
S.A.C.R.E. – STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION 13/06/13

Present:

Gwynedd Council Members: Councillors Tom Ellis, Jean Forsyth, Selwyn Griffiths and Gareth Thomas.

Christians and Other Faiths: Mr Wyn Myles Meredith (Methodist Church), Eirian Bradley Roberts, (Catholic Church), Reverend Deian Evans (Welsh Presbyterian Church)

Co-opted Member: Mr Rheinalt Thomas

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

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

Observer: Miss Bethan James (GwE System Leader),

Apologies: Cllrs. Huw Edwards, John Brynmor Hughes, Louise Hughes, Mrs Ruth Davies (Welsh Baptists' Union), Reverend. Robert Townsend (Church in Wales), Mr Cynrig Hughes (Congregationalists).

1. PRAYER

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

2. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Resolved: To re-elect Councillor Selwyn Griffiths as Chair of this Committee for the year 2013/14.

3. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Resolved: To re-elect Councillor Gareth Thomas as Vice-chair of this Committee for the year 2013/14.

4. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

5. URGENT ITEM

(The following items had not been included on the Agenda however, the Chair agreed to consider them under Section 100 (4)(b), Local Government Act 1972).

(a) The Assistant Education Officer and SACRE Clerk reported that he had received a letter from University of Wales Trinity Saint David, stating that the magazine Religious Education News would be available on-line from now on due to the lack of sufficient financial contributions from local authorities and an inability to receive funding from other sources. The Editorial board felt that there would be a reduction in production costs on-line and this could be sustainable. The website would be launched soon and those who contributed financially would be informed of the password to be able to read the magazine on-line.

A Member added that a substantial number of individuals received the magazine and they would receive an offer to continue to receive it for an annual financial contribution. It was stressed how important it was at a local authority level, for SACRE Members to receive the password. It was noted that Gwynedd already submitted ideas for Religious Education lessons for schools on-line through the Moodle site. Discussions were proceeding regarding the possible steps to consider one body that would encompass all Religious Education issues in the future.

Resolved: To accept and note the above and ensure that Gwynedd SACRE Members receive the password as soon as possible.

(b) A letter from the CYTŪN organisation requesting a list of SACRE Members.

Resolved: To request that the SACRE Clerk sends the distribution list for Gwynedd SACRE Membership to the above organisation.

5. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the meeting of this committee held on 20 February 2013 as a true record.

6. SCHOOLS' SELF-EVALUATIONS

Miss Bethan James reported that CYNNAL had now been replaced by a new body called GwE and that she had been appointed System Leader. She had not dealt with Religious Education issues as part of her new post since 1st of April.

She presented Members with a model form of how SACRE could self-evaluate Religious Education standards and they were requested to deal with tasks using the Self-evaluations submitted by schools following recent inspections at Ysgol Bethel, Ysgol Nebo and Ysgol Penbryn, Bethesda. She focused on the sources of information available and the quantitative and evaluative vocabulary used by teachers. In addition, Members were given a questionnaire to gather their views regarding how SACRE Members could support the system to monitor the standards of collective worship and Religious Education in the future.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were highlighted:

- (i) That the quantitative vocabulary was more evident than the evaluative vocabulary
- (ii) The importance that schools were honest in their self-evaluations
- (iii) That the list of words was very useful and teachers were not aware that the vocabulary needed to be used for self-evaluations submitted to SACRE. However, teachers used the vocabulary for self-evaluations submitted to ESTYN.
- (iv) It was suggested that it would be a good idea to give guidance to teachers regarding the vocabulary list and inform them of SACRE's role.

In response to a query from a Member regarding the influence of visitors on school assemblies, Miss Bethan James explained that schools had to be trusted that they chose their visitors wisely. It was noted that the assembly had the right to be Christian but in terms of a Religious Education lesson it was the responsibility of the school to ensure that children were not influenced by one denomination more than another as a Religious Education lesson had to be unbiased.

In terms of questions to ask teachers in order to understand more about Religious Education in school, the following were noted:

- (a) How many teachers have received specific training in Religious Education
- (b) How is improvement measured from one year to the next
- (c) It would be beneficial to see examples of pupils' good work
- (d) The self-evaluations referred to the teaching and there was no mention of the learning and therefore there was no mention of what was done
- (e) The teaching can be extremely good and the learning can be not as good

RESOLVED: (a) To accept and note the contents of the inspections and self-evaluations and in accordance with the 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.

(b) To request that the Assistant Education Officer sends the model form provided by Miss Bethan James to schools to assist and encourage them to use the appropriate vocabulary when undertaking the self-assessments in the future.

6. WALES ASSOCIATION of SACREs

(a) Minutes of the previous meeting

Submitted minutes of a meeting of the Wales Association of SACREs that took place on 22 March 2013 in Newport.

A Member referred to the useful and interesting presentation given by teachers (namely Ann Williams and Helen Evans) from Ysgol Llanelltyd. It was suggested that a specific reference should be made to the name of the school in the minutes rather than refer to them as a Dolgellau school.

It was further suggested that it would be useful to invite them to give a presentation to the next Gwynedd SACRE meeting in October.

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

(b) To request that the Assistant Education Officer invites Ann Williams and Helen Evans, Ysgol Llanelltyd to give a presentation on work in the Foundation Phase.

(b) Next Association Meeting

Members were reminded that a meeting of the Wales Association of SACREs would take place at Siambr Dafydd Orwig, Caernarfon on Wednesday, 19 June 2013 and Members were encouraged to attend.

It was also mentioned that the National Conference would take place on 10 October 2013, and representatives were encouraged to attend, especially as there would be a thematic ESTYN report in Key Stages 3 and 4 on the agenda.

(c) Nominations to Executive Committee of the Wales Association of SACREs

Nominations were submitted for the Executive Committee and it was noted that there were three seats available and the post of the Vice-chair also required to be filled. Nine names were received to serve on the Executive Committee, however, it was understood that Mr Dafydd Treharne had withdrawn his name.

Attention was drawn to the fact that Gwynedd SACRE should have only nominated one name.

Prior to the formal commencement of the SACRE meeting, the three representative groups namely Authority Members, Christian denominations and teachers, had met to choose three names in order that the Chair of SACRE could cast a vote on their behalf at the Wales Association of SACREs Annual Meeting to be held at Caernarfon on 19 June 2013.

Resolved: To nominate the following:

- (i) Mr Wyn Meredith**
- (ii) Ms Mary Parry**
- (iii) Mr Mark Brown**

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 3.35 pm.

CHAIRMAN