
S.A.C.R.E. – STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION 19.02.14

Present: Councillor Selwyn Griffiths - Chairman

Gwynedd Council Members: Councillors Jean Forsyth, Louise Hughes and Llywarch Bowen Jones.

Christians and Other Faiths: Mrs Ruth Davies (Welsh Baptists Union), Mr Cynrig Hughes (Congregationalists), Mr Wyn Myles Meredith (Methodist Church) and Reverend Robert Townsend (Church in Wales).

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), Miss Bethan James (GwE System Leader) and Ioan Hughes (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer).

Apologies: Councillor Tom Ellis, Councillor Gareth Thomas and Mrs Alwen Watkin (ASCL)

1. PRAYER

The meeting was opened with a prayer by Councillor E. Selwyn Griffiths.

2. BEST WISHES

The Chairman referred to Mrs Alwen Watkin (ASCL) and Councillor Tom Ellis' recent ill-health and they were wished well.

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

4. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee, held on 23 October 2013, as a true record.

5. MUSIC IN WORSHIP

Reverend Robert Townsend was given an opportunity to refer to a new book of religious songs that had been published recently.

He explained that he had been eager to arrange a better variety of songs to be used in worship in schools for a while.

Therefore he contacted religious musicians from different denominations and asked them to compose appropriate songs. As a result 61 songs had been received and 42 of these were Welsh language or bilingual songs and the remainder were English language songs.

The songs had now been published in a book called '*O Dduw ein Tad*'. CD's had also been produced with background music and the words of the songs so that they could be shown on PowerPoint.

It was added that a Christian business man, who wished to remain anonymous, had sponsored the scheme in order to ensure that a package of the songs was sent free of charge to every primary school within the six north Wales authorities.

It was further explained that no profit would be made from the scheme. Bangor Diocese had paid the printing costs etc. and they would be available on the Diocese's website for £10 per copy.

An official launch was held on Wednesday, 5 March, namely Ash Wednesday.

The information was welcomed and the chairman emphasised that the business man's generosity was very valuable. Reverend Robert Townsend was asked to thank the gentleman on behalf of the members.

6. **SCHOOLS' SELF-EVALUATIONS**

The Assistant Education Officer and SACRE Clerk guided the members through the self - evaluations below and noted that two schools had responded to his request to submit self-evaluations following recent inspections.

(i) **Ysgol Edmwnd Prys Gellilydan**

It was noted that good progress in Religious Education had been observed across the aforementioned school. It was added that evidence in the children's books and learning and teaching monitoring findings showed that good standards were achieved throughout the school.

Specific reference was made to class discussions that were held regularly in the classrooms. In terms of the benefit for the pupils, it was noted that these sessions contributed towards developing positive attitudes towards problem sharing and to feel empathy towards each other. They also demonstrated discussion, listening and responding skills very well.

It was noted that there was a close connection between the school and humanitarian charities and that the school had also 'adopted' a child in a foreign country and contributed to this scheme on a monthly basis.

It was noted that in general Collective Worship made a significant contribution towards the pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

In response to enquiries, it was noted:-

- that it was a common procedure for PPA (Planning, Preparation and Assessment) teachers to teach in the Religious Education field;
- that assigning at least two hours per week to Religious Education across Key Stage 2 was acceptable.

(ii) **Ysgol Brynrefail**

It was noted that Reverend Robert Townsend was the Chair of Governors for the aforementioned school, but it was noted that he was not required to leave the chamber and he participated in the discussion.

It was noted that the results and the provision of Religious Education was good in the school.

It was confirmed that the percentage achieving A/C had increased from 55.6% to 60.5% and A/E from 66.7% to 77.8%.

It was accepted that matters needed to be addressed in key stage 3, key stage 4 and key stage 5.

In the self-evaluation reference is made to the Estyn report, following the inspection in November, 2012 that noted that “the school satisfied all the statutory requirements in relation to statutory Religious Education.”

In terms of Collective Worship it was noted that the provision was good.

A member noted that in the self evaluations the vast majority of the schools awarded themselves a ‘good’ standard. The members asked if there was a tendency for the schools to be dubious of awarding themselves an ‘excellent’ standard and if consideration should be given to ways of raising standards so that they were ‘excellent’.

In response the GwE System Leader said that she was given to understand that Estyn’s expectations had risen and schools were seen to award the standard of the work in relation to Religious Education as being of ‘acceptable’ standard.

However, she said that schools were becoming more aware of the expectations of good standard, and were responding when they were required to reach the standard. She added that the challenge at present was to work with schools so that they could reach the excellent standard.

7. THE NATIONAL LITERACY AND NUMERACY FRAMEWORK AND A REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM FOR WALES

The GwE System Leader gave a presentation on The National Literacy and Numeracy Framework and a Review of the National Curriculum for Wales.

She noted that the challenge faced by secondary school Religious Education teachers was to develop numeracy skills within the context of Religious Education, and do this in a meaningful manner.

She noted that the teachers were on firmer ground in terms of literacy but that definite expectations had been set.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and the questions were responded to appropriately.

7. WALES ASSOCIATION of SACREs

(a) Submitted, for information, the minutes of the previous meeting of the Association, held on 10 October 2013.

RESOLVED to accept the information.

(b) Submitted, for information the report on the activities of the Wales Association of SACREs 2012-13.

It was noted that the next meeting of the Association would be held in Caerphilly on 27 March 2014.

RESOLVED:-

a) To accept the information;

b) To nominate the following members to represent Gwynedd SACRE on Wales Association of SACREs:-

Reverend Robert Townsend, Mrs Miriam Angharad Amlyn and Mr Wyn Myles Meredith.

c) A letter had been received inviting Gwynedd SACRE to nominate a new member of the WASACRE Executive Committee. It was explained that a SACRE could not nominate a members if they already had a representative on the Executive Committee. A vote would be taken on the nominations received in the Association's Annual Meeting in June.

RESOLVED to nominate Mr Wyn Myles Meredith as a new member of the WASACRE Executive Committee.

8. GWYNEDD ANNUAL REPORT 2012/13

It was noted that the Annual Report was not available to be distributed, but it was confirmed that the members would receive the report in good time.

However, before closing the discussion, members were reminded that the report created an opportunity for SACRE to consider how successful they had been in terms of raising the standards of Religious Education.

Consequently, the GwE System Leader suggested that work should be undertaken to invigorate their self-evaluation procedure by establishing a simple action plan. She added that the work included in the action plan could include various things, such as broadening collaboration plans and press head teachers to identify Religious Education needs.

RESOLVED to take steps to establish a simple action plan.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 3.40 pm.

CHAIRMAN