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

07/11/18

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

Gwynedd Council Members: Councillors Menna Baines, Judith Humphreys, Dewi Wyn Roberts, Mike Stevens.

Christians and Other Faiths: Eirian Bradley-Roberts (The Catholic Church), Tracy Ann Richards Jones (Bangor Diocese), Elisabeth M Roberts (Union of Welsh Baptists)

Teachers: Cathryn Davey (Ysgol Llanystumdwy), Miriam Amlyn (NASUWT)

Officers: Mai Bere (Assistant Education Officer and SACRE Clerk), Siôn Huws (Senior Corporate Solicitor) and Einir Rh. Davies (Members' Support Officer).

Apologies: Cllr R. Medwyn Hughes, Anest Gray Frazer (Church in Wales), Alwen Watkin and Heledd Jones (Teachers Unions)

1. PRAYER

The meeting was opened with a prayer from Councillor Paul Rowlinson.

2. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Resolved: To elect Councillor Paul Rowlinson as Chair of this Committee for 2018/19.

3. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Resolved: To elect Councillor Elin Walker Jones as Vice-chair of this Committee for 2018/19.

4. APOLOGIES

The above-mentioned apologies were received.

5. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

There were no declarations of personal interest.

6. URGENT ITEMS

No urgent items were received.

7. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this Committee that took place on 8 November 2017 and 20 June 2018, as a true record.

8. AGREED SYLLABUS CONFERENCE

Miriam Amlyn expressed her disappointment as the material continued to be unavailable in Welsh, despite it being available in English. It was noted that this was a problem in other subjects as well. It was confirmed that a letter had already been written to Kirsty Williams, noting the above concern.

Concern was expressed amongst the Members again as the material was only available in English. It was suggested that the Chair should consider writing another clear and strongly worded letter for the attention of the Cabinet Member, Kirsty Williams, the Language Commissioner, Siân Gwenllïan, Garem Jackson, with a copy to be sent to Dyfrig Siencyn, Eluned Morgan and Dilwyn Williams.

It was noted that there could possibly be further changes in 2020 and in light of this, consideration should be given to adhering to the exemplar Framework for the time being.

Recommended: To ask the Chair to write to the above to express the concern of SACRE about the lack of Welsh-medium materials, and to keep to the current Framework for the time being.

9. SACRE CONSTITUTION

(a) A request had been received from the Humanists to serve as voting members on the Gwynedd SACRE.

(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; however, the SACRE could co-opt members. Reference was made to a letter dated 3 May 2018 from Kirsty Williams, noting that Welsh Government's current view was:

"to ensure compatibility with the Human Rights Act 1998 the provisions relating to the constitutions of SACREs and ASCs in the 1996 Act are to be interpreted as permitting the appointment of persons who represent holders of non-religious beliefs in the same way as they permit the appointment of persons who represent holders of religious beliefs..." She went on to note, *"an appointment is dependent on the relevant local authority's opinion as to whether such a representative would help ensure that the relevant traditions in the local authority's area are appropriately reflected in Group A."*

(c) It was noted that the membership / constitution had not been reviewed since 1996. It was questioned whether the relevant traditions of the area were being reflected appropriately in Group A, and views were sought on the Humanists' request to be members of Group A.

(ch) The following points were raised when discussing the above:

- i. What happened in other Authorities?
- ii. The guidance in the GCSE course was that Humanists could be invited to schools to speak.
- iii. Was Humanism a belief system, rather than a religion?
- iv. Shouldn't we welcome as much diversity as possible in Group A, bearing in mind the recent situation where there was no quorum at a meeting?

Reference was also made to the following observations -

- The Committee would benefit from hearing the voices of various religions in their discussions which was essential for the Religious Education Learning Field curriculum.
- It would promote contact between Headteachers, Teachers and Pupils of various beliefs directly face-to-face.
- It would be an opportunity to build bridges and promote a society that is more tolerant of various beliefs.
- It was confirmed that Humanism was introduced in some of Gwynedd's schools

It was confirmed that the Wales Association of SACREs had appointed a Humanist on its Working Committee and shouldn't SACRE reflect what was being taught?

There was a need to be careful in case of giving priority to some beliefs and such requests needed to be managed carefully.

Were there any criteria?

This was an opportunity to learn and share expertise.

Recommended: That the SACRE Committee would be favorable to evidence-based requests, with the condition that non-religious beliefs be taught in Gwynedd Schools. Referring to the specific application, it was confirmed that the inclusion of the Humanists to Group A.

It was reported that a discussion had arisen at the previous meeting regarding the possibility of inviting school pupil(s) to be a part of the current membership in order to hear the voice of the pupil. The principle was discussed for the purposes of being inclusive; however, it was noted that practical matters existed that meant that this would not be possible, such as co-travelling to meetings. Some highlighted their concern that they were not certain of their purpose as the voice of any pupil was clear in the school and it was questioned in what context the pupil would be involved in any decisions?

Recommended: To withdraw the proposal.

10. GWYNEDD SCHOOLS' SELF-EVALUATION

Mr Rhys Glyn (Headteacher of Ysgol Cefn Coch, Penrhyndeudraeth), was welcomed to the meeting to discuss the relationship he had developed between the curriculum, personal education and religious education.

He shared examples of the pupils' work and he confirmed that Religious Education was not taught as a subject, however, the school developed children holistically, with Religious Education filtering into this naturally.

Very positive comments were received from the Committee and Rhys Glyn was congratulated for the work. It was noted that it was burdensome to do everything separately and that multi-sensory experiences with children leading the work. He noted that the role of governors had been developed with the governors taking part in all aspects, including scrutinising the work once the portfolio had been collected.

It was noted, since Donaldson, that there was a need to develop in every field, but that the creative element, the voice of the children and the emphasis on experiences was to be welcomed.

11. OVERVIEW OF GWYNEDD SCHOOLS' SELF-EVALUATIONS

Recommended: To note and accept the contents of the Report.

12. PROFESSIONAL RE OFFICER FOR SACRE

The content of Libby Jones's letter, requesting a representative from Gwynedd, was noted. Miriam Amlyn was asked to consider this.

Recommended: To give Miriam Amlyn an opportunity to consider the request.

13. ASSEMBLY WORKSHOPS TO CONSIDER RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND THE NEW WELSH CURRICULUM

It was confirmed that the Primary, on the whole, was looking forward to the new period, however, major concern had been expressed from the Secondary.

An outline was given of the new recommendation such as combining Religious Education, History, Geography and Business to the humanities field, with one lesson for each subject; however, it was not currently clear how many hours this would entail. A question was raised immediately about how SACRE would monitor the humanities?

If changing by 2020 was the intention, it was noted that there would be a lot of preparatory work - the current document was vast but only referred to concepts and skills that required collaboration between departments. At present, it was noted that it was not clear whether the course would combine or whether the subjects would be treated as five separate subjects? Another concern noted was that individuals without expertise in the specific subject would possibly give one of the lessons. A question was asked about whether each of the five subjects would have equal status, in particular if the Headteacher saw no value in a specific subject. The number of hours earmarked for each subject was also questioned.

It was questioned what SACRE would be able to do as the process was going ahead. Libby Jones was the only Religious Education advisor in Wales.

Recommended: To accept and note the above.

14. BANGOR UNIVERSITY OFFER - 'RE-CONNECT'

A concern was raised following a recent report regarding the lack of teachers and the issue of bilingual teaching in Gwynedd. A real concern was expressed about the merger between the Universities of Bangor and Chester. It was suggested that perhaps the Chair could send a letter to the University to enquire about the following:

- i. Was there a missing link? - real concern had been expressed by SACRE regarding the shortcomings in the field of Religious Education, and the link with the University of Chester, as well as the break between GCSE and a degree course. Also there was a need to note that an English only letter had been sent by the University.

A question was asked about whether an A Level in Religious Education was being offered in Gwynedd. Did the College offer Religious Education? What about Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor?

Recommended: To ask the Chair to write to the University in line with the above.
To ask the Assistant Education Resources Officer to look into the Religious Education A Level provision in Gwynedd.

15. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF WALES SACRES - ANGLESEY 6/7/18 - FOR INFORMATION

Recommended: To accept and note the content.

16. DIVERSITY OF RELIGION AND BELIEF - FOR INFORMATION

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

Recommended: To accept and note the content.

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