

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

10.02.16

Present:

Councillor Selwyn Griffiths - Chairman

Gwynedd Council Members: Councillors Annwen Daniels, Tom Ellis and Jean Forsyth

Christians and Other Faiths: Dr W Gwyn Lewis (Presbyterian Church of Wales), Mrs Elizabeth Roberts (Union of Welsh Baptists), Mr Cynrig Ellis Hughes (Congregationalists), Mrs Eirian Bradley Roberts (Catholic Church)

Teachers: Mrs Cathryn Davey (UCAC), Ms Heledd Owen (NUT), Mrs Alwen Watkin (ASCL)

Officers: Mrs Mai Bere (Temporary SACRE Clerk) and Glynda O'Brien (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer).

GwE: Miss Bethan James (GwE Challenge Adviser)

Apologies: Councillor Dilwyn Lloyd, Mrs Miriam Amlyn (NAS/UWT), Mr Rheinallt Thomas (Co-opted Member).

1. PRAYER

The meeting was commenced with a prayer by Dr W. Gwyn Lewis.

2. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) The Chair welcomed the following to their first SACRE meeting:

- (i) Mrs Elizabeth Roberts, Union of Welsh Baptists
- (ii) Ms Heledd Owen (Teachers' Union)
- (iii) Mrs Cathryn Davey (Teachers' Union)

(b) Reference was made to the fact that it had been necessary to defer the previous SACRE meeting as there was no sufficient quorum, however, it was pleasing that new Members had recently been elected from amongst the teachers and it was trusted that it would not be necessary to defer future meetings.

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any members present.

4. URGENT ITEM

No urgent items were received.

5. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the meeting of this committee that took place on 10 June 2015, as a true record.

6. DRAFT GWYNEDD SACRE ANNUAL REPORT 2014-15

The Draft Gwynedd SACRE Annual Report for the 2014-15 academic year was presented for the members' approval, prior to the publication of the final report.

(A) Miss Bethan James explained that the purpose of the Annual Report was to summarise the work undertaken by SACRE over the previous year and it was important that the recommendations within the report were drawn to the authority's attention. Members were guided through the contents of the report and attention was drawn to the fact that 14 primary schools had submitted self-evaluation reports during 2013-14.

In terms of the three key questions in the ESTYN common inspection framework and specifically the provision for collective worship, it was noted how important it was for SACRE Members to visit the collective worship sessions in schools in order to satisfy themselves that schools were in compliance with the statutory requirements. It appeared that one secondary school in the Bangor vicinity was anxious for a member of Gwynedd SACRE to visit that school and therefore it would be useful for a member to visit when the invitation was received.

Attention was drawn to the fact that ESTYN inspections were a focus of last year's discussions in terms of Ysgol Crud y Werin, Ysgol Dyffryn Nantlle and Ysgol y Gader. A presentation was received by Ysgol Crud y Werin and an improvement was seen in the quality of the plans of the school in question. Perhaps it may be timely to invite Ysgol Dyffryn Nantlle and Ysgol y Gader to support SACRE by showing the progress made in both schools.

Attention was drawn to the SACRE work evaluation and satisfactory progress was seen against the majority of the priorities.

It was noted that one of the recommendations referred to the offer of seasonal workshops for subject coordinators as they self-evaluate religious education and collective worship in their schools. Miss Bethan James explained that she had conducted half day workshops in Anglesey for any School that required support and it would be possible to make similar arrangements in Gwynedd if this was desired.

In response to a query regarding the process of implementing and monitoring SACRE recommendations for the authority, it was noted that the recommendations would be submitted to the Head of Education.

Miss Bethan James explained that it was the responsibility of SACRE to draft a religious education Agreed Syllabus for Gwynedd Schools. Members were reminded that SACRE adopted a common framework as the Gwynedd Agreed Syllabus in 2008 and in accordance with the regulations the Agreed Syllabus should be revised every five years. Gwynedd SACRE took the decision to wait prior to review until it was known what would happen with the new curriculum stemming from the recommendations of Professor Donaldson. It was trusted that, through the new members of Gwynedd SACRE and a group of teachers to advise, this would assist SACRE to respond to the principles of the 'Successful Futures' report by Professor Donaldson.

Resolved: (a) To accept and note the contents of the draft annual report for 2014/15.
 (b) To approve the recommendations proposed in the report.

7. SCHOOLS' SELF-EVALUATIONS

(a) The SACRE Clerk guided Members through the sheet submitted giving a summary of school findings and attention was drawn to the fact that five primary schools had been inspected by ESTYN during the 2015 Summer term. Reference was made to extracts taken from ESTYN reports under indicator 2.3 and heading care, support and guidance of the Common Inspection Framework.

Miss Bethan James explained the vocabulary used specifically by ESTYN about collective worship and they had to be careful regarding how the sentences were interpreted e.g. "successful" meant good, "appropriate" meant sufficient. Members were also reminded that they should not be too critical of the schools that had received unsatisfactory /sufficient for the care, support and guidance element as it was possible that this referred to other elements apart from collective worship and pupils' spiritual and moral development.

(b) Members were guided through the self-evaluations of the schools of Morfa Nefyn, Beddgelert, Hirael, Llanaelhaearn, Llanelltyd, Y Traeth and two secondary schools namely Dyffryn Nantlle and Y Gader by referring to the three key questions, namely:

1. How good are outcomes in Religious Education?
2. How good is provision in Religious Education?
3. How good is provision for collective worship?

SACRE Members appreciated the self-evaluations and Miss Bethan James gave an explanation regarding the gap that notes the standards of literacy, numeracy, ITC and thinking skills and this had been included to encourage schools to differentiate between religious education standards and skills and to be more specific regarding the type of elements presented in the report.

Attention was drawn to interesting elements in some schools and they would welcome schools to attend future SACRE meetings to share good practice with Members.

RESOLVED: (a) To accept and note the contents of the inspections and self-evaluations.

(b) To approve for Miss Bethan James, GwE Challenge Adviser, to invite a school to give a presentation on any element of the self-evaluations that would be of interest to SACRE.

8. 2015 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION RESULTS

The results of Summer 2015 were submitted and Members were guided through them. These were teachers' assessments for Key Stage 3 and it was seen that 94% had attained level 5+. It was anticipated that there would be more pressure in the future to attain levels 6 and 7. The schools were congratulated and it was seen that 25 pupils from Gwynedd merited Level 8 which was a credit to those schools.

In terms of GCSE, it was explained that every child followed a statutory religious education course, however, religious studies referred to the optional course. It had to be borne in mind that some schools offered the course in collaboration with other schools

and they shared resources. Attention was drawn to the fact that the number of candidates remained fairly consistent bearing demography in mind, with 371 sitting the examination and a third of these attaining an A*. It was explained that it was difficult to compare national results since the arrangements were not known as some pupils followed the course after School and some undertook it in Year 10, as well as the variety in teaching hours available to candidates.

In general, it was noted that the results for the full course were good with the girls' results exceeding those of the boys. However, some schools maintained the boys' interests in religious studies probably due to the nature of the contemporary subjects.

In response to a question by a Member regarding the gap between girls and boys, it was noted that this was a challenge for schools, however, the Specification B course had increased in popularity with the boys perhaps because of the elements of current issues etc., and these subjects should be introduced earlier in their religious education career. It was recognised that an effort was being made in the schools and very often Departments competed against each other for the same pupils when choosing subjects.

It was explained that in the past pupils had been given a choice of two courses namely the traditional course (Specification A) and a contemporary course studying contentious issues in terms of different religions (Specification B). The Specification B course had increased in popularity and was successful even with boys. However, the WJEC intended to present a new course in 2017 which combined the traditional and the contemporary course.

Resolved: To accept, note and thank the officer for the above information.

9. THE WELSH GOVERNMENT'S PLANS FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Reference was made to a letter from the Education and Skills Minister regarding changes to religious education as a result of the amendments to the curriculum stemming from the report of Professor Graham Donaldson.

Attention was drawn to a paragraph that stated that there was an invitation for regional education consortia (namely GwE) to work with primary, secondary and special schools in order that they try to be Innovative Schools. These schools would lead on the design and developing the new curriculum, as part of a partnership throughout Wales, together with relevant stakeholders.

It was felt that this would be a burden on the innovative schools and in terms of Gwynedd, SACRE should conduct discussions with the schools in order to ensure that the brief in the field of religious education was suitable and relevant.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

10. GWYNEDD SACRE ACTION PLAN 2015-16

Miss Bethan James reported that SACRE had developed an action plan last year outlining what SACRE had achieved during the year. The action plan had not thus far been drafted for 2015-16, however, this was discussed and it was decided to include the following matters as part of the plan:

- (a) Develop knowledge, understanding and managerial skills of coordinators and subject leaders

- (b) Encourage Gwynedd religious education teachers (primary and secondary sector) and Gwynedd SACRE Members to contribute fully to any review of the curriculum and the assessment arrangements
- (c) Ensure that the challenge adviser offers term workshops in order to offer guidance to subject coordinators as they self-evaluate religious education and collective worship in their schools.
- (d) Ensure that schools respond to any deficiencies that have become evident during the self-evaluation exercises and/or ESTYN inspection visits

In relation to (d) above, it was noted that the Schools at Dyffryn Nantlle and Y Gader had worked hard following recent inspections and it was trusted that they would be ready to welcome SACRE Members to the schools to see the progress made or to give a presentation in the next SACRE meeting.

In the case of Ysgol y Gader, there was a reference in the ESTYN Inspection that some teachers had not undertaken collective worship daily and the Challenge Adviser suggested that she would visit the school in the future.

Resolved: **To approve that the Challenge Adviser:**

- (a) drafts an action plan for the year 2015/16**
- (b) organises that she, together with the SACRE Chair, visit the schools of Dyffryn Nantlle and Y Gader when convenient.**

11. WALES ASSOCIATION of SACREs

- (a) Submitted minutes of previous meetings of the Wales Association of SACREs that took place on:

25 June 2015

25 November 2016

- (b) Attention was given to a letter received from Libby Jones, Secretary of the Wales Association of SACREs inviting nominations for the Executive Committee of the Wales Association of SACREs.

Attention was drawn to the fact that Mrs Ruth Davies was the Gwynedd SACRE representative on the Executive Committee, however, she had resigned since November 2015 and in accordance with the constitution of the Wales Association of SACREs that Gwynedd had the right to nominate a member to attend the meetings in her place until the annual meeting that will take place in June 2016.

It was noted that the next Association Meeting was on 8 March 2016 in Monmouthshire.

It was suggested that if any Member was interested in attending Wales SACREs Association meetings then they should directly contact the Chair of Gwynedd SACRE and / or Miss Bethan James, GwE Challenge Adviser

Resolved: **(a) To accept and note the contents of the minutes.**

(b) To approve for Members to contact the Clerk if they are interested in attending meetings of the Wales Association of SACREs on behalf of Gwynedd SACRE.

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

CHAIRMAN