
S.A.C.R.E. – STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION 29/06/11

Present:

Gwynedd Council Members: Councillors Huw Edwards, Selwyn Griffiths, Pat Larsen, and Dafydd Roberts.

Christians and Other Faiths: Mrs Ruth Davies, (Union of Welsh Baptists), Mr Wyn Myles Meredith, (Methodist Church), Mr Gwyn Hefin Jones, (Presbyterian Church of Wales), Mrs Eirian Bradley-Roberts (Catholic Church)

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

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

Apologies: Councillors Steve Churchman, John Gwilym Jones (ex officio), Mr Rheinallt Thomas, Mrs Alwen Watkin, Ms Elisabeth Roberts and Mrs Leusa Jones.

1. PRAYER

The meeting commenced with a prayer by Mr Gwyn Hefin Jones.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any member present.

3. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the meeting of this committee held on 9 February, 2011, as a true record subject to the following:

Item 6(b) – Festival Celebrating Religious Education 2011 - amend Capel Peniel to read Capel Penuel, Bangor.

4. SCHOOLS' SELF-EVALUATIONS

Submitted:

A summary of the self-evaluations by the following schools:

- (i) Ysgol Abersoch
- (ii) Ysgol Carmel
- (iii) Ysgol Cwm y Glo
- (iv) Ysgol y Faenol
- (v) Ysgol y Gader

Reported: (a) By the SACRE Clerk, that under the new inspection process, he had received self-evaluations on religious education from the above schools (namely four

primary schools and one secondary school) which had received inspections during the Autumn term, except for Ysgol Carmel who had received an inspection in the Spring term. Unfortunately, some schools had not sent in their self-evaluations and they were continually reminded of the need to complete them in order that Gwynedd SACRE could develop the role of monitoring Religious Education.

(b) By the Humanities Adviser her appreciation that schools were willing to share their self-evaluation information and they had undertaken the task conscientiously.

It was noted that there was a difference in the self-evaluation information of the primary sector and the secondary sector. Secondary schools could refer to teachers' assessment data at the end of Key Stage 3 as a response to part of key question 1 and they could also refer to the results of children who sit external examinations in religious studies.

Whilst primary schools on the other hand were dependent on the work plans of the religious education coordinator, observations, review of books, theme work or the inspection.

From the self-evaluations received the impression was that some schools had responded specifically to the key question within the context of religious education, and other schools had gone through all the self-evaluation documents and had chosen sentences that were relevant and specific to religious education.

Schools were requested to be honest in their self-evaluations by referring to elements that occur in religious education and their willingness to note aspects for further development was pleasing. Reference was made to the frustration that may arise when teachers introduce religious education in the foundation phase if parents wish to exclude a child from religious education. In this context, a teacher would have to note what period in the weekly timetable it was proposed to present religious education which in a sense conflicted with the principles of the foundation phase.

In terms of collective worship, it was noted that schools had a good direction in this context and it was seen that they were looking for alternative ways to present this be in a collective situation where everyone convened, in individual classes or by inviting visitors to the school etc.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were highlighted:

(a) it was asked if the system for introducing self-evaluations was happening throughout Wales, and if it was necessary for SACRE to respond to the schools as a result of the evaluations.

In response, the Humanities Adviser explained that the role of SACRE was to monitor self-evaluations and it was not necessary to respond unless SACRE members wished to do so. She added that the system for introducing self-evaluations had started throughout Wales this year and that some schools in south Wales were quite happy to present their self-evaluations for the attention of SACREs annually, however, the system in Gwynedd and Anglesey was to request schools to submit their self-evaluation in the year that they receive an ESTYN inspection.

(b) it was further asked what should the members of SACRE look for in the self-evaluations, especially as there were recent reports in the press of underachieving schools.

The Humanities Adviser explained that schools should respond to the statutory requirements, to the agreed syllabus and to statutory religious education in the secondary sector. Through this they should:

- Deal with the fundamental questions
- Examine beliefs, teaching and practices
- Expressing personal responses

Pupils should be encouraged to investigate, use sources and even visit religious communities be that to question them or borrow materials etc.

(c) concern was expressed that one school had not noted if they had collective worship and more information was requested regarding this.

In response, the Humanities Adviser explained that there was pressure on teachers to be evaluative rather than descriptive and that some Head teachers fell between two stools and were not brave enough to give praise.

(ch) In response to a comment regarding the number of schools that had not submitted self-evaluations, the SACRE Clerk confirmed that he would remind them and it was trusted that they would be submitted in due course.

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

5. CELEBRATING RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

(a) Members were given an opportunity to look at a short film to give them a taste of the launch day of the Festival Celebrating Religious Education at Stanwell School, Penarth on 2 March 2011 that had been filmed by sixth form pupils from Barry School and showing contributions from Stanwell School pupils and other schools in the vicinity.

Mr Wyn Meredith reported that the film was a reflection and a very good record of the day and that he was very pleased to be present. He added that the contributions of the two leaders, Norah Glass and Rheinallt Thomas were very laudable.

The Humanities Adviser reported that competitions for schools had been held as part of the celebration and many schools had competed.

(b) A slide presentation was received by Ms Miriam Williams regarding what Ysgol Eifionydd had done as part of the celebrations. They had a notice board outside the classroom in order that pupils could exhibit to all pupils in the school what activities would take place during the month of celebrations. Pupils were given a presentation on 'What is the purpose of Religious Education?' Year 9 looked at Religious Education and the world of work and discussion groups were held for pupils to express their views and to convey their feelings in a particular way. They had also looked at famous people in order to couple belief and religion with a specific type of person in order to show a different side to the pupils. It was felt that the notice board was a good way for pupils to express their ideas in a different way.

In addition, a competition was held to design a logo for the Religious Education Department and over 200 competed from years 7, 8 and 9 and the winner's work was displayed.

(c) In response to a query from a Member regarding the response received throughout the County to the national competition Celebrating Religious Education, the Humanities Adviser stated that 25 competed throughout the whole of Wales which included one entry from Gwynedd and one from Anglesey. The winners were announced at a recent meeting of the Wales SACREs Association and it was noted that Ysgol Ffrwd Win, Anglesey was joint first in the Foundation Phase category applicants. Ysgol Bryn Coch, Flint won in Key Stage 2 and a pupil from Merthyr won in the secondary sector.

Resolved: To accept and note the report and thank Ms Williams for the interesting presentation and for the opportunity to see the excellent work of the pupils.

6. THE ADVISORY SERVICE'S WORK PROGRAMME

The Humanities Adviser reported on the work of the advisory service in supporting schools and she stated that primary schools continued to update work plans in accordance with the agreed syllabus.

(a) In terms of the secondary sector, Members were reminded that Religious Education Departments in secondary schools send a portfolio of the work of Key Stage 3 pupils to external moderators. A letter was recently circulated to schools requesting that they submit a portfolio in the 2011/12 year. It was anticipated that a great deal of portfolios would be received and an appeal was made to appoint additional moderators and they should be bilingual. The process had already been undertaken in every other subject of the curriculum and religious education was the last subject to go through this process. The government's argument was that the portfolio should include work that reflects what had already happened in the classroom and that it was not additional work for any Department bearing in mind that the agreed syllabus had been operational since September 2008.

(b) Reference was made to the Guidance for Key Stages 2 and 3 circulated to schools outlining how schools can plan religious education lessons and activities that give children the opportunity to attain high levels. In addition, a collection of the examples of the pupils' work could be seen on the CD attached to the Agenda and they were glad of the fact that examples of the work from Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn and Ysgol Llandygai were amongst these.

(A copy of the Guidance was available to Members at the end of the meeting).

(c) In addition, draft guidance had been published recently for the Foundation Phase and this would certainly be welcomed by the primary schools. Schools could take advantage of the samples available in Welsh and English. Once again, examples of good practice were seen as produced by teachers and pupils of Ysgol Llanfachreth, Dolgellau.

(ch) As part of her work the Humanities Adviser noted that she was looking at key skills such as communication and literacy within lessons and examples of good practice were seen by a teacher at Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen in the Religious Education News magazine with the development of pupils' writing within religious education.

(d) Lastly, the Humanities Adviser referred to the forecast for next year with her additional responsibility to develop the Thinking and Assessment Project. She was supported by Mr Derek Evans in the Humanities work who had expertise in Information Technology, but was a humanities teacher by instinct. It was also noted that Mrs Leusa Jones had agreed to continue as an Advisory Teacher for one day a week.

Resolved: To thank and note the oral report of the Humanities Adviser.

7. WALES ASSOCIATION of SACREs.

Submitted: Draft minutes of the Wales Association of SACREs meeting held on 2 March 2011 in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Resolved: To accept and note the contents of the minutes of the Wales Association of SACREs meeting held on 2 March 2010 in the Vale of Glamorgan.

8. CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondence received was submitted regarding the proposal for the changes in the teachers training grants.

The correspondence had been referred to SACRE Gwynedd by Mr Rheinallt Thomas and the Humanities Adviser reported on the background. In the past, there was a shortage of religious education teachers and an additional incentive was offered to prospective students via a grant to read the subject and many young people in Wales took advantage of this at the time and received an additional grant for learning through the medium of Welsh.

The message of the statement before them was that the grant would end for prospective religious education teachers, as it was not considered now to be a subject with a shortage of teachers. Concern was expressed regarding this as there was already a shortage of religious education teachers in Gwynedd, however, on the other hand it was understood that Head teachers had to be careful when advertising and filling teaching posts as the numbers of children within the county were falling. However, it was noted that religious education was statutory and perhaps due to the above statement expertise in the subject might be lost.

Several members expressed their sadness and disappointment because of the above and it was suggested that the situation should be monitored.

Resolved: That SACRE should be watchful of the situation and act as required in order to safeguard the subject for the future.

The meeting commenced at 2:00 pm and concluded at 3:15 pm.

CHAIRMAN