
S.A.C.R.E. – STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION 25/06/14

Present:

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

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

Co-opted Member: Mr Rheinallt 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).

GwE: Miss Bethan James (GwE Systems Leader)

Apologies: Councillors Louise Hughes, Llywarch Bowen Jones

1. PRAYER

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

2. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Resolved: To elect Councillor Selwyn Griffiths as Chair of this Committee for 2014/15.

3. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

Resolved: To elect Mr Wyn Myles Meredith as Vice-chairman of this Committee for 2014/15.

4. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

5. URGENT ITEM

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

Review of the National Curriculum and the Assessment Arrangements for Wales

Miss Bethan James, GwE Systems Leader, reported that Professor Graham Donaldson had been appointed to lead an extensive and independent review of the assessment arrangements and the national curriculum. It was expected that Professor Donaldson would

develop a clear, coordinated vision for assessment arrangements and the national curriculum in Wales, from Foundation Phase to Key Stage 4, linking in directly with our new qualifications system.

Individuals or groups were requested to fill a questionnaire as part of the process and the responses would form an important part of the evidence base of Professor Donaldson's recommendations for changes to the curriculum in Wales. A response to the questionnaire was requested by 30 June 2014.

The Members of SACRE responded to the questionnaire as follows:

1. Apart from qualifications, what are the three most important things young people should receive as a result of their time at school?

- Nurture positive attitudes towards others
- Receive a range of different experiences especially in the field of religion
- Experience of being in special services in a spiritual building
- Life milestones and life ceremonies such as wedding, baptism
- Respect towards their fellow man and the environment

2. Do you believe that these issues will continue to be as important in ten years' time?

Yes

3. What are the three best things about education in Wales?

- We are doing as well in Wales bearing in mind that the budget per head is not as much
- Reflection on religious and national identity through the curriculum
- Success of religious education in GCSE examinations

4. What are the three main things that need to be changed to improve education in Wales?

- Losing sight of fundamental issues – developmental work suffers
- A balance is required – pupils have to deal with everything such as the future of the world

5. How much freedom should schools get to determine what they should be teaching?

- There should be a balance within the framework
- Such a wide field – difficult to get teachers to teach everything
- Concern regarding the loss of Religious Education teachers – difficult to attract teachers to schools due to the fact that the number of pupils is decreasing and the lack of sufficient funding to maintain small groups of pupils.

6. Are there any subjects that should be added or withdrawn from the curriculum?

No.

7. Do you feel that the balance between assessment and learning/teaching is currently correct in schools?

- Every school takes responsibility for its own assessment in KS3 in accordance with the system in the school – (the subject of religious education is compared with humanities as there are no quartiles for the subject)
- Assessment gives status

Resolved: To request that the Systems Leader responds to the questionnaire on behalf of Gwynedd SACRE as outlined above.

6. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous committee meeting held on 19 February, 2014, as a true record.

6.1 Item 8 – Gwynedd Annual Report 2012/13

(a) The Committee was reminded of the resolution at the previous SACRE meeting to establish a simple action plan in order to invigorate a system of self-evaluation of SACRE as a body that manages Religious Education. To this end, Miss Bethan James had formulated a plan and she gave a summary of the actions under the following main headings:

- (i) Develop good leadership in Religious Education
- (ii) Close the gap between boys and girls in GCSE results
- (iii) Support teachers and benefit from their expertise
- (iv) Promote collective worship

(b) The Chairman noted the need to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of Miss Bethan James, GwE Systems Leader, and Mr Ken Robinson, current SACRE Clerk bearing in mind that he would be retiring from his post as an Assistant Education Officer during this summer.

(c) A Member added that the SACRE committee was the statutory responsibility of the authority and it was therefore responsible for providing a Clerk. He was aware that a letter had been sent from the Chair of the Council of Welsh Churches to the Education and Skills Minister requesting, amongst other things, for guidance regarding support to SACREs and schools.

Resolved: (a) To request that the Chair and the GwE Systems Leader together with the successor to Mr Ken Robinson, meet in September to discuss and prepare a work programmes for SACRE for the year.

(b) Request that the Members' Support and Scrutiny Officer ensures that the Action Plan is included on every SACRE agenda in the future.

6. SCHOOLS' SELF-EVALUATIONS

The SACRE Clerk guided Members through the following self-evaluations:

(i) Ysgol Brithdir, Dolgellau

It was noted that there was good progress with several issues in terms of outcomes in Religious Education, including circle time and experience sharing sessions. Reference was made to key question 2 concerning how good the provision was in Religious Education and

it was noted that the school made extensive use of ITC and developing cross-curricular skills. It was noted that there was clear guidance in terms of collective worship and the Minister visited the school every month to take services.

(ii) **Ysgol Tany Castell, Harlech**

It was noted that the outcomes were good and the planning was appropriate and challenging and cross-curricular. In terms of key question 2, the report noted that the children came to know about three different religions during their time in school. It was noted that the collective worship provision was good with volunteers from St Tanwg's Church visiting the school regularly.

(iii) **Ysgol Pont y Gof, Botwnnog**

It was pleasing to see that Foundation Phase pupils could talk about their feelings in the early years and develop the ability to use simple religious vocabulary across the Foundation Phase. From the report it was seen that there were detailed plans which ensured progression and development in terms of key question 2. The collective worship provision was good with children having an opportunity within worship to develop several skills.

(iv) **Ysgol Tregarth**

Attention was drawn to the different self-evaluation format used by the above school as the school was under the voluntary management of the Church in Wales and elaborated on the school's context, vision and values. The report noted that the provision was good. An additional report was received following the March review by Rev. Canon Robert Townsend that noted that the school had achieved in accordance with the statutory requirements of collective worship. It was further noted that the prospects for improvement were excellent.

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.

7. WALES ASSOCIATION of SACREs

(a) Minutes of the previous meeting

Minutes of a meeting of the Wales Association of SACREs that took place on 22 March 2014 in Caerphilly were submitted.

Stemming from the minutes:

- (a) Mr Rheinallt Thomas referred to a very informative presentation by Mr Michael Strange on Re:Quest and drew attention to the offer of free resources to be shared with teachers in their area and new on-line resources were available on the website that was supported by 'Youth for Christ'.
- (b) An update was received from Miss Bethan James of a presentation by Phil Lord regarding the Religious Education Quality Mark / REQM and that schools should register to be accredited for a Quality Mark accreditation. Permission had been received to translate the successful criteria into Welsh and to own the Section dealing with Wales in order that the criteria reflect the National Model Framework for Religious Education. Teachers are encouraged to look at the REQM website as a guide and

- useful guidance for any Department. Currently there was a shortage of Welsh medium accreditors and it would be good if a teacher from Gwynedd was accredited.
- (c) That there was good news for authorities as they would not have to pay for the magazine 'Religious Education News' as Bangor University and Trinity Saint David College would meet the costs and the website was now open for anyone to gain access free of charge and without need of a password.
 - (ch) It was noted that a series of 6 books for the Foundation Phase had been produced by Trinity Saint David College. In addition, that Gill Vaisey was continuing to publish the 'Puddles' stories. However, the Welsh version 'Pwlllyn y Gath' had not sold well and therefore the author Gill Vaisey would not produce any more.
 - (d) It was noted that Mr Wyn Hobson, Wales SACREs Translator, had retired and Mr Garmon Davies had been appointed to succeed him.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(b) Nominations to the Executive Committee of the Wales Association of SACRES

Nominations were submitted for the Executive Committee and it was noted that there were two seats available.

Resolved: To request that the Gwynedd SACRE representatives vote for the following two names at the Association's meeting on 2 July 2014 at Llandrindod Wells.

- (i) Mr Wyn Meredith**
- (ii) Ms Vicky Thomas**

8. RETIREMENT

The Chair took the opportunity to thank Mr Ken Robinson, SACRE Clerk, for his support and commendable and valuable contribution to SACRE work over the last few years. Best wishes were extended to him on his retirement from his post as Assistant Education Officer at the end of the summer.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 3.25 pm.

CHAIRMAN