

**Attendance**

<p><b>Ynys Môn / Anglesey</b> Arfon Wyn (AW)</p> <p><b>Blaenau Gwent</b> Kathy Riddick (KR)</p> <p><b>Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr / Bridgend</b> Edward Evans (EE) Alice Parry (AP) Donna Graves (DG)</p> <p><b>Caerffili/ Caerphilly</b></p> <p><b>Caerdydd / Cardiff</b> Donna Graves (DG) Rheinallt Thomas (RT)</p> <p><b>Sir Gaerfyrddin / Carmarthenshire</b> Keith Evans (KE) Jennifer Harding-Richards (JHR) Gareth Morgan (GM)</p> <p><b>Ceredigion</b> Rhianydd James (RJ) MMC Morgan</p> <p><b>Conwy</b> Roger Boon (RB) Phil Lord (PL) Nicholas Richter (NR)</p>	<p><b>Sir Ddinbych / Denbighshire</b> Jennie Downes (JD) Phil Lord (PL)</p> <p><b>Sir y Fflint / Flintshire</b> Vicky Barlow (VB) Catherine McCormick (CM)</p> <p><b>Gwynedd</b> Meryl Roberts (MR) Eurfryn Davies (ED)</p> <p><b>Merthyr Tudful / Merthyr Tydfil</b> Donna Graves (DG)</p> <p><b>Sir Fynwy / Monmouthshire</b> Louise Brown (LB) Rachel Buckler (RBU)</p> <p><b>Castell-nedd Port Talbot / Neath and Port Talbot</b> Nia Jenkins (NJ) Rachel Samuel (RS)</p> <p><b>Casnewydd / Newport</b></p> <p><b>Sir Benfro / Pembrokeshire</b></p> <p><b>Powys</b> John Mitson (JM)</p>	<p><b>Rhondda Cynon Taf</b> Mathew Maidment (MM) Donna Graves (DG)</p> <p><b>Torfaen</b> Cllr Lucy Williams</p> <p><b>Bro Morgannwg / Vale of Glamorgan</b> Donna Graves (DG) Kathy Riddick (KR) Tyler Saunders (TSA)</p> <p><b>Wrecsam / Wrexham</b> Tania ap Siôn (TS) Libby Jones (LJ) Hugh Jones (HJ)</p> <p><b>SACs to be confirmed?</b> Ali Mahamad Alison Harding Amanda Davies Delyth Jones Michael Thomas N Haran Paul Davies Owen SC Ann</p>	<p><b>Observers:</b></p> <p><b>REMW</b> Paul Morgan (PM)</p> <p><b>WJEC</b> Chris Owens (CO)</p> <p><b>Estyn</b> Aranwen Morgans-Thomas (AMT)</p> <p><b>Church in Wales</b> Elizabeth Thomas (ET)</p> <p><b>Catholic Education Service</b> Angela Keller (AK)</p> <p><b>Qualification Wales</b> Kate Russell (KRU)</p> <p><b>NAPfRE</b> Phil Lord</p> <p><b>Minutes (from recording)</b> Jo Nicholls (JNI)</p> <p><b>Translator: Sioned Jones</b></p>
--	---	--	---

## **Minutes of the meeting**

### **1. Introduction and welcome**

TaS welcomed members to the Spring meeting and thanked Carmarthenshire's SACRE/SAC and LA for hosting the meeting.

Gareth Morgan, Director of Education and Children Services gave a warm welcome and thanked SACRE/SAC and WASACRE for arranging the meeting.

GM officially introduced the meeting with the following:

Carmarthenshire support 27,000 learners in 108 schools and placements. GM's background is in primary sector, an ex-head teacher who used to teach Religious Education.

As the world is constantly changing, with the suffering in Gaza and the war in Ukraine, there is need to ensure that education in Wales remains contemporary and relevant to today's citizens. All schools are on an exciting journey with a curriculum that is relevant and local to fulfil the requirements of the communities.

This is a huge task to ensure every aspect of the learning experience has room, including RVE within its rightful place in Humanities.

RVE is one of the most important aspects of the curriculum. RVE will enrich the curriculum by making children and young people informed, aware and respect the world and the people in it. It is an important area to ensure that learners can engage with a wide range of religious and non-religious concepts in order to develop into principled people. We have a responsibility like every LA that the agreed syllabus is in place for RVE and that it is monitored.

GM thanked Carmarthenshire SACRE/SAC for their work in accordance with the legislation and guidelines.

The syllabus has been written to help teachers and to support them with recommendations and guidelines. It is a flexible syllabus that is suitable for their needs. We have noted that support is needed and there are PL opportunities offered by Carmarthenshire which included PL community on MS Teams, monthly session for teachers and network meetings every term for secondary RVE teachers plus a wide range of resources. Hope this will be a useful session in sharing ideas.

GM thanked everyone for attending.

Jennifer Harding Richard shared a video of the recent work conducted by Carmarthenshire SACRESAC.

### **2. Quiet reflection**

TaS introduced PL who led a quiet reflection to remember and give thanks for the life and work of Bethan James, a much-valued colleague of WASACRE and NAPfRE who will be dearly missed.

PL: It was a great shock in the new year to find out that Bethan had passed away. She was a great colleague and a great friend of myself and many other RVE practitioners across Wales. Bethan embodied love within education. She embodied care and kindness for the pupils and for the teachers. When schools were due to have an Estyn visit, Bethan was known to bake cakes and encourage the staff of the schools that she worked with. I thought that Bethan was the embodiment of the love that Steve Davis spoke about some time ago at a conference in Llandudno. He said that the one thing missing in the education system is 'love'. It is something that I try to emulate in my work. I will always remember her for demonstrating that practical love within the education system, and something that I hope lives long in the people that have known her and lives long in my interactions with schools. Bethan will be dearly missed.

TaS thanked PL and a short period of silence followed to remember Bethan.

### 3. Apologies

Apologies received from Revd David Brownutt from RCT SACRE/SAC, Hayley Jones from EAS SACREs/SACs, Paula Webber from WASACRE Exec Committee and NAPfRE, Councillor Martin Palfreyman, Councillor Mansell Charles, and Mrs Helen Gibbon from Carmarthenshire, and Linda Maddock. No other apologies were recorded in the chat.

### 4. Minutes of the last meeting, Zoom, 25<sup>th</sup> October 2023

The minutes were checked for accuracy.

**ACTION:** LJ to confirm David's and Jane's full names.

**ACTION:** Add Rhianydd James, Ceredigion to the list of attendees

With the above corrections made. EE proposed and RS seconded that the minutes are an accurate record of what was said in the last meeting. TaS will sign the minutes and send to AP for filing.

### 5. Matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting.

Any matters arising are covered on this agenda or are currently being followed up.

### 6. Welsh Government [WG] matters

RS gave the following update from Welsh Government:

The last meeting was held on the 29th November 2023. In attendance were RS, LJ and TaS from WASACRE and John Pugsley (JP), Kerry Davies (KD) and Caitlin Doyle (CD) from WG.

Three main agenda items:

#### 1) Updates from WASACRE questions that were sent in advance:

- A request for an update on the agreed syllabus review carried out by WASACRE on behalf of Welsh Government

WG have been in touch with several SACREs/SACs since the informal review and are in discussion with LAs where points were raised in the review. WG thanked WASACRE and the members that conducted the work on the review. This discussion about the agreed syllabi is now closed and in the hands of the WG.

- Question on the definition of religion in the legal summary on Hwb

LJ provided the context; this discussion follows on from the last meeting held with WG and WASACRE where Lloyd Hopkin intended to speak with the legal services. KD confirmed that an internal discussion with legal services has been held and the outcome will be shared with WASACRE. No written update from WG received at the time of this meeting.

- Update review of the Annual reports

These annual reports are completed by each SACRE/SAC. WG confirmed they have not completed any work on the annual reports with regards to adaptations to the new curriculum. WG have requested that WASACRE and NAPfRE send details to KD and JP on why a review of the annual reports is needed.

Next steps for WASACRE Executive and NAPfRE will be to work together to draw up a response to justify the need to look at the annual reports.

#### 2) Recruitment crisis

- a) The decline in numbers taking Religious Studies at GCSE and A level.
- b) The decline of undergraduates of RE.
- c) The decline of numbers at ITE courses, and the RVE foundation qualification that WASACRE has been in discussions about with Qualifications Wales (QW).

This meeting took place before Qualifications Wales released the results of its consultation and announced its decisions.

- GW suggested that WASACRE and NAPfRE should contact Kevin Palmer (KP) with their concerns. KP oversees ITE within Welsh Government.

- WG confirmed it is not involved with qualifications or numbers of entries. WG stated that it is a school's choice which qualifications are completed by learners. With regards to the RVE foundation qualification, WG advised WASACRE to liaise with Qualifications Wales which is an independent body. WG also meets with QW and offered to suggest that QW waits until after the consultation response to speak with WASACRE and NAPfRE stakeholders. Consultation has subsequently been published in January.
- WASACRE have met with Qual Wales and this will be reported later in this meeting.
- A meeting with Kevin Palmer and WASACRE has now been arranged for 20<sup>th</sup> March to discuss WASACRE's concerns.

### **3) Request for withdrawal on religious grounds based on two queries with RVE and swimming**

- LJ shared the context, and it was discussed thoroughly.
- As WG haven't heard from head teachers directly that this is a problem, WG do not see it as a significant issue and would not consider providing guidance. Suggested Headteachers continue to gain advice from advisors and support officers in each LA.
- With the swimming query, WG stated this is an issue for the health and well-being team of WG. WG stated that the first point of call should be the AoLE department in WG rather than other agencies such as Swim Wales.
- WASACRE receives requests for support with regards to the right to withdrawal from RVE. As a result of this meeting, WASACRE aims to maintain records of these requests with the corresponding feedback. If a repeat query is received, WASACRE would be able to maintain consistency in the feedback provided.

### **4) Professional learning resources**

- These are the resources that WASACRE are developing alongside WG.
- WASACRE requested an update on the WG's commitment to additional modules and the three existing modules that are still in development
- WG acknowledged that there were budget constraints which will affect the work that can be commissioned.
- WASACRE emphasised how helpful Rachael Hicks (RH) from WG had been. Kerry Davies is to contact Rachel Hicks to gain a clearer idea of the resources that are incomplete and are awaiting finalisation and what is possible to complete. There is an update, this will be discussed later in the meeting.
- We shared information about the upcoming conference and integrating the Minister for Education into the conference. This will be discussed in our next meeting with WG.
- RT: Is there any information about a new appointment for January and the department lead by Mr George to produce resources for the new curriculum?
- RS: No, not until WG conduct a review of the resources on Hwb. Suggest we raise this at the next meeting. It is still early days regarding this appointment.
- KE: Thanked WASACRE for taking the questions to WG. It appears that there is lack of definitive decisions from WG – it is important that RVE is established properly in our schools and it is disappointing that there are delays.
- RS: It is always a challenge working with a big organisation with various people with different responsibilities. RS confirmed that WASACRE will continue to push its agenda with WG and to revisit issues, when necessary, in order that WG achieves its commitment.
- RBU: As I am new to this meeting I would like a better understanding of the operations. Why is there three WASACRE representatives at the Welsh Government meetings?
- RS: WASACRE has an Executive Committee. When there are external meetings, we ensure a representative of the Executive Committee is present which is usually the Chair of WASACRE, a NAPfRE representative and other available personnel who have the expertise in the area to be discussed.

**ACTION:** At the next WG meeting WASACRE to ask whether there is any information about a new appointment for January and the department lead by Mr George to produce resources for the new curriculum.

## 7. National Professional Learning resources

TaS and LJ met with WG colleague Rachael Hicks (RH) on the 31 January 2024. RH was able to confirm that the new playlist for school governors will be available on the Hwb shortly. It is in a queue waiting for publication.

TaS and LJ have supported RH in processing the three cross curricular skills playlists through the reference group and making the necessary amendments. These three playlists are now with the Hwb team who are working on outstanding questions on Welsh language equity.

There are two further playlists in the pipeline that require some work 1) RVE in the Humanities and 2) RVE and Pedagogy. It is hoped that Welsh Government will allow WASACRE to support the final development of these two playlists as WASACRE feel that they are extremely useful to practitioners across Wales. WASACRE are waiting for confirmation from RH to give the go ahead of the final development of those two playlists.

## 8. WASACRE conference

TaS shared a presentation providing an update on the WASACRE conference. WASACRE are working in partnership with NAPfRE. The conference is fully funded by WASACRE. It is free to all member SACs, and to those practitioners working in the corresponding local authorities.

The aims of the conference are:

- To celebrate religion, values, and ethics (RVE) in the Curriculum for Wales
- To provide significant professional learning opportunities for our member SACs and their schools
- To offer opportunities to raise and discuss issues that really matter for RVE in Wales
- To make connections and share insights across Wales.

The format of the conference:

- A series of online pre and post conference day seminars (summer term)
- Conference Day, Wrexham University on 13 June 2024.

TaS encouraged the WASACRE members to continue to publicise the event as widely as possible in order that as many people as possible can benefit from this professional learning opportunity. Details are available on the WASACRE website home page and the conference day booking link is <https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=-DqPEA6XUUSU-gGFwqFoUuVbWoO7EM5EqaUPjo4xdRFUN1RNTEVTMEIMUDFNUVRaSzIYQjZPTTY3TS4u>

TaS shared the draft programme of the conference day which included so far:

- |                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>9.30</b>          | Welcome (William Aston Hall)   |
| <b>9.45 – 10.15</b>  | Keynote speech 1 (William Aston Hall): Minister for Education.<br>Conference video: Value of RVE   |
| <b>10.15 – 10.50</b> | Keynote speech 2 (William Aston Hall): Professor Graham Donaldson - mapping the journey  |
| <b>11.00 – 12.00</b> | Workshops: emerging practice in RVE (3 parallel sessions)<br>a. Learning with history on religious tolerance and peace: RVE and the RETOPEA project<br>b. Science and RVE (primary)<br>c. Example of emerging practice (tbc) |
| <b>12.00 – 12.45</b> | Lunch  |
| <b>12.45 – 13.35</b> | Panel debate: Pluralism and RVE (William Aston Hall)   |
| <b>13.40 – 13.50</b> | Keynote speaker 3 (William Aston Hall) Bishop of Llandaff, Rt Revd Mary Stallard: Significance of RVE for young people (Film)  |
| <b>14.00 – 15.00</b> | Workshops: emerging practice in RVE (3 parallel sessions)<br>a. Inspiring young people to take up GCSE / A-level and further study in RVE.<br>b. Example of emerging practice (tbc)  |

c. P4C in RVE

**15.05 – 15:30** Closing words and opening AGM (William Aston Hall)

The online seminars: pre-conference day are as follows:

Seminar 1: (23/04/24, 16.30 - 18.00) - An introduction to SAC / SACRE: What do you need to know?

Seminar 2: (30/04/24, 18.30 - 19.30) - What does RVE look like in the early years setting?

Seminar 3: (07/05/24, 18.30 - 19.30) - Developing empathy through story in the nursery setting.

Seminar 4: (14/05/24, 16.30 - 18.00) - Approaching RVE planning: Having regard to the RVE Guidance

Seminar 5: (21/05/24, 16.30 - 18.00) - Sensitive issues in RVE: Conflict

The post conference seminars are currently being finalised.

Online Seminar registration link:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=-DqPEA6XUUSU-gGFWgFoUuVbWoO7EM5EqqUPjo4xdRFUOE1BQIRFM1c3V0NFSEITM0pWVjZLUUU0Ry4u>

**TaS:** Any questions you have or anything WASACRE can do to facilitate or provide information about the conference, please get in touch.

**ACTION:** This presentation is to be sent to WASACRE members with registration links included.

## 9. Qualifications

### - Qualifications Wales (QW)

LJ: QW has published its consultation report, which offers a detailed explanation of the decisions they have taken for 14 to 16 qualifications that will sit alongside the GCSEs. The main decision that WASACRE want to draw this committee's attention to is QW's decision not to proceed with a standalone foundation qualification in RVE. This decision has been met with some disappointment and confusion, especially as 61% of respondents to the consultation supported a standalone qualification for RVE.

One of the most common reasons cited within the report by those not in favour of a standalone qualification was that RVE did not lend itself to being assessed through a formal qualification. Now, I think many of us would refute this point, in my professional opinion and as a key member of the team that drafted the guidance RVE, it is assessable through formal qualifications. This is a conversation that WASACRE can have with QW as we move forward.

QW have added three new skills for life units to the proposals instead. And they say that these will provide opportunities to consider and explore a number of the RVE topics identified within the curriculum guidance. Centres will be able to choose to what extent to incorporate the delivery of these units in order to meet their statutory requirements. Learners will also be able to choose topics related to RVE for their personal project qualification. There are definite opportunities provided within the wider offer that have potential, but it's going to depend on the decisions made at a local school level as to whether learners will be able to gain a qualification for mandatory RVE. As RS mentioned earlier, WASACRE officers met with colleagues from QW before the report was published, to listen to the reasoning and to try and understand the decision. It was a positive meeting and WASACRE will continue talks with QW and support them in ensuring as much as we can, that these units will be appropriate and provide rich and meaningful opportunities for RVE that have regard to the guidance and the agreed syllabi in Wales.

**ACTION:** If there is anything that SACs would like us to raise with QW at these meetings, please inform WASACRE in writing by email to either myself or our secretary, AP.

### - Equality and diversity qualification (ncfe) / Agored Cymru – Exploring worldviews

- The Equality and Diversity qualification through NCFE and Agored Cymru's Exploring Worldviews qualification will both now continue until September 2027. But in September

2027, they will cease to exist. There will be a tendering process for the skills suite units, both the NCFE and Agored Cymru will be able to bid for the contracts to provide the qualifications for the RVE units. As many of our schools are offering their learners and working very hard to provide resources for these qualifications it is positive that Agored Cymru and NCFE may continue to be involved.

- The RVE proposed units in this skills suite are not intended to support all statutory guidance in this area, they include faiths and beliefs in the local community, ethical choices, and values for life. WASACRE will meet with QW regularly to support them with the skills suite.
- With regard to learning at 14 to 16, and relation to qualifications, there is a Welsh Government consultation that is currently open on the draft 14 to 16 statutory learner guidance: <https://www.gov.wales/14-16-learning-under-curriculum-wales>.
- The closing date for the consultation is the 8th May 2024. There is time if your SAC or you personally want to provide a response to that.
- We just want to highlight to you section 5.12 on humanities which is on page 16 of the draft guidance, it says the following: For the avoidance of doubt, schools must continue to provide learning in RVE for all learners in years 10 and 11 in accordance with the requirements of the Act and the RVE guidance. However, this is separate to the requirements to secure learning in this area. It is not necessary for this learning to result in any specific qualification. It will be for schools to design the most appropriate approach to meet the needs of their learner'. WASACRE officers felt that this was positive for RVE to be included in the guidance and for it to be highlighted as a mandatory subject that schools are required to teach right through to age 16.
- KRU: QW have not made decisions on all qualifications that is why the designation policy is important. So, if you do have particular wishes, or things that you think we should know, in relation to various qualifications, please complete this consultation and this will inform our decisions in terms of existing qualifications ('Our proposed Approach to Designating 14-16' - <https://haveyoursay.qualifications.wales/our-proposed-approach-to-designating-14-16-qualifications> Deadline: 14 May 2024). To give you the context, the new GCSE, in Religious Studies, for example, had to be developed because of the new curriculum and we were tasked with developing made for Wales GCSE to relate to the curriculum. There is a lot of qualifications that exist that are not made for Wales qualifications so that's why we have needed to refer back and this is why the consultation is important, so if you do have particular views on the existing qualifications that are not GCSEs particularly, please complete that consultation and share it with colleagues as well.
- TaS thanked KRU for her support and her work with WASACRE throughout this process in developing new qualifications.
- MM: Question for LJ - where were you quoting from when you mentioned that it was still mandatory for schools to be delivering RVE to year 10 and 11 even when there is no qualification exam. Helpful for schools to use that link to present to senior management.
- LJ: This is direct from the draft guidance that's been consulted upon for 14 to 16 which is called [draft 14 to 16 statutory learner guidance](#).
- RB: The decision not to proceed with a standalone qualification is a drastic decision from our perspective. Did you feel that this was a political decision that completely ignored all the feedback from the consultation? Do you think WASACRE need to change its strategy in exercising its influence in this area of the curriculum? I was very fortunate very recently to be invited to the local primary heads forum to speak about SACRE. Interestingly enough, only one person had read the comprehensive SACRE report.
- LJ: I cannot answer your first question as to whether it was a political decision but WASACRE's thoughts are that it was not a political decision. It was a positive meeting with QW. WASACRE listened to the reasons why the decision had been reached even though we may not agree with the final decision. Maybe that is something you could raise with QW from your local SACRE.

As the advisor for Wrexham, we are looking at how to can encourage schools to invest in their RE and RVE departments. It is not easy looking for different solutions. My attendance at the Wrexham Association of Secondary Head Teachers, and the Primary Heads Federation meetings has helped. This is something that other local authorities and SACs may like to

consider doing themselves. WASACRE may need to consider a new strategy and this is something the Executive could discuss.

- KRU: QW is an independent body. The decision is made quite clear in the decisions report as to why QW did not go with a standalone RVE qualification. It was a difficult decision, conversations with WASACRE have been ongoing. QW are also conscious of other issues in this space and that we are still creating qualifications linked to RVE but just not a qualification that is RVE alone. In terms of ongoing situations, there is more work from QW to explain our role, and perhaps the differences between the curriculum requirements and the requirements, that can be quite technical, but are linked to qualifications and how they are created. Recommended that QW provide WASACRE with more information, more context and more background information.
- LB: I am unclear as to why these skills qualifications would not line up with the mandatory requirements for RVE. How will schools actually manage to teach this if it's not a qualification? And would it end up meaning that the mandatory element is left out because it is not part of the qualification? If the mandatory element ends up being taught as a non-qualification, then it may not be taken as seriously by pupils in the school.
- TaS: These are all very important points, and this will remain on WASACRE's agenda.

**ACTION:** WASACRE to consider new strategies to exert its influence.

#### **10. What Covid-19 reveals to religious education specialists in Europe?**

TaS shared a short presentation on a research project which WASACRE helped facilitate in conjunction with other EFTRE Board members. This presentation will be circulated with the minutes.

The research results were presented at a number of conferences in 2023, including the EFTRE conference in Rome in August. A number of articles are currently being published in well-known international journals for religious education.

AP shared a link to one of the papers recently published which is open access: 'Covid made me think about ...What really matters in religious education: A European research project' : <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40839-024-00225-4>

There is another article currently in the review process regarding the relationship between social unrest and religious education. An abstract has also been accepted to write a full paper for a special issue in the British Journal of Religious Education concerning what can this research tell us about technology and religious education. In addition, the research group has been invited to submit articles to an international Polish journal and an International Greek journal.

WASACRE wants to share this research with you to show how Wales is being involved in significant research in religious education at a European level. It is generating a huge amount of interest outside Wales at the moment. It would be good if it can generate some interest in Wales as well and be publicised.

#### **11. NAPfRE presentation: *Objective, critical and pluralistic RVE in the primary classroom* Presented by Elizabeth Thomas, Provincial Director of Education for the Church in Wales**

ET gave a short presentation giving an overview of the project. A copy of the presentation will be circulated with the minutes.

The project was conducted under the auspices of being a practical classroom-based approach as to what objective critical and pluralistic might look in order to provide schools extra support, and for them to deliver RVE in the primary context.

The team leads were Beccie Morteo (BM), Education Lead for Llandaff and Monmouth and Jennie Downes (JD), Schools' Officer St Asaph who both worked closely with schools. ET coordinated the



project and provided input from the legal side. Hayley Jones from the EAS and Donna Graves from CSC also worked alongside the team during the project.

ET mentioned this was a project overview and that a more detailed presentation including BM and JD would be available in the summer.

TAS thanked ET and the team involved for this valuable piece of research.

This research will be included as part of WASACRE's Conference post-Conference online seminars. ET and colleagues will be providing an hour and a half, which would include time to discuss and explore this much further.

## **12. Estyn: 2024 – 2030 inspection plans**

Aranwen Morgans-Thomas provided the following update: A handout which includes an overview of the work carried out to date will be made available after the meeting.

### **The document includes:**

- An update on the inspection work that has continued during the autumn and the spring terms.
- An update on the annual report. There are a number of links included in the documents regarding Estyn's work in all sectors as well as the secondary sector that KRU is focused on.
- With regards to inspecting for the future 2024 - 2030, piloting work has been carried out on the new framework, which will now come into effect as of September 2024. The next cycle of inspections will start in September, and the changes to our current arrangements will be as follows:
  - o The overarching principle is that we will provide more regular feedback and assurances. There will be a rebalancing with individual provider inspections and the whole system of improvement education in Wales.
  - o We aim to build constructive relationships, to be responsive through flexibility, and ensure arrangements are deliverable and sustainable across Wales.
  - o In terms of the arrangements for core inspections of maintained schools and PIUs, this has been developed through consultation and piloting work. The main headlines are included in the document. Estyn will revert to a six-year cycle and reduce the number of inspection areas from five to three.
  - o Our three main inspection areas will be 1) teaching and learning 2) care, support well-being and 3) leading and improving. The 10-day notice period will be retained to give sufficient time for questionnaires and for providers to upload relevant documentation.
  - o The role of peer inspectors will be retained. These are head teachers, deputy head teachers, assistant head teachers, who are currently practising practitioners.
  - o We will also engage more frequently with providers. At the moment the plan is to conduct interim visits. Schools will have a core inspection every six years. Midway through this cycle, there will be an interim shorter visit which will focus on the recommendations from the core inspection and the progress the school has made against those recommendations.
  - o Estyn continues to trial its approaches for feedback and reports. The report is very much similar to the current reports, in terms of the narrative, but we welcome feedback if changes are required.
  - o For the inspection for the future 2024 - 2030, we do not have any current documentation live on our website. Once we finalise the findings from our pilot inspection work, I will update WASACRE when the documentation is to become available.
- TaS thanked Aranwen Morgans-Thomas for providing the update in person online.

**ACTION:** LJ to convert Estyn's document into a PDF for circulation to all SACs post meeting.

## **13. Up-dates:**

### **- Report from the Executive Committee held on 7 February 2024 (Tania ap Sion)**

Due to time constraints this item was not covered, although many areas are covered on this agenda.

### **- WJEC**

Christopher Owens gave the following report:

- As in previous years, there were two live events in the autumn of 2023, in Cardiff, and Llandudno. This year, there was an additional CADAG meeting in North Wales. All materials are available on the WJEC website.
- The entry figures this year are to be finalised in March. For GCSE, AS and A level, the figures are static and stable this year. However, there is a continuing decline in the short course entry as we would expect.
- At the moment, WJEC is continuing to work on the new specification for the new qualification. The current plan is that the new specification with SAMs (the specimen assessment materials), will be available in September, with the first exam in September 2026. The materials will be available in September 2024 for first teaching in September 2025. So effectively, schools will have quite a long time to prepare.
- In support that there will be 12 nationwide PL events across Wales. This will be in the spring term, February, and March 2025. It is important that RS teachers book their places on these particular events. The local authorities are closing the schools on these training days. It is an opportunity for every RS teacher in Wales to have training. We will not have the guidance for teachers available in September 2024. We will make sure when teachers start teaching in September 2005, that there is a detailed guidance for teaching produced by the WJEC.
- LJ: I am aware that the qualification development is done using a co-constructive process. One of the questions that I have been asked is, when the schools receive this qualification detail in September 2024, will that be the final version? Is there going to be any further consultation?
- CO: There has been consultation all the way through in the initial stage. For example, we have a subject advisory group composed of people who have looked at the development of the specification. The specification will go to Qualification Wales who will decide whether the specification is fit for purpose. But in reality, the specification that comes out in September to schools will be the finished product. So as an examination board, we are required to provide the specification and the SAMs, because we have two exams and two NEA tasks as part of the new specification. When that comes out in September, that will be the final draft.
- MM: Will there be more opportunities for us to be involved in the process and consultation before the final product?
- CO: I will double check on whether there is another opportunity for teachers to feedback I doubt it.

**ACTION:** CO to check whether there is an opportunity for further feedback and inform WASACRE.

**- REC**

LJ gave the following update:

- The REC has co-opted an RVE specialist representative from Wales onto its board. This is an important development. This is a temporary place on the REC board for one year. It is hoped that it will support relations between Wales and England and offer the REC the specialist advice and guidance on RVE to carry out its duties as the RE Council for both England and Wales.
  - All REC Board co options are for one year and the board can renew these for up to three years. There is hope that this co-opted position will continue.
  - LJ applied for the position as part of a formal selection process and is now the co-opted RVE specialist board member for the REC. LJ thanked Kathy Riddick, who is also a board member of the REC as KR has offered a Welsh voice at meetings. Our two countries are very different, but they do share some of the same issues with regard to RE and RS. As we have already discussed in the meeting today, the REC has processes already in place to address some of the issues that we share, and how they deal with them in England, and they are keen to support Wales. The board has asked how it can best be of service to Wales. So, LJ suggests that the WASACRE executive has an agenda item on this in its summer meeting in May, so that members can discuss what support if any, is required.
- TaS confirmed that it will put on the Executive agenda and the conversation will continue.

**ACTION:** Add to Agenda for the May meeting re. how REC can support Wales.

**- EFTRE**

PL gave the following update:

- Preparations are underway for the next conference in Budapest from 21<sup>st</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> August 2025. The COVID research materials that TaS and colleagues presented at the EFTRE conference (referred to earlier) are available on the EFTRE website. There is also a notable presentation on controversial issues. With the current conflict in the Middle East, this might be something to point schools towards.
- TaS stated from personal experience (and from LJ and AP who were also present) that the EFTRE conference is well worth attending.

**- REMW**

PM gave the following brief update:

- REMW is reconsidering its role in the changing context of RE and the Curriculum for Wales.

**- NAPfRE 2.02.17**

PL gave the following update:

- NAPfRE usually meet prior to the WASACRE main meeting, but it had to be scheduled for the following week. NAPfRE rep will be attending the meeting with Welsh Government (Kevin Palmer) regarding teacher recruitment referred to earlier. We have discussed previously the materials around Palestine / Israel and controversial issues, and I know that advisors have access to these resources that can be shared with schools.

**- IFN**

LJ gave the following update:

- I can confirm that the IFN has had to make the difficult decision to move towards closure due to the UK Government's decision to withdraw funding from the organisation.
- WASACRE received a news release from the IFN on 8th February 2024 announcing the decision. A statement issued by IFN's board was received on 24th January 2024 following a letter they received on 19th January from the Secretary of State, the Right Honourable Michael Gove MP which stated that he was withdrawing the funding offered in July 2023. In the statement, Mr Gove detailed his concerns about IFN having a trustee who is a member of the Muslim Council of Britain. We have a link to Michael Gove statements and the IFN co-chairs response if any members would like to read it.
- The IFN board is grateful to the many individuals and organisations who have written to MPs and ministers or signed petitions, made donations and in other ways shown deep and often humbling support to IFN across the last year. It is very sad and disappointing news.
- RT: I assume this does not affect the Interfaith network in Wales, because it is not funded.
- LJ: It is a relief that it doesn't affect the Interfaith network in Wales. This organisation is not funded and has a positive relationship with the Welsh Government. I attended a North Wales interfaith meeting last week. There was a representative from the Interfaith Council for Wales there who assured everybody that they were still running obviously with no money as they have been doing that for many years. Obviously, there was discussion in that meeting on how to support our colleagues and friends in England and the rest of the UK. There was talk of asking our assembly members whether there was a commitment to continue Interfaith dialogue in Wales.
- RB: If Wales has continued to have an interfaith faith network, is it not possibility that it could continue in England?
- LJ: I think the issues that they have in England with the interfaith network is that they have about four full-time members of staff and require funding in order to make it possible for them to do the work. The work that happens in Wales is voluntary. There is not as much work conducted at the Interfaith Council for Wales compared to what the IFN for the UK. It doesn't look like IFN UK is going to run on voluntary basis.

**14. Local matters / enquiries**

1. Linking to RS's feedback from the Welsh Government meeting about support for schools

dealing with requests for withdrawal from RVE, e.g. at seasonal celebrations and the records kept by WASACRE. Wrexham SAC has started to collate the advice that has been offered to its local schools. It already has one case study, and another one is in development. These are helpful to refer to when similar enquiries are received. It is something that other SACs and their advisors could also develop. WASACRE could collate those case studies and review them, possibly making them available for wider use on the website.

**ACTION:** TaS requested LJ to share this case study with WASACRE.

2. There is a lot of creative and rich RVE taking place in schools in northeast Wales. Some of our schools have raised the issue of lower numbers of learners showing an interest in and opting for GCSE religious studies. What we are trying to do in Wrexham is address this by engaging teachers in professional dialogue about possible solutions. We have a real concern that this particular issue of falling numbers will impact on staffing even further, especially at a time of severe budget cuts to schools.

Obviously, there are many reasons that can affect GCSE numbers in any subject, but some of the main ones we've identified locally for RVE are the disparity in regards to time and provision at Key Stage Three for RVE compared to some of the humanities subjects, higher numbers of non-specialists having to teach RVE at key stage three, and also lack of professional learning provided in school for those non-specialists.

These factors often lead to some learners in year seven and eight not having contact with a specialist RE teacher until year nine. I believe this has an effect on low numbers at GCSE, which then has a knock-on effect to staffing, and other impacts as well.

WASACRE would like to know whether any of the other SACs have similar issues in some of their schools. I know it is not just a Wrexham local issue and it is not in all of our schools. The the question is, how can we encourage our schools to invest in RE and RVE departments when funding is such an issue?

## **15. Correspondence**

AP: Received four items of correspondence:

- 1) From the IFN that LJ has already talked about in the IFN update
  - 2) Patricia Hannam, who is chair of the steering group for the RE hubs project has emailed the WASACRE Chair to express an interest to work with WASACRE through the RE Hubs project. An initial meeting has been set up.
  - 3) An email has been received from Pam Evans, who is the CEO of Peace Mala requesting the opportunity to explore the possibility of partnership working with WASACRE. An initial online meeting will be set up.
  - 4) Wrexham SAC have asked WASACRE to raise with Estyn the use of the word 'costumes' in inspection reports, when referring to religious and cultural outfits that children have the opportunity to wear in class, when they are exploring religious beliefs. The word 'costume' has offended one of the Sikh SAC members. Wrexham SAC suggest that a more appropriate word to use is 'outfit'. Members of Wrexham SAC feel that this is probably a national issue rather than just a local one and would like support from WASACRE.
- AMT: I will pass that information back to my AD. Following any report from a school setting, the school has five days to respond to any wording or any information that is in the report, those five days are available to check for accuracy, etc. But clearly, this has probably come from a member of the community as opposed to directly from the school community.

## **16. Any other business (to be agreed in advance of the meeting with the Chair)**

LJ: A letter via email has been sent to all SACs concerning the WASACRE Executive nominations. If SACs wish to nominate an individual, the proforma SACs received on 6th February is to be returned to LJ by 22nd March. LJ will send SACs the list of nominations bilingually by 26th April in order that nominations can be discussed in their summer term meetings, in time for the voting in the WASACRE AGM on 13th June (which will take place at the end of the WASACRE conference). There are two places available one for the vice chair position and one for an executive member position. LJ has received two nominations to date.

**17. Date for next meeting (AGM) – Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup> June 2024, Wrexham (Wrexham University)**

**ACTION:** The links in the chat to be collated and circulated to members.

TaS closed the meeting by thanking Carmarthenshire SAC and LA for the warm welcome today. TaS looks forward to seeing as many people as possible at the online seminars and on the RVE conference day. TaS thanked Sioned Jones for her translation, the presenters and everyone who has contributed.

**Meeting ended 1.00pm**

DRAFT