
SACRE - STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

23/11/21

Present: Councillor Paul J. Rowlinson (Chair)

Gwynedd Council Members: Councillors Menna Baines and Selwyn E. Griffiths

Christians and Other Faiths: Eirian Bradley-Roberts (The Catholic Church)

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

Present for item 6: Libby Jones, Religious Education Adviser, Wrexham County Borough Council

It was confirmed that as there were a number of apologies and absences, there was no quorum and it was not possible for the Committee to make any decisions, but that the meeting would continue and matters would be shared for information.

Councillor Selwyn E. Griffiths paid special tribute to Councillor Pat Larsen and Councillor Wyn Meredith, thanking them for their vital work with the SACRE and WASACRE.

1. PRAYER

The meeting was opened with a prayer from Councillor Menna Baines.

2. APOLOGIES

Miriam Amlyn, Cathryn Davey, Cllr Judith Humphreys, Cllr Dewi W. Roberts, Cllr Cemlyn R. Williams, Gwawr Maelor Williams.

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

4. URGENT ITEMS

No urgent items were received.

5. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

In the absence of a quorum, the Chair was unable to confirm the minutes of the meeting of this Committee, held on 8 June, as a true record. The minutes would be signed at the next meeting.

6. AN UPDATE ON THE GUIDELINES FOR RELIGION, VALUES AND ETHICS (RVE) WITHIN THE NEW CURRICULUM

Libby Jones gave a presentation to SACRE Members on the above Guidelines, confirming that Religious Education had undergone significant changes. She referred to the messages for the SACRE in terms of the Agreed Syllabus and curriculum planning. She also noted the important messages for schools when planning for RVE, including the use of sub-lenses. She also explained that under Human Rights Law, the subject would be objective, critical and pluralistic. She concluded by referring to the opportunity for professional learning.

It became clear from the presentation that the Guidelines referred to the need for major changes, and that RVE as a subject would include non-religious philosophical convictions. Another change was that the subject was mandatory from ages 3-16, with nursery settings to include provision for RVE. On the other hand, after the age of 16, it was noted that a pupil would opt into RVE. It was confirmed that an embargoed version of the Guidelines would be available before Christmas.

She elaborated on the important messages for the SACRE.

An agreed syllabus was the responsibility of the Local Authority, and needed to be in place in good time for schools to teach their new curricula from September 2022 onwards. The new Guidelines may form the basis of the syllabus, but it needed not to be overly restrictive - the sub-lenses may help.

There was a need to organise an Agreed Syllabus Conference, with as wide a membership as possible, and the need to inform schools of this intention as soon as possible, was noted.

Further questions were asked about the sub-lenses, where it was confirmed that they were not topics or themes, but disciplines or perspectives. It was noted that in determining themes, RVE would be guided by these viewpoints.

Following the report provided by Libby Jones, the importance of having a presence from the Council's Education Department to put the SACRE on the right path in relation to this change was noted. It was questioned whether it would be possible to work regionally, and the need for SACRE Members to understand GwE's contribution, the Council's role and how to collaborate, was noted.

As the subject will be mandatory, and a core part of the new curriculum, it was noted that some schools may need support to make this happen.

RESOLVED As there was no quorum, it was not possible for the Committee to make a decision but the presentation was accepted and Libby Jones was thanked for her contribution.

7. SACRE ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

It was confirmed that a draft of the Annual Report was in progress and would be submitted to the next SACRE meeting for approval.

RESOLVED As there was no quorum, it was not possible for the Committee to make a decision but the update on the above was accepted and the way forward was confirmed.

8. WASACRE MATTERS

Thanks were given for the WASACRE Annual Report for 2020-21, the WASACRE Treasurer's Annual Report for 2020-21, including the Statement of Accounts and minutes of the WASACRE meeting held on 16 June 2021.

An update was received from the WASACRE Autumn Meeting held on 23 November 2021, where a presentation was given on the New Curriculum by an officer from Central South, South East and GwE Consortia. The support available was reported at the meeting and concern was raised that south Wales SACREs appeared to be playing a central role in comparison with the north. Particular concern was expressed at GwE's lack of support for SACRE.

Reference was also made to the series published by Hodder to accompany the new curriculum, and a request was made for the message to be circulated that the series was not necessarily suitable for Wales as they did not receive any Welsh input when it was created.

The need to organise an Agreed Syllabus Conference before September 2022 was then discussed, and it was suggested that the first meeting might be held on 1 February. It was confirmed that as a body, the Conference was separate to the SACRE but that it would make sense to continue with the same membership. As a result, it was suggested that it may be possible to write to the religious bodies for nominations as there were many vacancies on the SACRE and membership numbers had declined.

RESOLVED As there was no quorum, it was not possible for the Committee to make a decision but the reports were accepted for information.

The meeting commenced at 2 p.m. and concluded at 3.10 p.m.

CHAIR