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

11/11/20

Present: Councillor Paul J. Rowlinson (Chair)

Gwynedd Council Members: Councillors Menna Baines, Judith Humphreys and Selwyn Griffiths

Christians and Other Faiths: Eirian Bradley Roberts (The Catholic Church), Tracy Richardson Jones (The Church in Wales), Eurfryn Davies (Union of Welsh Baptists)

Teachers: Miriam Amlyn (NASUWT), Cathryn Davey (UCAC)

Officers: Buddug Mair Huws (Assistant Education Improvement Officer and SACRE Clerk), Sion Huws (Senior Solicitor), and Einir Rh. Davies (Member Support Officer) and Lowri H. Evans (Member Support Officer).

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. ELECTION OF CHAIR

It was resolved to re-elect Councillor Paul Rowlinson as Chairman of this Committee for 2020/21.

3. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

It was resolved to elect Councillor Menna Baines as Vice-chair of this Committee for 2020/21.

4. APOLOGIES

Cllr Dewi Roberts, Heledd Jones (NEU), Anest G. Frazer (Church in Wales), Edward Pari-Jones (Humanists), Garem Jackson (Head of Education Department) and Dashu (Buddhism)

5. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

6. URGENT ITEMS

No urgent items were received.

7. MINUTES

The Chair confirmed the minutes of the meeting of this Committee held on 6 November 2019 as a true record.

8. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

No matters were raised from the minutes.

9. RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE CURRICULUM FOR WALES: RELIGION, VALUES AND MORALS

It was noted that there had been no opportunity to discuss the response and that a draft response had been shared with Members for observations. No further observations were received.

AGREED to accept the report.

10. MATTERS RELATING TO SACREs

Reference was made to the papers received for the previous meeting of the SACREs. Specific reference was made to the 'Advice to Schools' letter with regard to collective worship during the pandemic, and confirmation was received that the letter had reached the schools.

AGREED to accept the report.

11. THE EXPERIENCES OF PUPILS AND TEACHERS DURING LOCKDOWN

MA, CD, EBR a TRJ shared their experiences during the challenging period, where it was noted that the preparation time was very rare.

Reference was made to challenges such as IT issues - a number of the pupils were without computers and/or poor internet connection, and the skills of some families were not so good, as well as a lack of equipment.

Welfare - the pressure to keep in touch with pupils during the lockdown was noted, as well as the need for support for the children as they returned to school, but that the children appreciated being back at school and seeing their friends.

SACRE noted its appreciation of the efforts of teachers and the fact that Religious Education was seen to be having the same attention during lockdown, noting that the teachers had done well during a difficult time.

The Chair noted that the above was a very encouraging picture, referring to the pressure on teachers who were teaching remotely and face to face, which was certainly causing some strain.

AGREED to accept the report.

12. CONSIDERING THE SITUATION OF GCSE AND A LEVEL EXAMINATIONS

Following the statement of the Minister for Education on 10/11/20 with regard to the above, a concern was noted that the statement raised many questions and concerns. It was confirmed, although it was not expected for pupils to sit examinations in 20/21, that the pupils had lost a lot of time, and still needed to complete three work units. In terms of the system, it was noted that the tests were to be assessed externally, but that the details were required ahead of Christmas, as time was ticking. It was noted, for information, that the majority of subjects were in the same boat.

The report was accepted and it was agreed to

1. Attempt to have all SACREs to contact WJEC to ask for clarity before Christmas
2. Contact other SACREs, and the Education portfolio holder for Gwynedd Council and Siân Gwenllïan to express concern about the situation.

13. SACRE ANNUAL REPORT 2018-2019 AND 2019-2020

It was confirmed that it was a statutory requirement to create an Annual Report, and SACRE was reminded that Bethan James had previously completed this, but that Bethan's expertise had since been lost from SACRE. The Chair apologised that the work had not been done for 2018-19 or 2019-20.

It was agreed that BMH would discuss within the Department, and would then contact Bethan James on behalf of SACRE.

AGREED to accept the report.

14. THE FUTURE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AN BANGOR UNIVERSITY AND THE IMPACT ON THE DISCIPLINE IN GWYNEDD SCHOOLS

It was noted that the motivation for the item was the concern with regard to restructuring at Bangor University and the concern about the future of the subject. It was noted that it appeared that the only Religious Education staff member in the Department was leaving at the end of the year, despite a long tradition of teaching Religious Education there. It was noted that it appeared that there had been an intention to bring teachers in from schools to carry out the teaching role.

AGREED to accept the report.

15. WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF THE UNIVERSITY'S RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CENTRE?

The Centre is located on the George Site, and it holds important books and artefacts, and a concern was noted with regard to what would happen to this collection.

Concern was expressed about the above situation and the side effects of consequently losing Religious Education teachers.

The report was accepted and it was agreed that the Chair would:

1. Send a letter to Bangor University and the Education Portfolio Holder to ask about their intentions, noting SACRE's concern about the situation with teacher-training and resources.
2. Also ask about the future of the PGCE course in light of the restructuring, and in light of this the future of Bangor University's Religious Education Centre as a resource.

It was noted that it would be interesting to know which universities now offered a Welsh medium Religious Education course as well as teacher-training course.

16. SCHOOLS' SELF-ASSESSMENT

The report was accepted.

It was noted that the seven aspects scored 'good' and the school was congratulated.

The meeting commenced at 2:00 pm and concluded at 3:15 pm.

CHAIR