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

19/11/2024

Attendance:

Councillors: Menna Baines, Meryl Roberts, Anne Lloyd-Jones, Elin Walker Jones and Paul Rowlinson.

Others:

Christian and Other Faiths and Non-religious Philosophical Convictions: Eurfryn Davies (Union of Welsh Baptists).

Teachers: Miriam A. Amlyn (NASUWT).

Officers: Buddug Mair Huws (Assistant Resources Officer and SACRE Clerk), Rhodri Jones and Jasmine Jones (Democracy Services Officers).

Co-opted Members: Eleri Moss (Secondary Headteachers).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Item 6: Klavdja Erzen (Jewish History Association of South Wales).

1. PRAYER OR QUIET REFLECTION

The meeting was opened with a prayer from Councillor Elin Walker Jones.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:

- Councillor John Pughe Roberts
- Gwern ap Rhisiart (Head of Education Department)
- Nick Sissons (The Methodist Church)
- Bethan Davies Jones (The Union of Welsh Independents)
- Naomi Wood (The Church in Wales)

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

There were no declarations of personal interest.

4. URGENT ITEMS

It was noted that a letter had been received from Phil Lord, offering specialist support to the Committee. It was agreed that an e-mail would be sent to Committee members to see who would attend a meeting with Phil Lord to determine whether or not to accept his offer of specialist support.

5. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this Committee held on 2 July 2024 as a true record.

6. JEWISH HISTORY ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH WALES

The item was presented by Klavdja Erzen (Jewish History Association of South Wales – JHASW) drawing attention to the following main points:

It was explained that the JHASW had been established in November 2017 with the aim of preserving and sharing Wales's Jewish heritage with the broader public by addressing antisemitism, Holocaust denial and misinformation. It was also explained that the work they did was varied including digitising and publishing materials, researching, talks, digital heritage paths and creating educational resources.

It was noted that, to date, there were twenty educational resources for the Holocaust. These resources had been created in partnership with the Centre for the Movement of People, Aberystwyth University. It was explained that the resources were bilingual and they aligned with the Curriculum for Wales. It was confirmed that they were suitable for learners aged between 9 and 14 and were available free of charge. It was also noted that the resources were relevant to the local area and encompassed four different fields: humanities, the arts, health and well-being, and languages, literacy and communication. She emphasised that all the resources were available on the People's Collection Wales website and also on the Hwb website.

She noted that the Association had developed professional learning opportunities for teachers and schools in order to share their resources. It was explained that the training was 30-45 minutes long, could be provided on-line or in person, had been tailored to the needs of teachers and schools and was free of charge.

Klavdja was thanked for her presentation, and the committee congratulated her and the Association for developing such valuable resources. The focus on links with local history was especially welcomed.

7. AN UPDATE ON THE WORK OF DEVELOPING THE COLLECTIVE WORSHIP GUIDANCE

It was noted that only a few responses had been received to the letter sent in June, and therefore a reminder letter had been sent out and the responses were expected by 11 January 2025.

8. REPORT ON THE TEACHING PROVISION OF RELIGION, VALUES AND ETHICS IN SCHOOLS IN WALES

The report, published in April 2024 by the Wales National Centre for Religious Education (Bangor University), was presented by Councillor Menna Baines, drawing attention to the following main points:

It was noted that the authors of the report had sent questionnaires to primary and secondary schools and had received 58 responses. It was noted that teachers in general supported the change from religious education to Religion, Values and Ethics. It was explained that there were complaints about a lack of Welsh language resources, especially, with only one official English coursebook being available at the moment. It was also noted that there was a lack of training, and the training was inconsistent from county to county. It was felt that the subject of Religion, Values and Ethics was being minimised and did not receive the same amount of time as other subjects. It was noted that the focus remained narrow despite changing the title of the subject, and that

traditional religions continued to receive the greatest focus. It was noted that the report authors were calling for an urgent solution.

During the discussion, the following matters were raised: -

It was noted that the report reiterated what many teachers were saying. It was explained that the coursebook introduced the religions separately, which was contrary to how schools had chosen to teach them, it was therefore difficult to use.

It was reported that the situation was damning, and major changes were essential. Concern was expressed that only 17 schools had confirmed that their school met the legal requirements, which suggested that many schools were breaking the law. It was noted that this needed to be brought to the attention of Wales SACRE. It was noted that the department in Gwynedd needed to look into this and respond with a plan to rectify the situation.

It was further noted regarding the coursebook that it was not fit for purpose and was not available in Welsh. It was also noted there was no confirmation of the intention to translate it. It was proposed to send a letter to the WJEC regarding the coursebook, and a copy of it to the Minister for Education.

RESOLVED:

- **To ask the Education Department to look further into the matters raised in the report within Gwynedd.**
- **To ask the Wales SACRE to consider the report on a national level.**
- **That the Chair sends a letter to the WJEC and sends a copy to the Welsh Minister for Education regarding translating the Religion, Values and Ethics coursebook.**
- **The Chair to ask Gareth Evans-Jones for any update since the report was published.**

9. GCSE RELIGIOUS STUDIES DRAFT SPECIFICATION SEPTEMBER 2025

An update on the draft was presented by Miriam A. Amlyn (NASUWT) drawing attention to the following main points:

There was a concern that the coursebooks were not made available in time and were not bilingual. It was noted that between 120 and 140 hours of guided learning hours would be required, but only two hours a week, namely 76 hours a year, were being provided. Concern was expressed that this would lead to a disadvantage for pupils when preparing for the exam.

It was noted that two pieces of coursework would be introduced alongside the two existing exams. It was emphasised it would not be possible to change the times that had been earmarked for completing coursework, which would reduce the time given to teach the subject and prepare for the exam.

In terms of the content, it was noted that the religions would be dealt with quite similarly to how they were previously, but with greater detail in some fields. More content had been included on non-religious beliefs, human rights, and new content, not included in the old coursebook. Despite this, it was noted that the content was good, but may be quite heavy in terms of the additional details in some areas. The importance of publishing the coursebook in both Welsh and English at the same time was emphasised.

Further concern was expressed regarding the introduction of coursework, especially in relation to AI and its possible use by pupils to cheat. It was noted that the responsibility for preventing such cheating fell on the teacher, nevertheless, it was difficult to manage classroom activities to prevent such cheating.

During the discussion, the following matters were raised:-

It was noted that the time allocated for optional subjects varied from school to school, as in Ysgol y Moelwyn, where three hours a week were provided. It was explained that the time allocation was determined by the head teacher. It was also noted that this school had begun teaching the optional subjects in February in the past, allowing for more time to teach and to reduce behaviour-related problems. However, it was noted that the Welsh Government had suspended such an arrangement this year, which was a cause for concern in terms of maintaining behaviour and interest, with the addition of losing a term's worth of contact.

It was expressed that the coursework had been welcomed by the teacher at Ysgol y Moelwyn, as she felt that the subject had been at a disadvantage in the past by comparison to other subjects that had an element of coursework.

In relation to the concern of using AI to cheat, it was suggested that it could be useful to ask the pupils to see whether they understood what they had written to confirm whether or not it was actually their own work. However, it was explained that this would take time and it could cause conflict between pupils and staff.

It was asked how the time commitment compared between the current plan and the previous one. In response, it was explained that the answer was not at hand but was certain that it would be more practical with the introduction of coursework.

RESOLVED:

- **That the Chair sends a letter to the creator of the Key Stage 3 book regarding the new resources.**
- **That the Chair contacts Myrddin ap Dafydd (Gwasg Carreg Gwalch) about the idea of creating a coursebook for Religion, Values and Ethics.**

The meeting commenced at 3.30pm and concluded at 5.00pm.

CHAIR