
S.A.C.R.E. – STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION 23/10/13

Present:

**Councillor Selwyn Griffiths - Chairman
Councillor Gareth Thomas - Vice-chairman**

Gwynedd Council Members: Councillor Tom Ellis

Christians and Other Faiths: Reverend Deian Evans (Presbyterian Church of Wales), Mrs Ruth Davies (Union of Welsh Baptists), Mr Cynrig Hughes (Congregationalists)

Teachers: Mr Noel Dyer, (UCAC) and Mrs Miriam Amllyn (NAS/UWT).

Officers: Mr Ken Robinson (Assistant Education Officer and SACRE Clerk), Miss Bethan James (GwE System Leader), Mrs Glynda O'Brien (Members' Support and Scrutiny Officer).

Apologies: Cllr. Huw Edwards, Jean Forsyth, Louise Hughes, Llywarch Bowen Jones, Mr Wyn Myles Meredith (Methodist Church), Mrs Eirian Bradley Roberts (Catholic Church), Mrs Alwyn Watkin (ASCL).

1. PRAYER

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

2. BEST WISHES

The Chairman extended best wishes to Rev. Deian Evans who would be retiring from his ministry in the Penygroes area soon. He was thanked for his commitment and his valuable contribution to SACRE meetings over the years he had served as a Member.

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Councillor Gareth Thomas declared a personal interest in Item 9 (i) and (v) Self-evaluations as he was a school governor at Ysgol Arduwy, Harlech and Ysgol Cefn Coch, Penrhyndeudraeth. 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.

4. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the meeting of this committee held on 13 February 2013 as a true record.

5. PRESENTATION

(a) The Chairman extended a warm welcome to Mrs Ann Williams and Mrs Helen Evans from Ysgol Llanelltyd, near Dolgellau, to the meeting to give a presentation to SACRE Members on Religious Education in the Foundation Phase and to share examples of lessons provided by them to pupils.

(b) Miss Bethan James, GwE System Leader, set the context by referring to the National Exemplar Framework to present Religious Education for learners 3-19 years old in Wales adopted by Gwynedd SACRE as an Agreed Syllabus. She stated that through practical, integrated activities that maintained the interest of the children, they could learn more about themselves, other people and the world around them and develop an understanding of the rich cultural and religious heritage of Wales.

Members were reminded that the requirements of the syllabus were extensive and there were no subjects in the Foundation Phase, however, teachers steered education under specific headings.

- Knowledge and Understanding of the World
- Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity
- People, Beliefs and Questions

It was noted that there were 39 skills that were relevant to the field of People, Beliefs and Questions. It was a requirement for SACRE to advise schools not only on the provision of Religious Education but also regarding what type of suitable resources are available. Examples were also provided of activities suitable for the Foundation Phase such as toys, use of persona dolls etc. When thinking of Religious Education as a starting point this would then lead to opportunities to develop other skills with some teachers trying to predict the opportunities to develop skills and others keeping a record following spending time on a particular theme. Teachers plan specifically via a continuous provision, enriching the provision and creating focus tasks for learners.

(c) Mrs Ann Williams and Mrs Helen Evans demonstrated what happened in the classroom and an outline of the story book 'Salamuta and Kandoni go missing' was given as a starting point. This book was set in Ghana and offered an opportunity for pupils to learn more about themselves, other people and the world around them. From the story, there were opportunities for pupils to develop skills such as:

- playing a role
- expressing feelings
- weighing ingredients
- cooking
- making models of a Mosque and learning about how Moslems pray
- visiting local places of worship in order to understand the different features
- look at important dates
- write letters
- use stories and role work to develop understanding of other viewpoints
- opportunity to make a football from plastic bags
- learn about Fair Trade

(ch) To conclude, Miss Bethan James referred to research work that had been undertaken by Ms Marnel Edwards, Ysgol Cefn Coch, Penrhyndeudraeth and it was seen how she developed and planned activities, prepared resources to kindle the curiosity of

pupils and to extend the development of literacy and numeracy. Stemming from the research it was seen that nearly every target group had indicated attainment features for outcome 6 and achieved the expected outcomes of the National Literacy Framework for Year 2.

(d) In addition, reference was made to a Welsh Government committee that Mrs Ann Williams had been part of to draft guidelines under the title People, Beliefs and Questioning to develop ideas regarding planning learning and teaching in the field of Religious Education for learners between 3 and 7 years old. It was noted that the guidelines included case studies that show good practice in the Classroom, planning grids and suggestions with assessment. It was further noted that the guidelines would be extremely useful for schools.

(dd) The schools were thanked and congratulated for their work and it was noted that it was pleasing to see that the Christian faith was valued in the lessons with the other faiths. In the current inspection procedure it was noted that ESTYN were looking for examples of good practice and there would be a great deal of pressure on schools to share experiences.

Resolved: (a) To request that the Assistant Education Officer and SACRE Clerk sends a letter of thanks to the schools of Llanelltyd and Cefn Coch for their work.

(b) To request that Miss Bethan James, GwE System Leader, sends an electronic copy of the document People, Beliefs and Questioning for learners 3 to 7 years old to every primary school in the County.

5. DRAFT GWYNEDD SACRE ANNUAL REPORT 2012-13

The Draft Gwynedd SACRE Annual Report for the 2012-13 academic year was presented for the members' approval, prior to the publication of the final report.

(A) Miss Bethan James explained that the purpose of the Annual Report was to summarise the work achieved by SACRE over the previous year, however, the nature of the report had changed this time compared to previous reports. She explained that every three years the Welsh Government collected the Wales SACREs annual reports and published a review of them. The draft review had been prepared by the Government and included recommendations incorporated by Miss Bethan James in the draft annual report and it was anticipated that this would be the future pattern.

The Government Review noted the need for SACREs to continue:

- To give advice and support schools
- To monitor and evaluate the success of SACRE
- To monitor and give advice on collective worship
- With the practice of SACRE members visiting schools to have a taste of what happens in collective worship assemblies

It was pleasing to note that Gwynedd SACRE had adopted a procedure of receiving and considering school self-evaluations and the Assistant Education Officer was thanked for facilitating this.

In the Review there was a reference to the gap in the performance of girls and boys and that SACRE should deal with this.

In the past, Miss Bethan James in her role as Humanities Adviser with CYNNAL, transferred SACRE messages to schools, however, by now the advisory role had been lost as a result of displacing CYNNAL and creating a new body GwE (Schools Effectiveness and Improvement Service) and consequently SACRE would have to be clear of the messages that were to be presented to schools.

Members were guided through the draft report and reference was made to the main messages within it:

- that pages 4 to 11 dealt with how good are the standards of religious education in Gwynedd and this was done by presenting results to SACRE as well as school self-evaluations during the term prior to an ESTYN Inspection, during the Inspection term or following the Inspection.

Stemming from the above, there was an extensive discussion if schools that submit self-evaluations and those who do not should be named. There was a difference of opinion amongst Members regarding naming schools for different reasons such as that SACRE had a responsibility to monitor self-evaluations and support education officers and if this was not done it was felt that SACRE did not undertake its responsibility and was in a situation of weakness. The view was that self-evaluation should be completed naturally as part of a School's self-evaluation arrangements. On the other hand, it was felt that they should not be named and it would be fairer to note the number of schools who had not submitted self-evaluations perhaps because they had valid reasons for not doing so and that this matter should be considered via the Head teachers' Forum.

In response to the above observation, the Assistant Education Officer and SACRE Clerk explained that on the whole schools were good at sending self-evaluations and only about 3 or 4 schools per year failed to submit them on time. There were some circumstances where it was not prudent to continue to ask for them where a Head was in charge of a school.

Miss Bethan James added that some Counties were considering receiving the self-evaluations annually and Anglesey had resolved to request them every three years.

From the above discussion, it was proposed, seconded and voted to name the schools who present the self-evaluations and those who do not.

Recommended: To note in the SACRE Annual Report the names of the schools who submit self-evaluations as well as those schools who do not.

(B) In the report reference was made that approximately half of the self-evaluations were a response to the requirements of SACRE and attention was drawn to the fact that many of the observations were very general when referring to the standards of the subject and the provision for Religious Education and that the references to the Agreed Syllabus were very few.

An example self-evaluation form was sent to schools during the year and an improvement was seen in the comments thus far.

Attention was drawn to the fact that the Annual Report named schools with good practice and who were positive about the subject, as it was felt that this gave a direction for schools to be able to visit each other and share experiences and good practice.

A comment was made by a Member regarding the achievement of Religious Education Departments to provide a portfolio of the work of pupils for the attention of external WJEC

examiners, noting that they were a teacher's personal portfolio and if the teacher moved from the school then the portfolio was not an indicator that it was current.

Members were given an opportunity to air the recommendations regarding the provision and they were approved as outlined in the draft report.

(C) Miss Bethan James expanded on the contents of the recommendations in the annual report regarding the results and attention was drawn to the support of the Advisory Team in order to respond to what was raised during the year such as supporting schools, preparing and providing training courses, observing lessons of newly qualified teachers in the secondary sector etc.

The documents published were listed and specific attention was drawn to the ESTYN thematic report and Religious Education teachers in the secondary sector should be made aware of this.

It was noted that the Collective Worship guidelines had been distributed to schools and it was suggested that SACRE could consider holding their meetings in secondary schools in future in order to attend collective worship assemblies. It was understood that authorities that were much smaller geographically did this. Perhaps it might be possible to hold a training day for governors on collective worship.

In response to a query by a Member regarding promoting pupils who receive good results in Religious Education for jobs in the ministry, it was noted that Career Wales had posters offering all sorts of posts be that to follow a career in the ministry or in administration such as health and social work. It was expressed that it was an important subject in itself in order to study other subjects and developed transferable skills by evaluating different contentious arguments.

Miss Bethan James added that the University of Medicine in Cardiff held pupils who had studied Religious Education in great esteem as they had studied contentious questions.

Lastly, the attached appendices to the Annual Report were checked for accuracy.

Resolved: To accept the draft annual report and approve the recommendation in (A) above and all the recommendations included in the draft annual report.

6. STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

(A) Miss Bethan James, GwE System Leader, submitted information regarding Key Stage 3 results and noted that only 5 had submitted results this year and therefore she was not in a position to make an analysis of the standards. CYNNAL had been collecting data since 1996 at a time when the Government collected data on every subject apart from Religious Education. It was understood that teachers had completed the assessments and it was assumed that it was an administrative failing of inputting the data to CYNNAL.

It was suggested that a letter should be sent to Department Heads who had not submitted the data requesting that they submit this data.

In response, a Member explained that schools emphasised using data of the Fischer Family Trust, Ffynnon etc. and even data to compare with the subjects of history and geography as CYNNAL had nothing to offer as comparison. It would be useful for school Departments to receive information regarding the Gwynedd performance in terms of comparison. It was

added that there was no reason why Departments could not make a comparison with schools in Gwynedd, Anglesey and two schools in Conwy.

Resolved: To request that the Assistant Education Officer and the SACRE Clerk sends a letter to Department heads of those schools who had not submitted the results for this year to do so as soon as possible.

(B) In terms of the GCSE results, Miss Bethan James explained that in the past it was possible to see the results of each school and their scores in other subjects but the information was not available to her now.

It was noted that the Gwynedd GCSE results were very good and it was noted how many candidates received A*/A grades, that the numbers of pupils in classes varied, more girls than boys chose Religious Studies as a GCSE option and the average score for girls was 47 compared with 45 for boys. Whilst accepting that there was not such a large gap in the Gwynedd pattern and it showed a little improvement, the gap was high in terms of the higher grades. By looking at and analysing the data it was seen that a high percentage sat the Religious Studies examination at Ysgol Friars by using the GCSE qualification to accredit the statutory Religious Education and therefore the gap between the grades was not as extensive as other schools. It was suggested that it would be beneficial to invite the Department at Ysgol Friars to give a presentation to SACRE to have a taste of what was done at that school.

In response to the above, the following points were highlighted:

- that the support to school policy could enable some schools to undertake this but it was not possible to time-table this in every school.
- That the choice of subjects varied from school to school.
- That a gap between girls and boys was a national problem but was more of a problem in Religious Education.
- It would be interesting to know what courses were offered by schools.
- That internal WJEC arrangements had reconciled the standard of both examination papers, however, perhaps some subjects appealed more to girls than boys and this contributed to the difference in the gap between them.

Resolved: To accept and note the contents of the report and approve the following recommendations:

- (a) Ensure that religious education teachers have access to the WJEC examination board subject guidance;
- (b) Invite the Religious Education Department of Ysgol Friars to share good practice at a meeting of Gwynedd SACRE
- (c) Facilitate professional learning communities for religious education teachers in order to respond to the ESTYN Inspection Report (2013) and research key questions such as:
 - Why do pupils choose the subject? Why don't pupils choose the subject?
 - Why do more girls than boys choose to study this subject?
 - What can departments learn from other departments regarding the best way of supporting boys as they prepare for external examinations? What other strategies should be considered in order to close the gap between girls and boys?
 - How can departments challenge pupils to achieve work of the highest standard?

7. SCHOOLS' SELF-EVALUATIONS

The Assistant Education Officer and SACRE Clerk guided Members through the following self-evaluations and noted that each of the schools within the inspection cycle, namely 6 schools had responded to his request to submit self-evaluations following recent inspections.

(i) **Ysgol Ardudwy, Harlech**

It was noted that the outcomes and the provision in Religious Education was good at the above school with diverse and challenging learning and teaching strategies implemented and lesson observations had been at least Good+ as regards learning and teaching throughout the year. The self-evaluation stated adequate in terms of the collective worship provision with three matters to focus upon as regards to quality.

(ii) **Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen**

The above school's self-evaluation noted very detailed evidence that the outcomes in Religious Education were excellent and in the context of the provision that evidence of lesson observation by the Senior Management Team noted that the standard of teaching in the subject was excellent as well as evidence in the work books showing regular use of assessment for learning strategies and thinking development making the pupils confident and independent learners. It was noted that the collective worship provision was good and was in compliance with the statutory requirements.

(iii) **Ysgol O. M Edwards, Llanuwchllyn**

The self-evaluation notes that lesson observation indicated that the pupils had an excellent grasp of Religious Studies and there was close collaboration between the school and the community. An excellent standard was given for Key Question 1 namely how good are outcomes in Religious Education although this had not been noted in the self-evaluation but the Assistant Education Officer and SACRE Clerk stated that he had discussed this with the Head to confirm this. Attention was also drawn to ignore the question marks for Key Question 2 namely the provision and to confirm that the standard was good. In terms of Collective Worship it was noted that the provision was excellent.

(iv) **Ysgol Dolbadarn, Llanberis**

It was noted that the outcomes in Religious Education were good at the above school and attention was drawn to the fact that pupils in Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 had excellent experiences through a good combination of work on and off the site via varied visits that extend their understanding. The self-evaluation noted that the standard of Collective Worship was good with a special spiritual ethos to the services and the children make an effective contribution through organising contributions beforehand and through sharing feelings at the time.

(v) **Ysgol Cefn Coch, Penrhyndeudraeth**

It was noted that the above school had prepared detailed observations and noted a good standard for key question 1 namely, how good are outcomes in Religious Education. In the same way it was noted that the standard was good in terms of provision in Religious Education and that the school's humanities coordinator had attended HADA training and gained a great deal from this. In the same way a good standard was noted in the Collective Worship provision with the school providing daily collective worship for all pupils in accordance with the statutory requirement.

(vi) Ysgol Baladeulyn, Dyffryn Nantlle

The self-evaluation of the above school notes that the standard was good for key question 1 and in terms of key question 2, noting that it was necessary to develop international links in order to further enrich the children's experiences. In the same manner a good standard was noted in the Collective Worship provision.

Members were given an opportunity to make observations on the self-evaluations and it was noted that there had been progress and improvement in the quality of the self-evaluations.

Miss Bethan James noted that the authority had organised workshops on 28/29 November in order to discuss whole school self-evaluations and the workshops would be used to refer to the completion of Religious Education self-evaluations.

A comment was made by a Member that guidance for Religious Education Coordinators would be beneficial.

RESOLVED: To accept and note the contents of the inspections and self-evaluations and in accordance with procedure to request that the Assistant 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.

8. ESTYN'S THEMATIC INSPECTION REPORT

Submitted for information, a copy of a presentation by ESTYN on Religious Education in secondary schools that stated ESTYN's main findings stemming from visits to 20 secondary schools, interviews and lesson observation in Key Stages 3 and 4.

Resolved: To accept and note the above for information.

9. SACREs LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Resolved: To defer the consideration of the above due to a shortage of time.

10. WALES ASSOCIATION of SACREs

Minutes of a meeting of the Wales Association of SACREs that took place on 19 June 2013 in Caernarfon were submitted.

Resolved: To accept and note the contents of the minutes.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 4.30 pm.

CHAIRMAN