
SACRE - STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

08/06/21

Present: Councillor Paul J. Rowlinson (Chair)

Gwynedd Council Members: Councillors Menna Baines, Selwyn E. Griffiths, Judith Humphreys, Dewi W. Roberts

Christians and Other Faiths: Eurfryn Davies (Union of Welsh Baptists), Anest G. Frazer (Church in Wales), Gwawr Maelor Williams (Presbyterian Church of Wales)

Teachers: Miriam Amlyn (NASUWT)

Officers: Einir Rh. Davies (Member Support Officer), Buddug Mair Huws (Assistant Education Quality Improvement Officer and SACRE Clerk), Sion Huws (Legal Department), Eirian Roberts (Member Support Officer)

Present for Item 8: Dr Gareth Evans Jones, Lecturer in Religious Studies, School of History, Philosophy and Social Sciences, Bangor University

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 Selwyn E. Griffiths.

2. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED to re-elect Councillor Paul Rowlinson as Chair of this Committee for 2021/22.

3. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED to re-elect Councillor Menna Baines as Vice-chair of this Committee for 2021/22.

4. APOLOGIES

Eirian Bradley-Roberts (The Catholic Church), Dashu (Buddhism), Cathryn Davey (UCAC), Garem Jackson (Head of Education Department), Heledd Jones (NEU)

5. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

6. URGENT ITEMS

No urgent items were received.

7. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair confirmed and signed the minutes of the meeting of this Committee held on 10 February 2021 as a true record.

8. THE FUTURE OF BANGOR UNIVERSITY'S RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CENTRE

Dr Gareth Evans Jones, Lecturer in Religious Studies, School of History, Philosophy and Social Sciences, Bangor University was welcomed to the Committee meeting. He confirmed the Department's intention, in discussions with the Library, to take over responsibility for the Centre, merging it with a new project entitled 'Reconnect'. He confirmed the benefits of belonging to a cross-disciplinary Department that encouraged module sharing.

He gave details of the project which would create a new written resource for teachers of Religious Education at A level. He noted that the University was in the process of discussing new Religious Education pathways within the degree course, encouraging students, as part of the course, to follow the Religious Education route. The comment was reinforced by confirming that the Education Department also offered a new education module to include Religious Education, which gave a taste of teaching and learning.

The Committee noted that it was pleased to hear about the Religious Education pathway, particularly in light of the developments with the new curriculum, and the need to ensure that there are qualified teachers with specialist knowledge of Religious Education.

It was asked if it would be possible to include material for GCSE, as it was felt that it was at this level that pupil engagement was needed, perhaps bridging afterwards to show the opportunities. It was noted that it was a wonderful opportunity to do this now, although the target was A level pupils.

The challenges, such as liaising with schools in recent times, were highlighted. He also noted the lack of Welsh-medium resources, but that this problem had been overcome by adapting English-language materials rather than just translating them, adding a Welsh dimension to them.

With regard to A levels in Arfon in particular, given the low take-up for the subject, wouldn't distance learning be one solution? It was confirmed that the Department would be able to assist with this as collaboration is the priority. The comment was reiterated, noting that a teaching taster module was being offered by the Education Department, with scope for an interactive project.

It was confirmed that the Religious Education Newsletter will be resurrected and published before the end of the year.

RESOLVED to welcome the update from Professor G. Evans Jones and agree to further collaboration between Gwynedd SACRE, Gwynedd Council's Education Department and Bangor University.

9. DRAFT SACRE ANNUAL REPORT

The draft report for the period September 2019 to August 2020 was presented to the Panel. Concern was raised by the author in the Report that GwE's support had now ceased, and as a result the overview and analysis of subject specialisation had been lost. It was noted that another side effect of losing the support was that the Action Plan was not as comprehensive as in previous years.

Thanks were expressed for the report and the comments noted, agreeing to adopt the report for the period September 2019 to August 2020.

10. CO-OPTING PUPILS ONTO THE SACRE COMMITTEE

Everyone was reminded that the above matter had been discussed some years ago, and that one of the difficulties at the time was the practical issue surrounding pupils' ability to travel to Caernarfon to attend meetings. It was noted that travel would no longer be a problem as the meetings were held on a virtual basis.

A discussion ensued and concerns were noted such as the confidentiality of reports and whether it would be appropriate for a pupil to be involved in this type of discussion. It was noted, however, that SACRE meetings were public meetings. It was noted that there had to be a clear purpose for the pupil to attend the meeting, with a clear role and contribution to make. It was asked what the position would be in terms of the pupil's need to declare an interest.

It was suggested that consideration could be given to teacher and pupil input, with the teacher talking about a particular piece of work and the child discussing it from the pupil's point of view. The Committee was reminded that the issue of pupil inclusion in Council committees had been discussed in other committee meetings. The Committee felt that, as a result of the change in voting rules for young people, and the promotion of youth participation in decision making, it would be helpful for the Chair to make further enquiries. It was questioned that it might be better to discuss with young people in the first instance, explaining what SACRE is and asking whether they felt they would have a role. It was noted that it was important to be clear what the role of the pupil would be at the meeting. It was confirmed that consideration would need to be given to how to select children in terms of age, location, number of children, etc.

It was resolved, subject to the comments received following a conversation between the Chair and the relevant Officer, to accept the proposal to form a working group to look at all options for co-opting pupils onto the SACRE committee. It was agreed that it would be necessary to report back to the full Committee in due course under the chairmanship of Councillor Dewi W. Roberts, with Miriam Amlyn, Anest G. Frazer and Gwawr M. Williams as members.

11. RESPONSE TO THE WELSH GOVERNMENT'S CONSULTATION: "GUIDANCE ON THE DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF MANDATORY RELIGION, VALUES AND ETHICS"

The report was received, noting that a conference will need to be organised between December 2021 and summer 2022 as things currently stand.

A discussion ensued and it was hoped that there would be no change before 2023 in order to get it right, as this would be a different way of delivering lessons. It was confirmed that the Unions had consulted extensively and had held several discussions. It was noted that the document looked good, but there was concern regarding the number of hours allocated to Religious Education, and the need to work hard to maintain the status of Religious Education as it had been an individual subject to date. It was confirmed that Estyn had already been asking how it was intended to retain subject specialisation.

It was decided to express satisfaction with the content of the consultation, noting that Religious Education subject skills are key to the specialist element of teaching the new curriculum. It was noted that the Welsh Government needed to delay at least a year before introducing the new curriculum, in order to allow schools the opportunity to re-stabilise.

12. WASACRE MATTERS

- a) The Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 March 2021 were received.
- b) Kathy Riddick's Nomination to the Executive Committee was supported.
- c) The Date of the Next Meeting was noted and the names of Eurfryn Davies, Councillor Dewi W. Roberts and Councillor Paul Rowlinson were proposed as Representatives to the WASACRE on this occasion.

The meeting commenced at 2 p.m. and concluded at 3.40 p.m.

CHAIR