsend, (the representative of the Church in Wales), in a meeting of this committee in the future, on the background and work of Church Schools

6. SACRE'S RESPONSE AND GUIDANCE

6a. Submitted – a report by the Humanities Advisor noting that her term in the post with 'Cynnal' was coming to an end on 31 March 2013. As a result of the changes she would be working as part of a new service across north Wales. However, she did not anticipate that her link with Gwynedd SACRE would be cut entirely, although she would be presenting different information on the standards of Religious Education in the schools.

The Humanities Advisor referred to various courses that had been held recently and she drew attention to the following main points:

- Religious Education had been addressed in a course that had been held for the primary sector before Christmas;
- A five day intense course on Humanities that had been arranged for a small crew of Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 teachers was coming to an end;
- The theme of the course noted above was peace, and some of what had been seen was used in the self-evaluations of some of the schools as part of the Religious Education work.
- Those attending the course would prepare an assignment on Humanities before sharing each other's work;
- Courses had been held for secondary school teachers who taught GCSE courses with leadership from GCSE examiners;
- A session had been held for secondary school teachers where specific attention had been given to the subject's standards and the opportunities available to reach a good literacy level;
- A course called 'Data Reading' had been held for those who taught Humanities in the Secondary Sector. As part of the course, anything that involved a number was used as an unreligious source within the context of Religious Education.

6b The Humanities Advisor referred to the HMS that had been held by the Wales Association of SACREs for Key Stage 3 teachers.

She elaborated on a series of training sessions that had been arranged by the Wales Association of SACREs. The Wales Association of SACREs paid the providers' fees and the Local Authorities provided further financial support in relation to arranging a location for the training and refreshments. The Humanities Advisor gave thanks for the support received.

She used a power point presentation to report in full on the value of the training and specific attention was given to the discussions that had been held regarding the response to the report of the Chief Moderator of Teacher Assessments and the teachers' desire to consider the tasks that were being set. Furthermore, the teachers had been given an opportunity to discuss basic and challenging questions that could form part of Religious Education lessons. In addition, attention was given to the difference between these extreme questions and religious questions. Also, attention was given to questions regarding the human condition.

It was confirmed that the response of Gwynedd schools had been very positive and the attendance was encouraging.

6c. Attention was given to the implications of the end of the CYNNAL advisory service and how SACRE could undertake its duties in the future.

Reference was made to the duties of the new service, but it was noted that full job descriptions had not been received thus far.

In terms of Gwynedd SACRE, the Humanities Advisor expressed some concern in terms of the methods that could be used to monitor the standards of Religious Education in schools.

As a result of the changes, the Chairman referred to the exceptional work of the Humanities Advisor throughout the years. He added that he admired and appreciated the guidance she had provided him.

He further emphasised that there was particular value to the support that had been received and he did not wish to see this support being reduced.

Other members reiterated this appreciation and concern was expressed that the change would mean that the provision would be much poorer. The Humanities Advisor was wished well in her new post.

7. WASACRE SURVEY OF SACREs in Wales – June 2012

a) Submitted – a report by WASACRE on the survey of SACREs in Wales.

b) It was explained that the recommendations for the SACREs in Wales gave specific attention to representation. This meant that consideration could be given as to whether or not the representation on Gwynedd SACRE was acceptable and whether or not there was a need to consider any change.

c) One of the co-opted members noted that a lot of the report was less relevant to Gwynedd and Anglesey than to other areas in Gwynedd due to the nature of the society. Therefore he had some doubts as to the value of appointing a working group to submit feedback to the SACRE on the report's implications.

ch) In response, the representative of the Church in Wales said that he did not want to see the report being disregarded.

d) Upon the Chairman's casting vote, the proposal to appoint a working group to submit feedback to the SACRE on the implications of the report fell.

dd) Submitted – information regarding recommendations that had been made to the Wales Association of SACREs and it was agreed that consideration could be given to the various issues by including them of the agenda of the Gwynedd SACRE meetings.

9. WALES ASSOCIATION of SACREs

a) Submitted - the minutes of the previous meeting of the Association held on 23 November, 2012 in Merthyr Tudful.

b) The Humanities Advisor noted that Religious Education in the Secondary Sector had received considerable attention in the meeting.

c) In response to an enquiry, it was noted that these were draft minutes, and that they would be provided bilingually once they had been approved.

ch) It was confirmed that the meeting of the Association would be held in Caernarfon on 19 June, 2013 and a request was made for strong support for the occasion.

d) Reference was made to the work of the Gwynedd CYSAG representative, Mr Wyn Meredith and his willingness to attend the meetings of the Association on a regular basis.

RESOLVED:

a) To accept the information

b) To nominate Mr Wyn Myles Meredith (in his absence) and Councillor Louise Hughes to act as members of the Executive Committee of the Wales Association of SACREs;

c) To nominate Mr Wyn Myles Meredith (in his absence) to act as Vice-chair of the Wales Association of SACREs, if he is willing to have his name put forward.

10. ANNUAL REPORT – GWYNEDD SACRE

Submitted – for information, the final copy of the Annual Report of Gwynedd SACRE 2011/12

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 4.00 pm.

CHAIRMAN