

#### 4.4.18

##### HUMANIST REPRESENTATION ON SACREs.

A decision was made during the Autumn Term WASACRE meeting to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Kirsty Williams, on the issue of humanist representation on SACREs. WASACRE had received a number of queries with regards to whether Humanists should be offered a place on Group A or as co-opted members. Kathy Riddick from Wales Humanists also raised this issue during the presentation she gave at the meeting in Bridgend.

WASACRE has suggested to Welsh Government on numerous occasions that Welsh Office Circular 10/94 is in urgent need of revision to bring it into line with current legislation. This pressing need became all the more urgent because of the challenge to local SACREs by the Humanist Association of Great Britain who are seeking membership of Committee A on local SACREs. This is currently prohibited by Paragraph 103 of 10/94. The Humanist Association and Wales Humanists are citing Human Rights legislation, which they claim gives them the right to membership of Committee A. It would appear, therefore, that there is a direct contradiction between the wording of Circular 10/94 and the Education Acts it cites and recent findings of the Courts in favour of Human Rights challenges.

In order to provide the best possible advice to local SACREs on this matter WASACRE is looking to Welsh Government for a definitive statement on this issue and to their guidance on which law takes precedence, the Education Act 1944 and Education Reform Act 1988, which prohibits *Representatives of belief systems, such as humanism, (specified in 10/94)*, or Human Rights legislation which would appear to give rights to adherents of such belief systems and to allow them membership of Committee A.

The Chair of WASACRE requested that Welsh Government given this matter urgent attention and action. WASACRE have called for a definitive and categorical statement on the position of members of belief systems vis-à-vis membership of Committee A of local SACREs.

The Cabinet Secretary, Kirsty Williams, responded to WASACRE acknowledging that 'there has been an increased focus on the requirements and governance of Collective Worship, and the role and membership of SACREs, and whether current practices and arrangements comply with the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the Equality Act 2010.'

The Cabinet Secretary pointed out that 10/94 is 'a non-statutory document which is intended to provide guidance on both the teaching of religious education and collective worship in maintained and special schools.' She has, however, instructed her officials to review this area 'including a focus on the specific issues around legislation and the compatibility of the current requirements with human rights law.'

WASACRE have since requested that priority be given to this particular aspect of the review and are currently awaiting its outcome.