
S.A.C.R.E. – STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION 12.10.11

Present: Councillor Huw Edwards (Chairman)

Gwynedd Council Members: Councillor Pat Larsen

Christians and Other Faiths: Mr Wyn Myles Meredith, (Methodist Church), Mrs Ruth Davies (Union of Welsh Baptists), Mr Gwyn Hefin Jones, (Presbyterian Church of Wales), Mr Cynrig Hughes (Independents).

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

Co-opted Member:- Mr Rheinallt Thomas,

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

Apologies: Cllr. Selwyn Griffiths, Dafydd Roberts, Aeron Jones and John Gwilym Jones (ex-officio), The Rev. Robert Townsend (Church of Wales), Mrs Alwen Watkins (ASCL), Mrs Leusa Jones (Religious Education Advisory Teacher).

Welcome: Mrs Lisabeth Roberts, Head of Ysgol Maesincla, was welcomed to the meeting and at the same time the school was congratulated for their success following the recent ESTYN inspection.

1. PRAYER

The meeting was commenced with a prayer by Mr Noel Dyer.

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 29 June, 2011, as a true record subject to the following additions:

1. Election of Chairman

Resolved: To re-elect Councillor Huw Edwards as SACRE Chairman for the year 2011/12.

2. Election of Vice-chairman

Resolved: To re-elect Councillor Dafydd W. Roberts as Vice-chair of SACRE for the year 2011/12.

4. DRAFT GWYNEDD SACRE ANNUAL REPORT 2010-11

The Draft Gwynedd SACRE Annual Report for the 2010-11 academic year was presented for the members' approval prior to the publication of the final report.

The Humanities Adviser reported that the report was a summary of SACRE discussions during the previous year from September 2010 to August 2011, and that it was before the members in order to give them an opportunity to express an opinion on the draft report prior to submitting the final report to the Assembly's Education Department.

It was explained that the function of SACRE was to advise the Education Authority on matters involving the provision of Religious Education and Collective Worship and the Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education.

Members were guided through the report and reference was made to the methods used to give constant attention to monitoring Religious Education standards by reviewing the ESTYN school inspection reports (those inspected prior to September 2010) in the context of key question1, and the provision regarding the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; accept a summary of school self-evaluations together with monitoring examination results. Members' were reminded that there would be no specific reference to religious education in the inspection reports from now on and the reference to collective worship would be limited. In accordance with the adopted procedure, schools were asked within a year to the inspection to submit a Self-evaluation of the Religious Education subject and of the element concerning the pupils' moral development. During the year 6 self-evaluation summaries were received – 1 secondary and 5 primary and the evaluations of the standards were excellent and good. It was pleasing that schools were very honest in their evaluations and shared some aspects that would receive further attention.

Reference was made to the provision for collective worship and it was noted that every school conformed with the statutory requirements and as part of the self-evaluation procedure teachers were asked for their views on the standard of collective worship.

It was explained that the religious education results in the annual report were for last year and these results were discussed with SACRE in October 2010. Specific reference was made to the Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and Advanced Level Standards of Religious Education in 2010, and it was noted that it was more difficult these days to give views on external results and have a fair picture of the pattern as pupils undertook various courses at different times of their lives between year 10 and year 13. Further attention was drawn to the fact that the AS and A Level results did not appear on the SACRE agenda this term either, although the results had been published, the Humanities Adviser was of the view that it would be unfair to present

the religious education results in a public document until a fair comparison was received of pupils' performance in other subjects.

The work of the advisory service in the field of Religious Education was summarised and the courses offered under the in-service training programme for the authority's primary and secondary teachers were outlined. The report noted the link with DCELLS.

During the ensuing discussion the following comments were made:

(a) It was pleasing that the self-evaluation sheets presented to Gwynedd by the Humanities Adviser had been adopted and implemented throughout Wales. The Humanities Adviser was congratulated and thanked that the Gwynedd model was used by other authorities in Wales.

(b) In response to a query, an explanation was received from the Humanities Adviser that the acronym ESDGC stood for Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship.

(c) In response to a query regarding if cuts in the authority's expenditure had an impact on In-service Training, the Humanities Adviser explained that there had been cooperation for many years with schools and as teachers they did not have much choice as schools closed twice a year for In-service training and had been programmed for each area.

(ch) A member representing a deprived ward expressed his concern that there was pressure on primary schools to maintain the standards of religious education and the danger that the subject could disappear because of a lack of interest in it, especially when there was no strong educational support at home and a reduction in the numbers who attended Sunday Schools compared with the past.

In response, the Humanities Adviser explained that the numbers who choose religious education as a subject was fairly good. She recognised the efforts of primary schools and the work they do and it was noted that there was no expectation for primary schools to report the attainment of pupils in terms of levels in the subject.

(d) It was noted that there had been recent attention in the press regarding presenting school results on the basis of the family rota and would this be of assistance in terms of religious education results.

In response, the Humanities Adviser explained regarding Key Stage 3 (11-14 old pupils) that teachers assessments were presented to the Assembly and they were listed as families. Because religious education was managed locally it was noted that the results were not collected nationally. It was further noted by the Humanities Adviser, that she was aware of the performance of Gwynedd and Anglesey pupils in religious education.

In the context of older pupils (15-18 years), it was noted that religious education was one of the optional subjects and it was felt that it was more complex to make a fair comparison if family data was used. The Humanities Adviser confirmed that the

results would be presented to SACRE members at their meeting during the Spring term,

The Humanities Adviser was thanked for preparing the Draft Annual Report.

RESOLVED to accept with thanks the Draft Gwynedd SACRE Annual Report for 2010-11.

5. REVIEW OF SACRE REPORTS

A report was presented by the Humanities Adviser on reviews of Annual SACRE Reports for the period 2004-2008.

The Humanities Adviser reported that the Assembly Government was reviewing the work of SACREs on how schools were supported to try and raise religious education standards and collective worship in Wales. The importance of presenting these reviews by SACRE was noted in order to undertake a self-evaluation of the work of SACREs themselves and identify effective approaches for continual improvement.

Members' attention was drawn to the Assembly Government's recommendations as follows giving them an opportunity to submit observations on their performance:

(a) That SACREs continue to provide effective advice to their local authorities on matters related to raising standards in teaching and learning as identified in the agreed syllabuses. All SACREs should continue to support schools and monitor and evaluate the success of the advice given.

Whilst they were happy with the guidance given to SACRE, a comment was made that it would be beneficial for SACRE to receive a leaflet with information of the courses provided to schools.

(b) That SACREs continue to advise local authorities on monitoring standards and supporting schools pre and post-inspection. SACREs should also develop and recommend additional and complementary forms of monitoring. This would ensure that schools were continuing to improve standards of teaching and learning in religious education.

The Humanities Adviser noted that schools received support pre-inspection and a great deal of time was spent in schools assisting with any shortcomings, if this was required.

It was also trusted that the arrangements to receive school self-evaluations responded to the above recommendation as well as close collaboration with schools to this end.

In response to the above, the Member noted that recommendation (b) was important for the education authority at senior officer level in light of the fact that religious education was the only subject with statutory responsibility. It was further noted that SACRE Members depended extensively on the professionalism of officers to advise and draw their attention to any shortcomings or matters of concern regarding standards.

Another Member noted her concern regarding the possibility that some schools may fall through the net by forgetting to submit self-evaluations and as a result Gwynedd SACRE would not be undertaking its duties to monitor standards thoroughly.

In terms of self-evaluations, the Assistant Education Officer and SACRE Clerk had sent a request for self-evaluations in January this year. Some self-evaluations had been received and a second letter had been sent in May to remind Head teachers. By now, each one had been received, except for two self-evaluations of the schools inspected during the Autumn term 2010. Of the schools inspected in Spring 2011, it was noted that 2 out of 6 schools had completed self-evaluations. In the same manner, of the schools inspected during the Summer 2011 term, it was confirmed that 2 out of 6 schools had responded. It was further noted, whilst recognising the Member's concern above, the Assistant Education Officer and SACRE Clerk gave an assurance that the situation was not critical as schools had an annual time-table to be submitted and it was confirmed that they would continue to remind Heads of the need to complete these and submit them within the specified time.

(c) That SACREs provide evidence of discussions that emerge as a result of analysis of examination results. SACREs should also provide evidence of the subsequent advice that was given to the local authority and action that was then taken to help schools address a range of issues and raise standards.

The Humanities Adviser noted that SACRE received results and an analysis of the results for girls and boys, together with percentages of pupils who choose religious education as a subject.

In response to the above, there was a consensus amongst SACRE members that they were achieving in accordance with the above recommendation.

(ch) That SACREs continue to provide advice about teaching methods, resources and teacher training to their local authority. SACREs should ensure that an evaluation procedure was in place to assess the impact of that advice on standards.

In response, a Member noted that the above recommendation was a strength in terms of Gwynedd SACRE, as Members received presentations and examples could be seen which confirmed what was happening in classrooms. In addition, there were presentation on resources and new publications

(d) That SACREs continue to advise their local authorities on supporting and evaluating effective collective worship to ensure compliance with statutory requirements. All SACREs should continue to address these issues on a regular basis.

The Humanities Adviser reported that collective worship had been included as part of the schools' self-evaluation form and guidance would be distributed by ESTYN on collective worship.

Members were reminded that the Rev. Robert Townsend had made a request to undertake a review regarding the partnership between secondary schools and

religious leaders when it was confirmed that there was a good relationship between them.

Reference was also made to on-line resources with specific reference to Religious Education Movement Wales which translated materials to Welsh and this had proven valuable to the secondary sector.

(e) That the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) acknowledged the quality of work that was carried out by SACREs and WASACRE in supporting and raising standards in RE and appreciated the close working relationship it shared with them.

It was felt that there was collaboration and a very good relationship between the Humanities Adviser and other advisory services in Wales. It was also noted that there was seasonal representation on the Welsh Association of SACREs with valuable input to Members.

RESOLVED to accept the report together with the observations made in response to the recommendations of the Welsh Government.

6. SCHOOLS' SELF-EVALUATIONS

Submitted:

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

- (i) Ysgol y Gelli, Caernarfon
- (ii) Ysgol Maenofferen, Blaenau Ffestiniog
- (iii) Ysgol Pennal

The Assistant Education Officer and SACRE Clerk guided members through the above self-evaluations and noted that standards were excellent or good and he was proud of the willingness of the schools to note aspects for further development. It was noted that the Heads were fairly new in post in two of the above schools namely Ysgol Maenofferen and Ysgol Pennal.

(a) A Member noted that there was no specific attention to including religious education as a subject in the self-evaluation sheets and it may be interpreted that the comments were for any subject.

In response, the Humanities Adviser agreed and perhaps it would be necessary to adapt the model as there was no reference to subject skills in order to identify religious education more prominently. However, as someone visiting schools and undertaking training, the Humanities Adviser could identify religious education with the comments and the types of themes that receive attention.

(b) It was noted that artefacts were available to schools from the National Centre for Religious Education in Bangor and were available via the University Library system.

RESOLVED to accept and note the contents of the inspections and the self-evaluations.

7. WALES ASSOCIATION of SACREs.

Submitted to Members during a meeting were draft minutes of a meeting of the Association that took place on 24 June 2011 at Llangefni.

The Humanities Adviser reported that the minutes were for information and she thanked her colleagues in Ynys Môn for providing a musical welcome to members together with an exhibition of the work of secondary schools showing the creative work they had undertaken.

Reference was made to the competition results and specific reference was made to Ysgol Ffrwd Win, Ynys Môn.

Stemming from the minutes, attention was drawn to a recommendation that SACREs should pay a subscription of £400 for 2011/12.

RESOLVED: (a) To accept and note the contents of the minutes of the Wales Association of SACREs meeting held on 24 June 2011 in Llangefni.

(b) To approve the re-membership of the Wales Association of SACREs by paying a subscription of £400 for the year 2010/11.

8 CORRESPONDENCE

- (a)** An e-mail message was submitted from the British Humanist Association regarding representing Humanists on SACREs.

Mr Rheinallt Thomas reported that the Executive Committee of the Welsh Association of SACREs had discussed the matter at their meeting in 5 October 2011 when it was agreed to request clarification from the Welsh Government regarding the legal statements made in the e-mail message. The results of this exercise would be reported back to WASACREs. It was further noted that the matter would also be discussed at the next meeting of the Association in Cardiff on 24 November 2011. The Executive Committee's recommendation was that the SACREs should defer their response to the above e-mail until the WASACREs has made enquiries and had discussed the matter further.

- (b)** Articles in Religious Education News:

The Assistant Education Officer and SACRE Clerk drew the attention of Members' to the following articles that appeared in Religious Education News No. 89 – Summer 2011:

- (i) Page 8 - Praise for Ysgol Tryfan, Bangor and their recording of the song to Celebrate Religious Education called 'Hafan Ffydd'.

- (ii) Page 16 – Article by Bethan Andrews, Margaret Williams Roberts, Dewi Davies, Alun Llwyd and Bethan James on Non-literary Writing in Religious Education.
 - (iii) Page 56 – News from Gwynedd and Môn
 - (iv) Page 70 – Lecture to launch the Religious Education Centre by Carys Pritchard
 - (v) Page 84 – Publication of a book by Eirian Jones “Y Gymraes o Ganaan: Anturiaethau Margaret Jones ar Bum Cyfandir”.
- (c)** The committee took the opportunity to wish all the best to Miss Bethan James, Humanities Adviser, on her recent appointment as Chair of the National Panel of Religious Education Advisers in Wales.

RESOLVED (a) To defer consideration of the response to the British Humanist Association e-mail until guidance was received from the WASACREs following enquiries with the Welsh Government.

(b) To accept, note and thank the Assistant Education Officer and SACRE Clerk for bringing the articles to the attention of members.

The meeting commenced at 2:00 pm and concluded at 3:30 pm.

CHAIRMAN