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**S.A.C.R.E. – STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL  
ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION  
14.10.09**

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**Present:** Councillor Pat Larsen, (Chair)  
Councillor Huw Edwards (Vice-chair)

**Gwynedd Council Members:** Councillors: Aeron Jones,

**Christians and Other Faiths:** Mrs. Ruth Davies, (Union of Welsh Baptists), Mr Gwyn Hefin Jones, (Presbyterian Church of Wales), Mr Wyn Myles Meredith, (Methodist Church), Rev. Robert Townsend (Church in Wales, Bangor Diocese), Mrs Eirian Bradley-Roberts (Catholic Church)

**Teachers:** Mr Noel Dyer, (UCAC), Miss Miriam Williams (NAS/UWT)

**Co-opted Member:** Mr Rheinallt Thomas,

**Officers:** Ken Robinson (Assistant Education Officer and SACRE Clerk), Bethan James (Humanities Adviser), Glynda O'Brien (Committee Officer).

**Apologies:** Councillors Stephen Churchman, Selwyn Griffiths, Guto Rhys Thomas, Mr Paul Mathews-Jones (SHA).

**1. PRAYER**

The meeting was commenced with a prayer by Mr Rheinallt Thomas.

**2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL CONNECTION**

Mr Rheinallt Thomas declared a personal interest in relation to Item 10 – Correspondence, namely the Annual Report of the Religious Education Movement Wales as he was Treasurer of the Movement.

He was of the view that it was not a prejudicial interest and did not withdraw from the Chamber during the discussion on this item.

**3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- (a) The Chair took the opportunity to welcome new members to the meeting, namely, Miss Miriam Williams, NAS/UWT representative and the Reverend Robert Townsend, representative of the Church in Wales.
- (b) She made reference to a bereavement suffered recently by Councillor Stephen Churchman in the loss of his mother. The SACRE Clerk was requested to send a letter of condolence on behalf of SACRE members to him and his family in their sad loss.

**Resolved: To request that the SACRE Clerk, on behalf of SACRE members sends a letter of condolence to Councillor Churchman.**

#### 4. MINUTES

**Submitted:** Minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 17 June 2009.

**Resolved:** To accept and approve the minutes as a true record.

#### 5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(a) Reference was made to Item 5 – Urgent Matter regarding A level provision in Religious Education at Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor.

The SACRE Clerk reported that he had corresponded with Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor in accordance with SACRE's request for information regarding the provision offered by the College to pupils who wish to continue with their studies in Religious Education up to A level.

A reply had been received from the Principal of Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor and the Clerk read out the relevant parts of his letter.

“The College reviews what is offered on the curriculum every three years in order to ensure that we provide what prepares the learners for the next steps in their educational career or for work. We undertake this by researching into the requirements of the local economy (for vocational courses) and with research and discussions regarding the requirements of Higher Education (for AS and A2 courses). We also look at the numbers who study different subjects in the schools that input us in order to identify trends. The purpose of all these considerations is to be able to offer a curriculum that allows appropriate progression for our learners, and we do not want to close any doors for our learners.

The decision of the College Body a little while ago was to continue to offer an AS course in Religious Studies but not to offer an A2 Course. The situation was evaluated by using the above criteria. From the point of view of trends, very few wish to continue to study Religious Education after GCSE and even less choose to continue to A2 having completed the AS course in the subject. Another important fact is that an A Level qualification in Religious Studies is not required to follow a course in the subject at a Higher Education level.

The decision therefore allows students to study a course and receive a qualification in Religious Studies (AS) It is not a barrier to prevent any learner who wishes to study Religious Education at a Higher Education level”.

Attention was drawn to the fact that the Principal of Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor would be prepared to join in any reasonable and constructive discussion on how the curricular provision available in the area could be developed.

Members were reminded by the Humanities Advisor that SACRE had no control over further education establishments and there was no written evidence to hand on the exact number of pupils who wished to study Religious Education to A2 level. It would be useful if teachers could gather data in Year 9 of how many pupils were eager to study Religious Education as a GCSE course, as well as how many would wish to continue with the subject to A Level.

Concern was voiced once again by several members that there was no offer available to study Religious Education to A Level. It was suggested, whilst accepting that SACRE had no control over courses in further education establishments that a letter should be sent to the Governors of Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor expressing SACRE Gwynedd's concern regarding

the side effects on pupil choices in Gwynedd schools that they were responsible for especially those pupils who are anxious to continue to study Religious Education to A2 level.

A request was made by members representing different denominations to receive a copy of the response of the Principal of Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor from the SACRE Clerk in order that they could share the information with representatives of those denominations.

**Resolved: (a) To request that the SACRE Clerk:**

**(i) Thanks and acknowledges receipt of the letter from the Principal of Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor stating that the contents had been discussed by SACRE members**

**(ii) Sends a letter to the Governors of Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor expressing concern regarding their decision not to continue to offer the A2 level course in Religious Education.**

**(iii) Sends a copy of the letter of the Principal of Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor to those members who represent denominations on SACRE Gwynedd in order that they can share information with their fellow members.**

(b) Reference was made to Item 9 – Wales SACRE Association when it was suggested that it would be an idea to invite the Wales SACRE Association to Gwynedd sometime in the future. Mr Rheinallt Thomas reported that a rota had been provided by the Association to travel around the counties in turn, and that the Association would visit Gwynedd in the summer of 2013.

**Resolved: To accept and note the above.**

## **6. DRAFT SACRE ANNUAL REPORT**

The Humanities Advisor presented the Draft Gwynedd SACRE Annual Report for the 2008-09 academic year for the members' approval prior to the publication of the final report.

It was explained that the purpose of the report was to present a summary of Gwynedd SACRE's discussions during the previous year i.e. September 2008 to August 2009. She guided members through the report and referred to the methods used to give constant attention to Religious Education standards by monitoring the results of examinations, reviewing school inspection reports together with receiving a summary of the self-evaluation of schools. We appreciate the willingness of schools to present their self-evaluations together with the support of the administrative staff in the education office with the collection of data for Gwynedd SACRE. In addition, presentations were received from schools who had received Grade 1 in their inspection in order to share the pupils' learning experiences with SACRE members.

Reference was made to the secondment of Mrs Carol Llewelyn Jones as a Religious Education Advisory Teacher, however, her work had been hindered by long term illness. Her support for the work was acknowledged and appreciated and best wishes were sent to her for a full and speedy recovery. Mrs Leusa Jones, Head of Department at Ysgol Dyffryn Nantlle had been appointed as her successor and it was trusted that she could attend some meetings of Gwynedd SACRE if the dates were convenient to her.

Reference was made to the courses offered under the in-service training programme for the authority's teachers. The report stated a link with DCELLS and reference was also made to SACRE's function in relation to collective worship.

Minor amendments were proposed by individual members regarding the contents of the report such as the deletion of words (Hydref Edern) in the Welsh on page 6, that the Chair was Councillor Pat Larsen on page 18, add the name of Councillor Aeron Jones to the list of those attending meetings of the Welsh Association of SACREs page 20 and delete the word 'independent' opposite the name of Cllr Huw Edwards on page 18 of the English version.

**RESOLVED to accept the report with minor amendments as stated by members and thank the officers who produced the report.**

## **7. 2009 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION RESULTS**

The report of the Humanities Advisor on the 2009 Religious Education Results was presented. From the point of view of KS3 it was noted that CYNNAL had been collecting data since 1998 in accordance with the attainment of 14 year old pupils based on the year's work, specific assessment tasks and tests. In the past, Gwynedd pupils had followed the Agreed Syllabus levels. By now the Departments had been following the new Agreed Syllabus levels, however these were not relevant to Year 9 pupils this year. It was noted that the Assembly did not have a statutory right to collect KS3 Religious Education data as it was not a national curriculum subject but a subject that was managed locally. Consequently, CYNNAL depended on the goodwill of the Heads of Department for KS3 to present the information to them, although this entailed a great deal of additional work. It was noted that two schools had been invited to be part of a pilot scheme (DCELLS) to create portfolios this year for external accreditation.

Reference was made to the good results in KS4 and it was noted that CYNNAL were anxious to offer support to departments that were eager to attract more candidates to sit GCSE Religious Studies together with supporting departments that intend to submit Religious Education portfolios to external verifiers this year

Attention was drawn to the fact that the numbers of pupils that follow the short course had increased and had achieved good results.

Reference was made to the Religious Studies Advanced Subsidiary Results for 2009 and it was noted that secondary schools by now worked in cooperation in order to share the responsibility of presenting Advanced Level and Advanced Subsidiary Level courses and therefore every secondary school in Arfon did not offer a provision of Advanced and AS courses.

It appeared that the numbers and percentages for Ysgol Eifionydd were incorrect in the tables within the report and Miss Miriam Williams gave an undertaking to send the correct information to the Humanities Advisor.

**RESOLVED to accept the report.**

## **8. SCHOOL INSPECTIONS**

Submitted:

(a) Information on the contents of school inspection reports under Section 28 of the Education Act 2005 in relation to Religious Education and pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development.

(b) A summary of the self-evaluations of the following schools:

- **Ysgol Dyffryn Nantlle**
- **Ysgol Glan y Môr**

**Reported:** (a) By the Humanities Advisor that six schools in Gwynedd had been inspected since the last meeting of this Committee. Only one of these, namely Ysgol y Traeth, Barmouth, had been inspected in Religious Education as a specific subject, with the school receiving a Grade 2 in Key Stages 1 and 2 without no important shortcomings. With the other schools (Ysgol Bron y Foel, Ysgol y Traeth, Ysgol Nefyn, Ysgol Hirael, Ysgol Dolgellau) attention was given to Key Question 3 that refers to: "How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?" In the context of Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau as a Church School, attention was drawn to the fact that a full report had been received from the Diocese of Bangor on the standards at the school. The Committee were proud of the grades achieved by all the above schools and they were congratulated on their success.

(b) Reference was made to the contents of the Self Evaluations of the two secondary schools noted in (i) and (ii) above. It was noted that the two schools had given themselves a Grade 2. Reference was made to the aspects that would receive attention during the inspections next year, although Religious Education is not inspected as a subject in the two schools a report will be received in connection with key question 3. It was noted that Ysgol Dyffryn Nantlle had submitted information in accordance with the old inspection procedure namely key question 7 and gave attention to 6 subjects, whilst Ysgol Glan y Môr were trialling the new method where emphasis is placed on 3 questions for the framework. The final report would be brief, more emphasis placed on skills and less specific attention to the subjects.

The Humanities Advisor elaborated on the new arrangements that would come into force after 2010 namely introducing SACRE reviews as inspections with no specific attention given to the subject. Consequently, SACRE will not receive pages that refer to Religious Education specifically as part of the programme. However, the arrangement of presenting self-evaluations will continue. She explained that ESTYN would ask HM Inspector to write a topical report based on school visits and to present a sample of primary, special and secondary schools throughout the whole of Wales. She went on to explain the reasons for the change, namely that the current inspection procedure was arduous, that inconsistencies arose in the inspection procedure, schools received too much notice and perhaps too much time was spent with schools with good standards and a lack of support for schools with shortcomings.

In response to members' concern regarding how SACRE will monitor Religious Education standards, it was explained that emphasis will be placed on self-evaluations and teachers understood that it was expected that the self evaluations would be effective and accurate. The grade that a school was given in self evaluation could be compared with the final report of HM's Inspector and any shortcomings could be seen.

**Resolved:** **To accept and note the contents of the inspections and self-evaluations and in accordance with procedure to request that the Education Officer sends a letter to the above schools congratulating them on their success and to note SACRE's appreciation of the efforts made by them in achieving the grades.**

## **9. WALES ASSOCIATION OF SACREs**

**Submitted:** Minutes of a meeting of the Joint Committee that took place on 24 June 2009 in Llangollen.

**Reported:** By Councillor Aeron Jones who attended meetings of the Wales Association of SACREs, that they were very useful and stimulated new ideas. Reference

was made to an interesting presentation by Vicky Barlow regarding more able and talented pupils and it was added that CYNNAL had provided work on this field

Attention was drawn to a recommendation in the minutes of the annual meeting that SACREs should pay a subscription of £383 for 2009/10.

- RESOLVED:**
- (a) **To accept and note the contents of the minutes.**
  - (b) **Approve the re-membership of the Welsh Association of SACREs by paying a subscription of £383 for the year 2009/10.**

**10. CORRESPONDENCE**

The Clerk of SACRE referred to the following correspondence that had been received:

(a) 2008/09 Annual Report of the Religious Education Movement Wales that included a tribute to the late Hywel Iorwerth Evans, Honourable President of the Movement. Attention was also drawn to the contribution of Miss Bethan James on the continual professional development of teachers. The Movement were thanked for a financial contribution towards the work of the Advisory Teacher and this was noted.

(b) Summer edition of Religious Education News and reference was made to an interesting article on the theme of travelling by Mrs Heulwen Hydref Jones, Head of Ysgol Bro Hedd Wyn, Trawsfynydd. Heulwen had recently received surgery and would be away from work for a period and best wishes for a speedy and full recovery were sent to her.

**Resolved: To accept and note the above.**

The meeting commenced at 2 pm and concluded at 3.25 pm.

**CHAIRMAN**