
**S.A.C.R.E. – STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL
ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
27/06/12**

Present:

Gwynedd Council Members: Councillors Tom Ellis, Jean Forsyth, Selwyn Griffiths, Louise Hughes, John Brynmor Hughes and Gareth Thomas

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

Co-opted Member: Mr Rheinalt Thomas

Teachers: Mrs Miriam Amlyn (NAS/UWT).

Officers: Mr Ken Robinson (Assistant Education Officer and SACRE Clerk), Mrs Glynda O'Brien (Members' Support and Scrutiny Officer)

Apologies: Councillor Huw Edwards, Mr Noel Dyer (UCAC), Mrs Alwen Watkin (ASCL), Reverend Robert Townsend and Miss Bethan James (Humanities Adviser - CYNNAL).

1. PRAYER

The meeting was opened with a prayer from Reverend Deian Evans.

2. WELCOME

(a) The Assistant Education Officer (SACRE Clerk) welcomed all to the meeting and especially new Members to their first SACRE meeting.

(b) Reference was made to Councillor Huw Edwards, a member of this committee, and the committee extended its best wishes to him for a full and speedy recovery.

3. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Resolved: To elect Councillor Selwyn Griffiths as Chair of this Committee for 2012-13.

4. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Resolved: To elect Councillor Gareth Thomas as Vice-Chair of this Committee for 2012-13.

5. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL CONNECTION

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

6. **MINUTES**

The Chairman signed the minutes of the meeting of this committee held on 8 February 2012 as a true record.

6.1 **Matters arising from the minutes**

(a) **Item 7 (i) - Subscription letter to the Religious Education Movement Wales**

Mr Rheinallt Thomas thanked Gwynedd SACRE for the contribution and subscription to the Religious Education Movement Wales.

(b) **Item 7 (iii) – Resignation from Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee**

In response to a query regarding the nomination of a SACRE representative to serve on the above committee, it was explained that following the Election the Council had adopted a new system of governance in the form of a new Cabinet and scrutiny committees. The Children and Young People’s Committee had been replaced by the Services Scrutiny Committee and the resolution of that Committee was not to co-opt additional members except for the five members with a vote on education issues only.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

7. **SELF-EVALUATIONS**

Submitted: A summary of the self-evaluations from the following schools:

- (i) Ysgol Tanygrisiau, Blaenau Ffestiniog
- (ii) Ysgol Friars, Bangor

(A) The Assistant Education Officer (SACRE Clerk) explained to the new Members that in the past the procedure was for Gwynedd SACRE to monitor religious education and collective worship by :

- Reviewing ESTYN inspection reports
- Analysing the teachers’ assessment and examination results within the Secondary Schools of the Local Authority;
- Receiving regular reports from representatives of the local schools/advisory service;
- Inviting teachers and head teachers to share examples of good practice with SACRE members.

However, the new ESTYN Inspection framework would not refer specifically to Religious Education and collective worship and at its meeting on 12 October 2010 the decision of SACRE was that it would achieve its statutory responsibility by inviting schools to share their self-evaluations of Religious Education, collective worship and the spiritual and moral development of pupils with Members.

The Assistant Education Officer guided Members through the above self-evaluation form and noted that several schools had been reminded of the need to submit their self-evaluations, however, unfortunately only two schools had done so this time. The self-evaluation of Ysgol Gynradd Aberdyfi had been received, however, it was too late to be included with the agenda and an assurance was given that it would be submitted to the next SACRE meeting. Schools had been asked to respond to the following three key questions:

- (a) How good are the outcomes in Religious Education?
- (b) How good is provision in Religious Education?
- (c) How good is provision for Collective Worship?

In regard to Ysgol Gynradd Tanygrisiau, it was seen that the standard of Religious Education was good with the school giving several reasons to support that view. In the same manner the school honestly noted those issues that required attention namely to continue to develop the teacher's knowledge and thinking skills in order to give pupils more freedom when presenting their findings. The school noted good features in relation to the quality of collective worship.

(B) In response to the above, the following points were highlighted by individual Members:

- (i) In accordance with ESTYN guidance, the school should not state good in relation to the quality of collective worship unless it holds an assembly for pupils every day.
- (ii) Reading through the report it appeared that there were several linguistic errors in the contents and it was trusted that this was not a reflection of the school's thinking regarding the subject.

(C) Regarding the self-evaluation of Ysgol Uwchradd Friars, the school noted that in the context of key question 1 that the standard of Religious Education was good and it was noted that the self-evaluation was based on observations of lessons and pupils' work and interviews with the pupils. In addition, it was noted that there was progress in standards as well as one issue that required specific attention. In the same manner, good standards were noted in key question 2 with three matters to receive specific attention. In the context of collective worship, it was appreciated that the school had good features as weekly assemblies were conducted by each year group and every child had a thought for the day read out every day.

(D) During the ensuing discussion the following points were highlighted:

- (i) That teachers followed and conformed with specific ESTYN guidance when completing self-evaluation forms and therefore they had to be correct and frank.
- (ii) That parents were entitled to withdraw a child from collective worship activity, however, it was hastily noted that only a very small number of children nationally were withdrawn.
- (iii) That the Minister for Education had ordered that Religious Education should receive a subject Inspection next year.
- (iv) It was asked if progress had been made regarding the provision of a model leaflet on the CYNNAL website for the use of teachers in the future.

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

(b) To request that the Assistant Education Officer (SACRE Clerk) makes further enquiries with the Humanities Adviser regarding the model leaflet on the CYNNAL website.

7. SPIRITED ARTS COMPETITION

Mrs Gwenda Healy, Head of Religious Education, Ysgol Botwnnog was welcomed to present the winning poems in the 2011 poetry competition.

Mrs Healy gave the background and stated that she had attended a course with Lat Blaylock, Editor of the magazine *RE Today* which provided educational resources for the secondary sector. In the magazine there was a competition 'Spirited Arts' which offered pupils between 5-19 years old the opportunity to create creative materials via images and using art to express religious ideas. Since approximately 2005 the competition had been extended to include 'Spirited Poetry'. As a school, they had placed emphasis on creating a strategy within the school development plan to stretch able and talented pupils and ideas had been aired on how to stretch the best pupils in the History, Geography and Religious Education Departments. Therefore, last year they had competed and a task was set for Year 8 and 9 pupils as well as those in Year 7 to write poetry under five headings. The poems were selected and 10 were sent in to the competition, the maximum that could be entered in accordance with competition rules. Of the 10 poems sent, two pupils from Ysgol Botwnnog won namely Tomos Turtle and Evely Usher it was a huge achievement come top amongst the first 15 in Britain with the other 7 sent recognised to be amongst the first 50 throughout Britain. It was noted that both pupils would have been present to read their poems, however, they were currently sitting internal school examinations. Therefore they had prepared a DVD reading out their winning poems for the committee to hear.

The members of SACRE were proud of their success and the Chair promised that he would congratulate the school and send a personal letter to the above two pupils to congratulate them on their success and excellent work.

Resolved: To accept, note and thank the Head of Religious Education for the presentation.

8. COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Ms Debbie Humphreys from Ysgol Eifion Wyn, an Advisory Teacher with CYNNAL, was welcomed to the meeting to present guidance regarding Collective Worship. She expanded on what meaningful collective worship was, namely that it:

- Promoted spiritual development;
- Contributed to personal development;
- Beneficial to the community of the whole school;
- Linked the school community with the wider local community;
- Improved awareness of global citizenship.

Members were guided through the statutory requirements and the listed support available to schools. Reference was made to several websites and books that teachers could use to support collective worship and some of these provided materials in Welsh. An example was seen of a timetable in the form of long term collective worship that would be useful for teachers with the theme of a festival or Religious event, possible Biblical link, important messages for the school together with important national/local events.

Members were reminded of the responsibilities of SACREs namely to support an efficient provision of Religious Education and collective worship in schools. Every local education authority should work with its SACRE to review the current provision for Religious Education and to consider with SACRE if there was a need to make any changes in the joint syllabus or in the support offered to schools. In the same manner, they should work with their SACREs to keep an eye on daily collective worship and to consider any steps that may be taken to improve such a provision.

To conclude, Members were asked if they were of the view that it was necessary to ask schools to undertake any actions that were different in terms of collective worship.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were highlighted:

- (a) The guidance was discussed at the meeting of the Welsh Association of SACREs held on 28 June 2012, when it was resolved to include a footnote on page 3 of the guidance to explain the difference between collective worship and corporate worship namely that:
- collective worship was any group of persons such as children at a meeting
 - corporate worship – referred to the faith community together.
- (b) That there was an opportunity for Churches via *Cyhoeddiadau'r Gair* to support schools by buying a pack of materials for worship equivalent to £120 for approximately £60.00 to give them to local schools.
- (c) That Toni Schiavone had produced material for collective worship and this would be useful on the Website, if he agreed.
- (ch) The committee were proud of the work undertaken by the Advisory Teacher bearing in mind that so many teachers qualified these days without a background in Religious Education.
- (d) It was suggested that it would be useful to invite and use a prospective Vicar who hailed from south Meirionnydd to visit schools. In response, it was noted that it would be a matter for a head teacher and the Governing Body to contact Christian leaders.

Resolved: To accept, note and thank the Advisory Teacher for the presentation.

9. WALES ASSOCIATION of SACREs.

Submitted: Draft minutes of the Wales Association of SACREs meeting held on 30 March 2012 in Ceredigion.

Reported: That a very special welcome was received in Aberaeron as part of the above meeting, however, concern was noted regarding the lack of representatives from amongst the Members who attend these meetings. It was noted that technically every SACRE should send a Council Elected Member, teacher together with a representative from the Churches to these meetings. An appeal was made for Gwynedd SACRE to consider this in future.

At the meeting held on 26 June 2012 in Conwy, the following were considered:

- (a) Collective Worship guidance
- (b) Inspection of the link between SACRE and local communities and the results were expected by the end of July 2012. It was suggested that it would be beneficial to include an item on this matter at the next Gwynedd SACRE meeting.
- (b) Positive presentation on the attitude of young people by Leslie Francis regarding a variety of Religions
- (c) It was agreed to raise the membership fee for the Wales Association of SACREs to £408.

RESOLVED: (a) To accept and note the above.
(b) To approve the re-membership of the Wales Association of SACREs by paying a subscription of £408 for the year 2012/13.

10. **CORRESPONDENCE**

Submitted: (A) Advice from the Executive Committee of the Wales Association of SACREs in response to a request for representation by the British Humanist Association on SACRE.

Reported: By the Assistant Education Officer (SACRE Clerk) on the background to a request received from the British Humanist Association to nominate a representative to serve on SACRE. The Wales Association of SACREs received legal advice on this issue and reference was made to Section 390 of the Education Act 1996 which stated useful information regarding the constitution of advisory councils. The advice of the Executive Committee of the Wales Association of SACREs was to adhere to the law as submitted in Section 390 regarding the request.

Following careful consideration of the correspondence a Member noted that Section 390 stated clearly that the representative groups should reflect the area' main Religious traditions. The word **Religious** appeared clearly in Section 390 and therefore agreeing to the request would create a future precedent.

It was proposed, seconded and voted to refuse the request in accordance with the guidance of Section 390 of the Education Act 1996.

Councillor Jean Forsyth abstained.

Resolved: (a) To accept and note the contents of the correspondence.

(b) To approve the refusal of the request made by the British Humanist Society to nominate a representative to serve on SACRE in accordance with Section 390 of the Education Act 1996.

The meeting commenced at 2:00 pm and concluded at 3:40 pm.

CHAIRMAN