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

11/02/2026

Attendance:

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

Others:

Christian and Other Faiths and Non-religious Philosophical Convictions:
Edward Parri-Jones (Eryri Humanists), Rev. Nick Sissons (The Methodist Church).

Teachers: Miriam A Amlyn (NAS/UWT).

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

Also in attendance: Luke Donnellan.

1. PRAYER OR QUIET REFLECTION

The meeting was opened with a prayer from Nick Sissons.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:

- Councillor Dewi Jones (Cabinet Member for Education)
- Councillor Elin Walker Jones
- Councillor Meryl Roberts
- Eurfryn Davies (The Baptist Union of Wales)
- Bethan Jones (Welsh Independents)
- Nathan Abrams (Judaism)
- Eleri Moss (Secondary Headteachers)

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 Committee meeting held on 18 November 2025 as a true record.

6. MATTERS ARISING

It was confirmed that examples/templates of policies discussed at the previous meeting had been shared with schools on that day.

It was confirmed that examples of questions to evaluate RVE and Collective Worship had been written and translated, and would be shared with members soon.

7. HUMANISM - THE BENEFITS OF INCLUDING NON-RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHICAL CONVICTIONS IN THE RVE CURRICULUM

The item was presented by Luke Donnellan, Director of Understanding Humanism, Humanists UK, on Humanism and the benefits of including non-religious philosophical convictions in the RVE curriculum. During the presentation, the following main points were discussed:

- It was noted that the Humanists UK education department supported teachers in schools across the UK with resources and services to teach Humanism as part of a broad and balanced RVE education.
- Background information was provided about RVE in Wales, emphasising that Wales' RVE curriculum noted the need to include non-religious philosophical convictions.
- It was noted that non-religious philosophical convictions meant "philosophical convictions which are based on a non-religious worldview as opposed to a religious worldview".
- It was emphasised that there were three main benefits of including non-religious philosophical convictions in the RVE curriculum, namely that it was knowledge-rich, that it supported mutual understanding and social cohesion, and that it encouraged personal development.
- It was noted that there were five main beliefs associated with Humanism, in addition to the fact that it was non-religious, namely that humans were part of nature, that a scientific understanding of the world was important, that everybody had only one life, that ethics were not dependent on religion, and that people had a responsibility to make the world a better place.
- It was noted that a higher proportion of the population of Wales identified themselves as non-religious (47%) than religious (44%) according to the census results, with around a third to half of the non-religious population having Humanist beliefs.
- It was noted that a number of historically renowned Welsh people were known to be humanists.
- Attention was drawn to the 'Humanists UK' website, understandinghumanism.org.uk, which included several resources available to support the teaching of the subject, with specific resources for teachers in Wales available bilingually.
- It was noted that the book 'My Humanist Family' was available to support teaching the subject to young children.

Thanks were expressed for the presentation.

A question was asked regarding the amount of time allocated to teaching Humanism in schools. In response, it was noted that the answer was not clear, but that evidence showed that there was insufficient time devoted to RVE in general, and therefore this affected the opportunity for pupils to learn about Humanism. It was noted that although the curriculum had changed, the time devoted to non-religious philosophical convictions remained low, possibly due to the transition period to the

new curriculum or due to opposition to its inclusion within some schools. It was emphasised that 'Humanists UK' was doing everything within its ability to communicate with schools in order to offer learning and training resources to help facilitate this period of transition. It was emphasised that things were improving in this regard, but there remained much work to be done.

It was asked whether Humanists regularly came together as a community. In response, it was noted that this varied from one Humanist to another. It was noted that Humanist organisations, such as 'Humanists UK', held annual events, and that local groups of Humanists held socialising events. It was emphasised that there were opportunities available, but that individuals were not obliged to participate. More work needed to be done at a social level to support people to feel a sense of belonging to a community.

A question was raised on how Humanists dealt with morality and sin within their philosophy. In response, it was noted that the world was not an ideal place, but that things had generally improved for people over the years in terms of standards of living, freedom and democracy. It was recognised that the world continued to face several challenges, and that there was no assurance that things would continue to improve over the years. It was emphasised that Humanism was not an ideal philosophy, but that it believed in trying to create a better world, not a perfect world, through human actions rather than through divine power. It was noted that Humanists believed in seeking justice in this life, rather than in life after death. It was emphasised that suffering was part of the world in which we lived, and that the aim was to try to reduce and alleviate it wherever possible.

A question was asked about whether the dissemination of Humanism was important in the same way as it was to Christianity. In response, it was noted that most Humanists were against evangelisation. It was further explained that Humanism had no goal of creating new Humanists or disseminating the philosophy. It was stressed that Humanists believed in freedom of belief, and supported the right of people to learn about a variety of religions and philosophies to enable them to make their own decisions.

A question was asked on how many Humanist SACRE members were there in other counties in Wales. In response, it was noted that all SACRE Committees in Wales had a Humanist representative, and that over 90% of SACREs in England had Humanist representation. This was noted to be a significant improvement, as only about 50% of SACREs had representation around five years ago.

A request was made to receive a presentation from all faith representations so that Committee members could receive more information in these areas. In response, it was noted that this was a good idea, and it was suggested that Nathan Abrams be invited to give a presentation on Judaism. It was also suggested that the presentations should be forwarded to schools for use as learning resources.

Edward Parry-Jones was thanked for applying to become a member of Gwynedd SACRE, and it was stressed that adding representation from non-Christian religions and non-religious beliefs had been a huge step forward for the SACRE Committee.

8. SACRE DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2025-26

The item was presented by Phil Lord, Independent Consultant, and the following key points were highlighted:

- The development plan could be used to explain, as part of the annual report, what had been achieved.
- There were three main priorities in the development plan, namely to develop the effectiveness of SACRE, to monitor and support the RE and Religion, Values and Ethics

provision in Local Authority schools, and to monitor and support the provision of collective worship and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the Authority's schools.
- The activities under priority one included ensuring that relevant information was included in the annual report, including relevant resources for schools.
- The activities under priority two included the provision of monitoring materials and exemplar policies, including the policy relating to the fact that parents were no longer entitled to withdraw their children from RVE lessons.
- The activities under priority three involved Councillors and SACRE members who were school governors trialling the questions and reporting back to SACRE.
- The plan was for the current year, and activities could be added to the plan for future years.

Thanks were expressed for the presentation. A view was expressed that there was a disconnect between what was happening within schools and what SACRE was aware of, and therefore the development plan and its priorities were welcomed to ensure that the Committee could positively influence schools.

A point was raised regarding the timetable, asking whether it was realistic that everything would be delivered by the summer term. In response, it was noted that the resources to be included in the annual report had already been created. It was also noted that the aspect involving Governors going to schools to trial questions was dependent on the support of members in order to meet the timetable.

A question was asked whether it was intended for non-Governor SACRE members to visit schools to trial the questions. In response, it was noted that it was intended for members who were Governors to initially trial the questions before extending the arrangement to other SACRE members. It was suggested that the Education Department should ask schools that were not affiliated with a member of SACRE to volunteer to receive a visit from a SACRE member so that they could ask the questions and observe collective worship within their schools.

9. MANAGING THE RIGHT OF WITHDRAWAL FROM RVE

The item was presented by Phil Lord, Independent Consultant, and the following key points were highlighted:

- RVE lessons had, historically, focused much more on local Christian beliefs, and therefore there was a feeling at the time that the right to withdraw was necessary.
- RVE lessons had changed significantly over the years to be multi-faith, but the right of withdrawal nevertheless continued until 2022, when the Welsh Government abolished the parental right to withdraw their children from RVE.
- Cases had arisen where parents wished to withdraw their children from RVE, even though they did not have the right to do so, and this could create problems within schools.
- The document had been produced in order to categorise parental concerns about RVE, and to provide information about the best actions to deal with those concerns.
- The document would be useful to schools to ensure that they were able to respond in an appropriate way should any cases or concerns arise in the future.

Thanks were expressed for the presentation. It was noted that the document was very useful, and that it was better to prepare proactively rather than wait for a case to arise before creating a document to provide support to schools.

A question was asked about whether it was intended to send a copy of the document to every school in the county. In response, it was suggested that the Education Department should make the document accessible on the education SharePoint so that teachers could access it if needed.

A question was raised on whether any such documents were already available. In response, it was noted that there were no documents available in Gwynedd for the county's schools.

It was enquired whether the right to withdraw children from RVE included collective worship. In response, it was noted that the right to withdraw from collective worship continued to exist.

Support was expressed for the document and for its aim of supporting schools to provide RVE. It was suggested to change the document's wording regarding the rejection of RVE for racial or prejudicial reasons.

10. 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