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# **S.A.C.R.E. - STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)**

**18/11/2025**

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## **Attendance:**

**Councillors:** Menna Baines, Meryl Roberts, John Pughe Roberts, Paul Rowlinson, Anne Lloyd-Jones, Elin Walker Jones and Jina Gwyrfai.

## **Others:**

**Christian and Other Faiths and Non-religious Philosophical Convictions:** Eirian Bradley-Roberts (The Catholic Church)

**Teachers:** Eleri Moss (Secondary Headteachers)

**Officers:** Buddug Mair Huws (Assistant Resources Officer and SACRE Clerk), Phil Lord (Independent Adviser) and Jasmine Jones (Democracy Services Officer).

## **1. PRAYER OR QUIET REFLECTION**

The meeting was opened with a prayer from Councillor Menna Baines.

## **2. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from:

- Councillor Dewi Jones (Cabinet Member for Education)
- Nick Sissons (The Methodist Church)
- Joanna Thomas (The Church in Wales)
- Eurfryn Davies (The Baptist Union of Wales)
- Bethan Davies Jones (The Union of Welsh Independents)
- Gwern ap Rhisiart (Head of Education)
- Gwawr Maelor Williams (Presbyterian Church of Wales)

## **3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

None to note.

## **4. URGENT ITEMS**

None to note.

## **5. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Chair signed the minutes of the meeting of this Committee held on 24 June 2025, as a true record.

## **6. MATTERS ARISING**

None to note.

## **7. ANNUAL REPORT – GWYNEDD SACRE 2024-25**

**It was RESOLVED to accept the Annual Report 2024-25.**

## **8. POTENTIAL SACRE DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2025-26**

The item was presented by Phil Lord (Independent Adviser), highlighting the following key points:

- It was suggested that the SACRE should create a development plan with around three objectives to support its work and to be able to provide an end-of year report against those objectives.
- It was suggested to prioritise the following three objectives: developing the effectiveness of SACRE and promoting SACRE within schools; monitoring and supporting the provision of RE and Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) in Local Authority schools; and monitoring and supporting the provision of collective worship and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the Authority's schools.
- It was suggested that a newsletter be created to send to schools to promote elements such as the RVE playlist by the Welsh Government, EFTRE and WASACRE.
- The importance of having a dialogue with schools was emphasised to ensure that the SACRE was aware of what was happening within the county's schools, and that schools were aware of what was being discussed at SACRE meetings.
- It was emphasised that there was concern about the capacity to achieve everything suggested, but that there was a need to continue to be ambitious.

He was thanked for the presentation.

It was noted that the suggestion of creating a newsletter to be shared amongst schools was useful. It was suggested that a newsletter be provided following each SACRE meeting to raise schools' awareness of what was presented and discussed within the meeting. It was noted that links could be included within the newsletter to teaching materials that had been highlighted within the discussions. The committee emphasised the importance of ensuring that the newsletter was in a format suitable for a school audience.

Views were expressed that the link between the SACRE and schools had weakened, and therefore any future approach to strengthening this link was welcomed. It was noted that the committee was not aware of what was happening within schools as school self-assessment reports had not been received. It was asked whether these self-assessment reports could be obtained, and a further question was asked as to whether contact could be established by visiting schools. The committee emphasised the importance of understanding what schools would find useful in order to prioritise the committee's work moving forward.

It was noted that one governor in Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen took responsibility for looking at one subject, and if this was common practice in all secondary schools, then it was suggested that we made contact to send resources to them and to receive an annual report from them. There was agreement with this suggestion, noting the importance of not forgetting primary schools within the process. It was emphasised that it was not realistic to receive a report from every school, but that it would be possible to receive reports from enough schools to give a realistic picture of what was happening in the county's schools.

The Independent Adviser noted that there was a list of questions available for governors to use when questioning teachers within schools. It was suggested that this list be distributed to committee members for governors to use and to report back on the findings. It was also suggested that committee members who were also governors could trial the suggested new approach. It was further noted that it would be possible to create a report of the responses to the questions to be presented to the SACRE meetings using AI.

It was agreed that establishing contact through governors was one of the best ways forward as school headteachers were often overwhelmed by messages. A member asked whether the SACRE's annual reports were being forwarded to schools. In response, it was noted that the SACRE annual reports were being sent to schools in the county.

It was suggested that all councillors who were also governors be invited to receive the questions to ask in their own schools, and to report back on the results at a future meeting. It was noted that an official form with questions for schools already existed within the Education Department which could be adapted for this purpose.

In terms of collective worship, it was noted that several questions had been drawn up to ask schools about the provision, and that these could be shared with the members and governors. The importance of asking the right questions to the right people within the schools was emphasised. A suggestion was made to report on the committee's conclusions regarding this at a meeting in the summer. It was asked whether it was possible to be invited to attend collective worship in schools.

Several further ideas were put forward for raising awareness amongst schools and teachers of the SACRE's work and the resources available to them:

- creating a catalogue of the available resources and including a link on the front page of the SACRE's annual report;
- including a short section on the front page of the SACRE's annual report explaining the SACRE's work;
- asking Gwern ap Rhisiart, Head of Education Department, to include links to RVE resources in his weekly e-mail to teachers;
- creating a SACRE section on the intranet for school staff and teachers with links to the available resources.

It was agreed that further discussions would be necessary regarding several of the suggestions so as to decide on their practicality.

## **9. NEW DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION FOR THE DIOCESE OF BANGOR**

It was resolved to defer the item until the next meeting.

## **10. WELSH GOVERNMENT RVE PLAYLIST**

The item was presented by Phil Lord (Independent Adviser), highlighting the following key points:

- That the Welsh Government had been commissioned through WASACRE to support schools with transferring to the new curriculum.
- The resources highlighted the differences between RVE and Religious Education.
- There were six modules within the resources, namely: Early Years, Primary Schools, Secondary Schools, Additional Learning Needs (ALN), Headteachers and Governors.
- The sixth module was new and available specifically for governors.
- There were strong examples available on how to use the content of the resources in the classroom.

- The module for headteachers included a list highlighting the implications of the changes in the curriculum for them, especially in regard to the fact that parents no longer had the right to withdraw their children from learning about RVE.
- The implications of the curriculum changes on staffing were also highlighted, as teachers no longer had the right to withdraw themselves from teaching RVE.
- There were practical elements within every module.
- It was suggested that a short presentation of about 10 minutes be given on the playlist in governors' meetings to make them aware of the resource available.

He was thanked for the presentation, noting that the resource was valuable for the county's schools.

## **11. RVE AND COLLECTIVE WORSHIP EXEMPLAR POLICIES**

The item was presented by Phil Lord (Independent Adviser), highlighting the following key points:

- That schools were expressing concern about parents wanting to withdraw their children from RVE lessons because they didn't want their children to be learning about different religions.
- That having a policy was useful in those instances where parents insisted on withdrawing their children from RVE lessons, as the policy explained the intentions and objectives of RVE lessons, such as fostering understanding, tolerance and highlighting the wide range of religions that exist in Wales.
- That such a policy offered protection to schools.
- That the collective worship policy provided a foundation for schools and parents to hold discussions about the objectives of collective worship.
- That the collective worship policy was specifically for the county's schools.
- That a definition of collective worship was included in the draft policy, namely: "Time for the school body (as a whole or in smaller groups) to meet and reflect on the values that the school considers important. Many of these values will be based (but not solely) on the Christian tradition."
- That the collective worship policy was quite comprehensive, and that the RVE policy was more basic.
- That a list of evaluation questions was available for inclusion as an appendix to the collective worship policy, if desired.

He was thanked for the presentation.

It was noted that the schools' intranet was being used to disseminate policy templates. It was noted that the county's collective worship policy was now outdated, and that it had been identified as a policy that needed to be updated. The view was expressed that the creation of a new collective worship policy would be useful for schools. It was noted that the next step, if the committee approved the request, would be to share the policy internally within the department to secure an agreement that it could be shared with the schools as the authority's official template.

Support was expressed for both policies to be used as the authority's official templates. It was emphasised that the RVE policy explained to parents why they no longer had the right to withdraw their children from learning about RVE, and the benefits of the new curriculum for their children. The view was expressed that these policies would be an important tool for schools moving forward.

The committee agreed to revisit the item at the next meeting for approval.

## **12. EFTRE CONFERENCE (EUROPEAN FORUM OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHERS) 2025**

The item was presented by Phil Lord (Independent Adviser), reporting on his experience at the EFTRE Conference 2025. During the discussions, the following main points were highlighted:

- That Religious Education tended to be confessional in most European countries.
- Even in a country like Germany, the church had a fundamental presence within Religious Education for the majority of learners, depending on the particular area.
- That Scandinavian countries were more similar to Wales in terms of their Religious Education provision than the rest of Europe, but with a greater emphasis on knowledge rather than discussion.
- That 60 delegates had attended the conference in Hungary from all over Europe.
- That the first presentation attended focused on the topic of questioning, encouraging teachers to promote more questioning within lessons.
- That the second presentation focused on actual questions, emphasizing that children had lost some of the vocabulary to discuss actual issues such as war and the pandemic, as such questions were being asked less often within society.
- That the third presentation was about the relationship between Judaism and Islam.
- That a bid had been submitted to host the EFTRE Conference 2026 in Cardiff.

## **13. WASACRE**

The minutes of the Association's last meeting held on 2 July 2025 were accepted.

The meeting commenced at 3.40pm and concluded at 5:15pm.

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**CHAIR**