
**S.A.C.R.E. – STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL
ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
10.02.10**

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

Gwynedd Council Members: Councillors Stephen Churchman, Dafydd W. Roberts

Christians and Other Faiths: Mrs. Ruth Davies, (Welsh Baptist Union), Mr Wyn Myles Meredith, (Methodist Church), The Rev. Robert Townsend (Church in Wales, Bangor Diocese).

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

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

Apologies: Mr Gwyn Hefin Jones (Welsh Presbyterian Church), Mr Paul Mathews-Jones (SHA), and Mr Rheinallt Thomas.

1. PRAYER

The meeting was opened with a prayer from Councillor Huw Edwards.

2. MINUTES

Submitted: Minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 14 October 2009.

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

3. 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.

Reported: (a) By the Assistant Education Officer (SACRE Clerk) that the aim was for schools to attain Grade 1 or 2 in the inspections and it was very pleasing that the majority of schools inspected over the last year had achieved this.

The Humanities Adviser guided Members through the inspections of the following schools

- Ysgol Dyffryn Nantlle
- Ysgol Gynradd Llanaelhaearn
- Ysgol Gynradd Llanrug
- Ysgol Gynradd Rhiwlas
- Ysgol Gynradd Llwyngwriil

- Ysgol Gynradd Bro Cynfal
- Ysgol Gynradd Waunfawr
- Ysgol Gynradd Cae Top

It was noted that two of these schools had been inspected in the subject of religious education namely the primary schools at Llanaelhaearn and Llwyngwriil. The other schools had been inspected by giving attention to the spiritual, moral and cultural development of the pupils.

In the context of Ysgol Dyffryn Nantlle, it was noted that the school provided extensive opportunities for the development of pupils' and students' social, moral and cultural development. Reference was made to a sentence in the inspection report that stated "the provision for the spiritual development of pupils is not so effective. Daily acts of collective worship do not challenge and enrich pupils' spiritual experiences". The Humanities Adviser confirmed that she was confident that the school would be able to respond to this challenge especially as more collective worship materials were distributed at a national level. Every Department had a responsibility to contribute to this agenda and the school was surely disappointed that the Inspectors had not benefited from the fact that they had held a Holocaust Remembrance Day last year when the Religious Education Coordinator in the school persuaded every Department to hold some activity in connection with the Holocaust remembrance. Certainly, this would have been a challenge for the pupils to think spiritually in a subject context.

From the primary schools, Ysgol Llanaelhaearn was congratulated especially for attaining a Grade 1 in Key Stage 2 and a Grade 2 in Key Stage 1. Reference was made to the statutory requirement for collective worship but also to experiences regarding spiritual, moral and cultural development of the pupils.

In the same manner, reference was made to the excellent experiences at Ysgol Llanrug and good features concerning spiritual and moral development at Ysgol Rhiwlas. Attention was drawn to the fact that Ysgol Rhiwlas had succeeded under very difficult circumstances bearing in mind that there was only a Temporary Head Teacher there when the school was inspected.

Ysgol Llwyngwriil had experienced several challenges recently considering that there was only a Temporary Head in charge of the school and they had attained a Grade 2 in both Key Stages under very difficult circumstances. Attention was drawn to the period when concern was expressed that pupils were not being challenged to deal with the big questions and it was seen that schools ventured to discuss concepts such as shared knowledge, forgiveness and compliance and the impact of faith on believers.

Ysgol Bro Cynfal and Ysgol Waunfawr were praised for their excellent provision and the way they promoted the pupils' spiritual and moral development.

The inspectors described the provision as being very effective at Ysgol Gynradd Cae Top.

To conclude, guidance was requested regarding the nature of the letters of congratulations to be sent to schools as in the past letters had been sent to those schools who had succeeded well in Religious Education. It was proposed that a letter of congratulations be sent to each one of the schools but in a different form to those school inspected in accordance with the procedure for key question 3.

(b) By the representative of the Church in Wales that he attended Ysgol Brynrefail regularly to hold services of collective worship and one of the recommendations of the recent inspection by the Church in Wales was to try and develop and nurture a link with secondary schools, especially in the context of collective worship.

He was of the view that the leaders of the denominations were more than willing to visit schools to assist in the spiritual and moral development of the pupils and it was suggested

that it would be beneficial for the SACRE Clerk to write to the Heads of Secondary Schools to find out if the leaders of denominations attended the school, and if they did not would they be prepared to do so.

In response, the Humanities Adviser was aware that many primary schools received support from denomination leaders and they were always welcomed in the schools. Perhaps it was a different type of challenge for Secondary Schools bearing in mind the need to convene pupils in one place. The school had a responsibility to conduct collective worship and not necessarily in one place and this happened often in classrooms or in year groups.

Resolved: (a) To accept and note the contents of the inspections and request that the Assistant Education Officer on behalf of SACRE sends a letter in accordance with procedure to congratulate every inspected school but in a different format to those schools inspected in accordance with the procedure for key question 3.

(b) Request that the Assistant Education Officer collates information from the Head teachers of Secondary Schools as follows:

- (i) If they have used local religious leaders by inviting them to the school**
- (ii) If yes, what use is made of these arrangements**

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

- (i) Ysgol Gynradd Rhiwlas**
- (ii) Ysgol Gynradd Bro Cynfal**
- (iii) Ysgol Gynradd Bontnewydd**
- (iv) Ysgol Gynradd Llwyngwriil**

(i) The Humanities Adviser reminded the Members of the procedure for schools to present Self-evaluations namely, if a school was not inspected in the subject of Religious Education that school is requested within a year of the inspection to present a Self-Evaluation of the subject of Religious Education and of the element regarding the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. It was noted that SACRE had a responsibility to monitor the standard of Religious Education and it was felt that the procedure was successful and that receiving Self-Evaluations was a means of monitoring the standards of schools. The four Self-Evaluations presented by the schools named above referred to the aspects that would receive attention. It was mentioned that the procedure for inspection would change in 2010 and no specific report would be received on Religious Education and the procedure of collecting Self-Evaluation would continue. The Humanities Adviser had consulted with her fellow workers throughout Wales and they had exchanged documentation in order to ascertain good practice under the various SACREs. It was proposed to have further discussions regarding the challenge of monitoring the standards of Religious Education in the future. It was suggested to Members who were also school governors that they find out what system is favoured regarding the monitoring system.

(ii) A Member stated that he considered the self-evaluations to be very useful for the purpose of giving guidance of what should be achieved and that they were very useful for Gwynedd SACRE in order to monitor standards in the meantime, prior to the formal inspections.

Resolved: To accept and note the contents of the self-evaluations.

4. TEACHING RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE CLASSROOM

Mrs Sianelen Fleming, Head of Ysgol Llanaelhaearn, was welcomed to the meeting and she gave an outline of what led the school to receive the excellence of Grade 1 in Key Stage 2 and Grade 2 in Key Stage 1 following an inspection by ESTYN Inspectors in October 2009.

It was explained that Llanaelhaearn school was historically a small school with currently 37 pupils and two teachers. The school was located in a deprived area and the background of the children varied and out of the 20 pupils in the Head's class only two attended a place of worship on Sunday.

Examples were given of the theme presented to pupils together with the resources used such as books, newspaper articles, gathering information from the Web etc. Activities such as 'World Environment Day' were looked at and these gave the pupils an opportunity to respond to what was happening around them.

Examples were shown of presentations made by pupils in the form of a photo story of the life of Tom Nefyn and Gwilym Davies.

It was emphasised that the children were at different levels within the class and therefore work had to be adapted for them. They had experiences of doing craftwork, a pilgrim's journey and pilgrimage in other religions as well as looking at sacred places. Having spoken with the children the Inspectors were of the view that they understood conscience, forgiveness and obedience and indicated a strong awareness of the effect and influence of belief on believers.

To conclude Mrs Fleming stated that she was fortunate in Llanaelhaearn to be able to work with Rector and there was a good relationship between him and the school and there was an opportunity to visit the Church.

Mr Sianelen Fleming was thanked for a most interesting presentation and she was congratulated on the school's success and excellent inspection. She was thanked for her commitment and for her commendable work with children considering that many of the pupils required additional education.

5. CYMDEITHAS CYSAGau CYMRU

Reported: By Mr Wyn Myles Meredith that he attended a meeting of the Wales Association of SACREs on 13 November 2009 in Rhondda Cynon Taf and in light of the fact that no draft minutes were received from that meeting thus far, he drew attention to some of the main issues discussed at the meeting.

Three distinct presentations were given at the meeting by:

(i) Joanne Glenn, Head of Community Cohesion Strategy Unit, Assembly Government on her work concerning community cohesion and the need to understand this in broader terms and to involve every faith and race. It concerned:

- Development and understanding of each other and respect with equal opportunities to participate and take part in activities

- Integration, appreciate individual differences and focus on shared values

Every area in Wales had their own issues to respond to and legislation was available to support social cohesion. The strategy would deal with identifying individual concerns and focus on the issues of housing, learning, communication skills, social inclusion, equality and preventing extremism.

Several members of the Association expressed concern that the project focused on the Moslem faith and this should be expanded. Concern was also expressed that the strategy would undermine the relationship with Moslem communities.

(ii) Tania ap Sion on the background and the work of Saint Mary's Centre, Hawarden that focussed on supporting Religious Education via collective worship in schools, through research, materials and accredited courses.

(iii) Mary Parry on the popularity of presenting persona dolls to schools for Foundation Phase children in order to introduce different faiths.

RESOLVED: (a) To accept and note the contents of the minutes.
(b) To note that the next meeting of the Association would take place on Thursday, 18 March 2010 in Swansea.

6. SACRE ANNUAL REPORT 2008/09

Reported: By the Clerk that the Annual Report had not been printed thus far, however, an assurance was given that a copy would be sent for information to SACRE Members as soon as possible.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

7. CORRESPONDENCE

The SACRE Clerk referred to the correspondence below that had been received and that copies were available to Members:

(a) The winter edition of the Religious Education magazine and attention was drawn to an interesting article "On the Holocaust Trail" by Mrs Leusa Jones, Head of Religious Education, Ysgol Dyffryn Nantlle in this edition.

(b) The REflections leaflet talking about Meeting the Challenge Through Religious Education by Vicky Barlow, Learning and Teaching Adviser for RE, Wrexham Children and Young People Service.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

The meeting commenced at 2 pm and concluded at 3.20 pm.

CHAIRMAN