
S.A.C.R.E. – STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION 11.02.15

Present:

Councillor Selwyn Griffiths - Chairman

Gwynedd Council Members: Councillors Tom Ellis, Gweno Glyn,

Christians and Other Faiths: Mr Wyn Myles Meredith (Methodist Church),
Dr W Gwyn Lewis (Presbyterian Church of Wales), Reverend Canon Robert Townsend (Church
in Wales), Mr Cynrig Ellis Hughes (Congregationalists)

Teachers: Mrs Miriam Amlyn (NAS/UWT).

Officers: Mr John Blake (Interim SACRE Clerk) and Glynda O'Brien (Members' Support and
Scrutiny Officer).

GwE: Miss Bethan James (GwE Challenge Adviser)

Also in attendance: Miss Manon Davies (Ysgol Crud y Werin)
Miss Catrin Roberts (Student on work experience)

Apologies: Councillors Jean Forsyth, Llywarch Bowen Jones, Mrs Ruth Davies (Union of
Welsh Baptists), Mr Noel Dyer (UCAC) and Mrs Alwen Watkin (ASCL).

1. PRAYER

The meeting commenced with a prayer from Councillor Selwyn Griffiths.

2. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) A welcome was extended to:

- (i) Dr W Gwyn Lewis, representative of the Presbyterian Church of Wales, to his first SACRE meeting.
- (ii) Miss Menna Davies, Coordinator of Religious Education, Ysgol Crud y Werin
- (iii) Miss Catrin Roberts, student on work experience from Bangor University.

(b) Reference was made to the death of Councillor Huw Edwards who was a loyal member of this Committee. A tribute was paid to him for his work and commitment to SACRE over the last few years and the Members' Support Officer was requested to send condolences on behalf of the Members to his widow and family in their sad loss.

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Rev. Canon Robert Townsend declared a personal interest in Item 6(b) (ii) - Self-evaluation of Ysgol Dyffryn Ardudwy, as his step-daughter was a teacher at the school.

4. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the meeting of this committee that took place on 22 October 2014 as a true record.

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).

A letter was received from the Secretary of the Wales Association of SACREs inviting Gwynedd SACRE to nominate a new member to the Executive Committee of the Wales Association of SACREs, as well as a nomination to the post of Vice-chair of the Executive Committee. It was noted that the closing date for nominations was 1 March 2015.

In her absence from the meeting, the name of Mrs Ruth Davies was suggested as a nomination as a new member of the Executive Committee and Miss Bethan James gave an undertaking to contact her to find out if she was prepared to accept the nomination.

Resolved: (a) To nominate:

- (i) **Mrs Ruth Davies as a new member of the Executive Committee, if she was willing to accept the nomination.**
- (iii) **Mrs Mary Parry (Carmarthen) for the post of Vice-chair of the Executive Committee.**

6. SCHOOLS' SELF-EVALUATIONS

(a) The SACRE Clerk guided Members through the paper submitted giving a summary of school findings and attention was drawn to the five primary schools that had been inspected by ESTYN during the Autumn 2015 term, with two inspected in December 2014. It was anticipated that four other schools, as well as one secondary school, would be inspected during this term namely the schools of Coed Mawr, Dolgellau, Bro Plennydd, Tanygrisiau and Dyffryn Nantlle Secondary School. Reference was made to extracts taken from ESTYN reports under the heading care support and guidance.

It was noted that ESTYN was not required to give a view on the quality of collective worship and schools were requested to do this in their self-evaluations. Therefore, only a little information was given regarding religious education and the inspection framework that meant there was more responsibility on SACRE to get the full picture via school self-evaluations of what happens in schools.

The above was supported by the GwE Challenge Adviser and ESTYN needed to include clauses regarding the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. An appeal was made to members who collaborate with schools to ensure that there was a reference to these clauses in the school self-evaluation.

Members were reminded of the new inspection system and schools only received a few weeks' notice prior to inspection.

(b) Members were guided through the self-evaluations of the schools of Ysgol y Gorlan, Dyffryn Ardudwy, Y Garreg and Bro Tryweryn by referring to three questions, namely:

1. How good are outcomes in Religious Education?
2. How good is provision in Religious Education?
3. How good is provision for collective worship?

(c) It was noted that schools received guidance of what to present in accordance with the relevant guidelines and specific attention was drawn to three of the above school that had included an additional box referring to literacy, numeracy and ITC and thinking skills. Attention was drawn further to one of the schools that had been adjudged excellent for collective worship and consequently it was suggested that this Committee should visit the school to experience of their good practice.

(ch) The GwE Challenge Adviser added that other SACREs held their meetings in schools in order to enrich their experience of what happens in schools in the context of Religious Education and collective worship. In terms of the self-evaluations, teachers continued to confuse information about standards with provision. It was explained that standards dealt with the pupils' work and the provision dealt with how good teachers plan the lessons. Members were reminded that the SACRE Annual Report evaluated the quality of self-evaluations to be proactive when developing schools. Approximately 60% of self-evaluations last year responded to the requirements of SACRE namely conveying information about the standards of Religious Education as outlined in the CYTŪN syllabus and it was recognised that some schools did not refer at all to Religious Education and that they had to be reminded of the need to do this.

(d) They were proud that schools took advantage and invited priests and ministers to schools and it was pleasing to note that Rev. Iwan Llywelyn had held a baptism ceremony with the Reception and Nursery classes.

(dd) An explanation was received regarding the 'Open the Book' Scheme by Rev. Canon Robert Townsend, operated by the Bible Society, and was a method of telling Bible stories by laypersons. The scheme had expanded in the Bangor Diocese and was also being promoted to ecumenical organisations in the hope that more use would be made of it in the future.

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

(b) That the next Gwynedd SACRE meeting would take place at Ysgol Bro Tryweryn, Fron-goch, Bala in order to be part of the collective worship activities, if the school was willing.

7. PRESENTATIONS

- (a) Miss Menna Davies, Religious Education Coordinator, Ysgol Crud y Werin, was welcomed to the meeting to outline the steps and work she had undertaken at the school following her appointment as Coordinator to respond to the recommendations of the ESTYN Inspectors following their inspection that stated "in Key Stage 2 there are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of Religious Education".

Miss Davies noted that in consultation with the head, she had formulated an action plan to ensure formal monitoring arrangements every half term. A guidance pack was formulated for the school's teachers and the pack and a planning template presented at staff meetings. These focused on the three core skills in Religious Education. The GwE Challenge Adviser visited the school and it was realised that the plans were not detailed

enough and more emphasis was required on Religious Education. A designated Governor was appointed in order to support and challenge the school when responding to the recommendations. In the 2015 Spring term, the action plan was adapted in response to the findings of the Autumn term monitoring activities and schemes of work were prepared for KS2 on the term's theme to ensure a response to the findings of the scrutiny activities. It was recognised that the provision was better because:

- The schemes of work referred clearly to the skills and the range they dealt with
- That the schemes of work ensured progression and clear progress from Year 3 and 4 class to Year 5 class.
- That the schemes of work gave specific guidance to teachers of what was expected to be implemented in the classroom, from progression and suitability of the challenge of the activities and what was expected as evidence in the pupils' work.

As a result of the above, it was noted that early forecasts from samples of the children's work indicated that pupils used their knowledge and understanding of Religious Education as well as skills such as literacy successfully.

To conclude, Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and they were responded to appropriately.

Miss Menna Davies was thanked for her presentation and SACRE showed its appreciation of the work she undertook at the school.

- (b) A report was received from Ysgol Uwchradd Tywyn stating what had been implemented at the school in terms of progress with Religious Education that enabled them to provide a range of tasks that gave pupils opportunities to consider religious and moral questions by starting to come to rational conclusions. One of the themes they followed was suffering by looking at specific resources and Inquiring into Issues in Religious Education. In addition, they had looked at conducting ceremonies to welcome Members into a religion by considering several moral questions regarding commitment in this way. Emphasis was placed on joint working and supporting individuals in order to enable a number of students to succeed in the subject at the end of KS3 – 2013-2014.

Resolved: To accept, note and thank the officer for the report.

8. UPDATE ON THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

- (a) The GwE Challenge Adviser reported that it was usual for Gwynedd SACRE to plan, review and re-draft the CYTŪN syllabus every five years, however, it was agreed to delay this until they saw what would stem from the new national curriculum by the Minister for Education.
- (b) The GwE Challenge Adviser quoted from a recent speech by the Minister for Education to the education profession in Wales, asking them to work with him to develop a new curriculum for Wales. The Minister for Education noted that the profession would be key to present the new curriculum when Professor Graham Donaldson had presented his report at the end of the month. His plans for a 'new deal' for the workforce to transform professional development was made in order to assist them to present the new curriculum and ensure higher standards in the classroom, e.g. Masters qualification, professional teaching materials.

The Minister stated: “The National Curriculum of 1988 has served an important purpose but the message from Graham Donaldson’s review will be that it has had its day. We know our new made in Wales curriculum will take time to evolve and roll out, but both Professor Donaldson and I are clear that the teaching profession must play a central role in developing, and of course delivering what is to come. Now it is time for another ‘great debate’ in Welsh education – on the vital subject of curriculum change. On what, and how, our young people will learn over the decades to come. The reform agenda ahead is demanding and dependant on the capacity of the professionals out there to deliver it. We are asking a lot of the profession, but we are determined to work in partnership with them. The international evidence on this is absolutely clear. We cannot spend our way to higher standards. The coming changes to the curriculum have to be built on the higher skilled profession and about consistent application of the very best practice. It has to be about using the latest research evidence and continuously building on the best – professional to professional, school to school”.

(c) During the ensuing discussion the following observations were highlighted:

- In terms of collaboration with Anglesey on the syllabus, that the six authorities in the North had already commissioned one body namely GwE, to undertake work in the field of education and it was thought that the authorities did not have the capacity to undertake the task to develop their own curriculum and it was trusted that they would trust in the SACREs. Regarding the Wales Association of SACREs, they were anxious to see the whole of Wales following a very similar national framework for Religious Education.
- It was trusted that Professor Donaldson would refer to the samples of pupils interviewed who did not give him a good impression of Religious Education, as certainly this did not reflect the evidence of children’s satisfaction in Gwynedd.
- Concern regarding the timing of introducing the new curriculum as schools were waiting for the amendments in the GCSE specification and in some areas this impacted on A Level. This would add to the teachers’ workload and would be a huge amount of work. In response, the GwE Challenge Adviser confirmed that guidance had not been received in terms of timetabling and she reminded the meeting that Gwynedd SACRE was statutorily required to provide KS4 Religious Education provision and that it would be the schools' decision how to timetable this.
- Concern regarding schools that they would lose subjects from September onwards.

Resolved: To accept the above observations and note the need to be ready for future changes.

9. SACRE ACTION PLAN 2014-15

- (a) The action plan for the Gwynedd SACRE for the year 2014-15 that was agreed at the previous SACRE meeting for monitoring arrangements, was submitted.
- (b) Members were guided through the outcomes and to what extent they had an impact on:
1. Developing good leadership in Religious Education and collective worship
 2. Closing the gap between standards attained by boys and girls at GCSE
 3. Updating Religious Education teachers’ knowledge e.g. Welsh Government guidance documents, ESTYN
 4. Facilitating good quality collective worship.

(b) Regarding collective worship, it had been suggested at a previous meeting that SACRE should visit schools to attend collective worship sessions and reference was made to the previous proposal in Item 6(b) above, that SACRE should hold its next meeting at a school where it would be possible to observe a collective worship service at that school.

Resolved: To accept and approve the action plan.

10. WALES ASSOCIATION of SACREs

(a) Minutes of the previous meeting

The draft minutes of the previous meeting of the Association that took place on 26 November 2014 at Torfaen was submitted and the procedure of responding to a query in terms of the Welsh translation of the minutes was explained, however, the Executive Committee had agreed to send out draft bilingual minutes in the future.

Resolved: (a) To accept and note the above.

(b) To note that the next meeting of the Wales Association of SACREs will take place on 6 March 2015 at Port Talbot.

11. GWYNEDD SACRE ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14

The final copy of Gwynedd SACRE annual report was submitted to the Members.

Resolved: To accept, note and thank the GwE Challenge Adviser for her work in the provision of the annual report.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 3.45 pm.

CHAIR