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

06/11/19

Present: Councillor Paul J. Rowlinson (Chair)

Gwynedd Council Members: Councillors Menna Baines, Judith Humphreys, and Mike Stevens

Christians and Other Faiths: Eirian Bradley-Roberts (The Catholic Church), Dashu-Scott Smith (Buddhism)

Teachers: Miriam Amlyn (NASUWT)

Officers: Buddug Mair Huws (Assistant Education Improvement Officer and SACRE Clerk), and Eimir Rh. Davies (Member Support Officer).

Apologies: Cllr. Dewi Roberts, Cllr. Elin Walker Jones, Heledd Jones (Teachers Unions), Anest G Frazer (Church in Wales), Cathryn Davey (UCAC), Edward Pari-Jones (Humanists)

The Chair confirmed that although a number of apologies had been received, there was a quorum.

1. PRAYER

The meeting was opened with a prayer from Councillor Paul Rowlinson.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

There were no declarations of public interest.

3. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

4. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of a meeting of this Committee held on 12 June 2019, as a true record subject to the following amendments:

Present - need to record the attendance of Councillor Mike Stevens.

Item 8 - the term 'ymddiswyddiadau' (resignations) was used - this needed to be amended to 'diswyddiadau' (redundancies)

In the minute 'Kirsty Williams Letter of Response' it suggested that a letter should be written to Kirsty Williams - it was noted that the minute was unclear and the decision was to write to Kirsty Williams and Siân Gwenllian as an Assembly Member.

5. WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION DOCUMENT: CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS TO ENSURE ACCESS TO THE FULL CURRICULUM FOR ALL LEARNERS

Mair Huws led the discussion on the Council's response to the consultation document and the following general points were noted prior to responding to the specific questions:-

It was wrong to prevent parents from doing anything

On the other hand, parents should not be given the choice and the right should be withdrawn from them.

It was important for children to get a full and balanced education.

It was difficult to understand why parents would want to refuse for their children to study the subject.

The subject has great value as it is a subject that touches upon so many other subjects. The subject needs to be treated equally, like other subjects - i.e. there is no option to opt out of other subjects.

Would it perhaps be of assistance if the subject's name was changed? Aren't children losing out if they do not attend these lessons?

It was noted that it would be interesting to get the figures showing how many parents had withdrawn their children from the subject in Gwynedd.

Reference was made to those children who are home educated and it was questioned if they receive religious education lessons? It was suggested that perhaps it would be possible for SACRE to produce a package or reading list for them. Mair Huws noted that she would ask the Department and would make arrangements for the matter to be discussed at a future meeting.

A vote was taken on this matter and it was agreed, that SACRE was in favour of withdrawing the right to opt out. It was agreed that Mair Huws would include the above observations when responding to the following questions:

Question 1 - What would be the implications on learners, parents/carers and schools if all learners had to take Religious Education and/or Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) lessons in the new curriculum?

It was noted that parents had the right to withdraw their children from other matters, but also pupils had their own rights. It was noted that it was a difficult, but interesting discussion. It was important not to ignore parents' rights, but it was questioned why attention had been drawn to this particular subject. It was noted that there were no implications for parents or children as it was currently statutory. One implication may be more Home schooling?

Question 2 - What information, help and support would be needed if this approach was adopted?

It was noted that parents would require background information and headteachers would require a package. It was noted that with all the changes happening in the area of Humanities and Health Education, a great deal of support was required generally by schools.

Question 3 - Our proposal is that parents/carers should not be able to prevent their children from receiving Religious Education and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) lessons. This will be introduced from September 2022 onwards for all primary aged learners and in Year 7 in secondary schools (with other year groups added every year).

See above.

Question 4 - What is an appropriate name for 'Religious Education' to correctly reflect the wider scope offered within the new curriculum?

The following suggestions were given:

It needs to change from Religious Education in order to show the subject's breadth. What about World view/ Bydolwg (rather than World views/Bydolygon), as their was no direct translation of World Views? It was important not to lose the Spiritual element.

Resolved to note that a change of name would be a good idea, however, there was no preferred name.

Question 5 - We would like to know your views on the effects that not including the right to withdraw would have on the Welsh language

It was noted that there was a tendency for children to choose humanities through the medium of Welsh, if the documents were produced in Welsh, then there were no anticipated problems. It was noted that it was necessary to receive the Welsh and English versions at the same time.

Question 6 - Also explain how the proposed policy can be formed or amended:

It was noted that it was necessary for any Welsh and English documents to arrive at the same time, together with any guidance or booklets. The Welsh language should not be treated less favourably.

It was noted that any major change required time to prepare for this and appropriate guidance.

6. SCHOOLS SELF-EVALUATION

The report was accepted.

Resolved: to write to the schools to congratulate them and to send another invitation to Glenda Evans to attend the next meeting.

7. AUDIT ON THE HOURS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The report was submitted and it was noted that there was a variation and differences from school to school. It was noted that it would be interesting to compare the results against the time given to pupils.

Resolved to contact the schools again to ask for an analysis of the figures. It was noted that if this was a baseline then it was necessary for it to be totally correct.

8. MINUTES OF THE WASACRE MEETING 28TH JUNE 2019

The draft minutes of the previous Association meeting, held on 28 June 2019, were submitted.

Resolved: To accept and note the contents of the minutes.

The meeting commenced at 2:00 pm and concluded at 3:20 pm.

CHAIR