

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

Minutes of the meeting of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) held in the Council Chamber, Ty Nant, Nant Hall Road, Prestatyn on Thursday, 17th October, 2002 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT

Representing Denbighshire County Council

Councillors S. Drew, K.N. Hawkins, N. Hugh-Jones, D. Jones and M.M. Jones

Representing the Denbighshire Teachers' Joint Negotiating Committee

M. Barros-Curtis and M.B. Lloyd

Representing Religious Denominations

Parch. J. Owen (Chair), H. Ellis, J. Gibson, S. Harris and J. Kirkham

ALSO PRESENT

Inspector/Adviser R.E. and Administrative Officer (K.E. Jones)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE WERE RECEIVED FROM

T. Bryer, M. Colbert, Rev. P.J. Collinson, Rev. Prof. L.J. Francis, Sister Elizabeth Kelly, N. Roberts and Councillor W. Roberts

The Corporate Director Lifelong Learning had submitted her apologies for the first part of the meeting owing to her attendance at the Headteachers Conference but she hoped to attend for the latter part of the meeting.

SILENT REFLECTION

The meeting began with a few minutes silent reflection.

573. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

(a) Inauguration of New Chair (current Vice-Chair)

The retiring Chair, Mrs. M.B. Lloyd, took the opportunity to thank members for their support and commitment during her year as Chair and paid tribute to the work undertaken by the Inspector/Adviser RE on behalf of this SACRE. In accordance with the constitution of the Denbighshire SACRE the current Vice-Chair, Parch J. Owen, was invested as Chair for the ensuing year and members conveyed their best wishes to Parch Owen on his appointment. The Chair referred to the excellent work undertaken by Mrs. Lloyd over the last twelve months and emphasised the important role of SACRE in ensuring the effective provision of Religious Education in schools.

(b) Appointment of Vice-Chair (from County Councillors)

In accordance with the constitution of the Denbighshire SACRE the Chair invited nominations for the appointment of Vice-Chair from the Elected Member Representatives. It was proposed and seconded that Councillor M.M. Jones be appointed Vice-Chair for the ensuing year and upon being put to the vote it was:-

RESOLVED that Councillor M.M. Jones be appointed Vice-Chair for the ensuing year.

574. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 5th July, 2002 (previously circulated), as approved by the County Council on 24th September, 2002 were submitted.

Matters Arising

Item No. 2 - Welcome and Resignation of Teacher Representative - The Inspector/Adviser RE advised that, to date, no nomination had been received from the DTJNC to replace Mrs. Carolyn Thomas as an Infant Headteacher representative following her resignation. He also reported that he had received a letter from Mr. Neil Roberts, Headteacher of Ysgol Borthyn, Ruthin, tendering his resignation as a Primary Headteacher representative on this council. Members agreed that nominations for replacements for both those vacancies be sought directly from the DTJNC.

Item No. 3 - Urgent Matters: Curricular Support Service - Joint Working Arrangements: In response to a question from the Chair, the Inspector/Adviser RE confirmed that various proposals were currently being considered by the three authorities as a result of the review on the delivery of curricular services.

Item No. 5 - Delegation to the National Assembly - Mrs. M.B. Lloyd reminded members that Ms. Jane Davidson, Assembly Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning had invited the delegation from the Executive Committee of WASACRE to return for an annual visit and discussions were currently underway with a view to arranging the next meeting in March, 2003.

Item No. 6 - Inset Plans 2002 - 2003 - The Inspector/Adviser RE reported upon the 'Christianity on offer' experience as an initiative to enhance the delivery of RE and enable teachers and schools to be aware of the surrounding local religious community. It was anticipated that this event would be held at 4.00 p.m. on 25th March, 2003 at St. Asaph Cathedral and a letter would be sent shortly to all the Religious Representatives on SACRE in that regard. In the meantime the Inspector/Adviser RE suggested that the Religious Representatives raise this issue with their denominations and encourage attendance at the event. Members welcomed the initiative and felt it was important that children be given the opportunity to attend places of worship.

Item No. 8 - ACCAC Symposium - 27th April, 2002 - Mrs. M.B. Lloyd advised that the report of the main points and recommendations arising from the Symposium would be published shortly and made available to members.

Item No. 9 - Collective Worship Resources: New Materials - The Inspector/Adviser RE confirmed that he had contacted schools with details of the offer from Pfp Publishing Ltd but he had been disappointed with the poor response. Only seven of Denbighshire's schools wished to take up the offer and two of those were already subscribers, accordingly there would be only five new subscribers. Responses from the other neighbouring authorities had also been disappointing but the Inspector/Adviser RE confirmed that he would pursue this matter with Pfp Publishing Ltd and hoped that they would still be prepared to reduce the subscription fee in view of the lack of schools willing to subscribe. Members were disappointed that many schools had failed to take up the offer and it was suggested that another letter be sent to schools urging them to take up the offer to enhance their RE provision. The Inspector/Adviser RE confirmed that the initial letter had been sent from the Corporate Director Lifelong Learning and he agreed to advise the Head of Education Services of SACRE's views regarding this matter.

Item No. 10 (a) - Cwricwlwm Cymreig - The Inspector/Adviser RE reported that the Church in Wales Syllabus for aided schools had been launched that week and the final version of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig document would be distributed to schools as soon as possible after printing.

Item No. 10 (b) - Guidance on Assessment in RE - The Inspector/Adviser RE confirmed that copies of the 'Guidance on Assessment in Religious Education' would be distributed at the Denbighshire Headteachers Conference held today at the Oriel House, St. Asaph. He had also brought copies of the document to this meeting and he encouraged members to take a copy at the end of the meeting.

RESOLVED that the minutes be received.

575. DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT OF SACRE

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted a draft of the Annual Report of the Denbighshire SACRE 2001 - 2002 (previously circulated) which summarised Denbighshire SACRE's activities during the year including the

Agreed Syllabus; Standards in Religious Education; Collective Worship/SMS C Development; INSET Provision; together with various other issues.

The Inspector/Adviser RE took members briefly through the report commenting on the following points:-

- (a) The Agreed Syllabus - funding granted to schools by St. Gabriel's Trust had been used to produce guidance on the revised agreed syllabus and applications for further grants would be made shortly;
- (b) Standards in RE - few schools had been inspected during the early part of the year but members had considered a detailed table of examination results; further examination results would be submitted to SACRE's next meeting in February 2003;
- (d) INSET provision - a full programme of courses plus, in co-operation with the RE Association a range of 'twilight sessions' had been held and proved very successful; visits to the Islamic Cultural Centre, Rhyl by school groups had also proved to be a very popular and positive experience, and
- (e) Luke Project - further information on the Luke Project had been sought and schools would be advised of its existence once the material had been made available.

The Inspector/Adviser RE drew members attention to page 1, paragraph 3 of the Draft Report regarding the distribution of the RE pack and advised that the packs had been distributed and sought members approval to reword that paragraph to reflect the past tense. He advised that, once members approved the draft, the final document would be lodged with ACCAC prior to 31st December, 2002. Members discussed the Draft Report and complimented and thanked the Inspector/Adviser RE for the work he had undertaken for Denbighshire SACRE during the year.

RESOLVED that, subject to the rewording of paragraph 3, page 1 to reflect the past tense, the Draft Annual Report of SACRE be approved.

576. FIVE YEAR REVIEW OF STANDARDS AND PROVISION

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted a report (previously circulated) seeking members' consideration of the five year review of standards and provision of Religious Education and Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development (SMSC) for the period 1997 - 2001. The five year review of standards was based on the cumulative analysis of the thirty six school inspection reports considered during that period and highlighted both the positive and negative points arising from the inspection and a table of results for examinations.

The Inspector/Adviser RE took members through the report and highlighted the following key areas in RE standards:-

- 91% of schools had been deemed satisfactory or better in RE over the five year period with only a small number of schools deemed unsatisfactory;
- there was a long list of positive features recorded in the inspection reports; the top five good features were the same top five in Denbighshire's neighbouring authorities of Conwy, Flintshire and Wrexham which suggested common themes in areas of school provision, and
- only three negative features had been noted in the inspection reports.

Members were pleased to note the high standards of RE in Denbighshire's schools. In response to a member's question regarding why no grade had been given in some schools the Inspector/Adviser RE explained that RE lessons may not have been seen during the inspection period. He also explained that, on occasion, judgements on standards had been based on work and discussions with pupils if inspectors had been unable to observe those classes.

In considering the examination results over the five year period members were advised that the figure for A Level in 2000 should be 42.9 and not 28.6 as detailed in the examination table and members were pleased to note the overall improvements in examination results.

The Inspector/Adviser RE highlighted the following key areas in standards of provision in SMSC:-

- 94% of schools had been deemed satisfactory or better in SMSC over the five year period with only two schools deemed unsatisfactory, and
- there had only been a small number of negative comments which would be addressed through the schools action plans and support had been given to schools to help them comply with the statutory requirements for collective worship.

Members discussed the statutory requirements for collective worship and the Inspector/Adviser RE explained that since 1988 every pupil must receive collective worship every day and in many cases individual class teachers had been charged with that responsibility. It was important to ensure that adequate resource materials and guidance was provided to schools in leading acts of collective worship. Members also discussed the school governors role in ensuring compliance with the statutory provisions for collective worship within schools and addressing any shortcomings identified within the inspection reports.

Members were pleased to note the positive findings of the report and were satisfied with the explanations given by the Inspector/Adviser RE regarding the negative comments. Mrs. M.B. Lloyd suggested that reference to the five year review of standards and provision of the inspection reports be included in the final Annual Report of SACRE. Members unanimously agreed with that suggestion and it was:-

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) *the report by the Inspector/Adviser RE be accepted, and*
- (b) *reference to SACRE's five year review of standards and provision of the inspection reports be included in the final Annual Report of SACRE.*

577. ANALYSIS OF INSPECTION REPORTS

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted a report (previously circulated) upon the positive and negative comments concerning Religious Education and the Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development (SMSC) inspected at six schools between October 2001 and June 2002 together with a brief background history of each school.

Inspections had been carried out at the following schools:-

- ♦ Trefnant Church in Wales VC Primary
- ♦ Ysgol Cefn Meiriadog
- ♦ Bodnant Infant School, Prestatyn
- ♦ Ysgol Caer Drewyn, Corwen
- ♦ Ysgol y Castell, Rhuddlan
- ♦ Ysgol Penmorfa, Prestatyn

A member referred to the brief description of the schools contained within the report and sought clarification regarding the assessment of children starting schools. Members were advised that pupils were now subject to baseline assessments when entering school which covered a wide range of skills including social, mathematical and language skills. It was noted that reference to those assessments had not been made in all of the schools reports and it was agreed that the inspection reports should be consistent in that regard. After further discussion it was:-

RESOLVED that the Inspector/Adviser RE seek clarification from Estyn regarding the use of baseline assessments during school inspections and appraisals and report back to a future meeting of the council thereon.

The Inspector/Adviser RE proceeded to take members through the report and confirmed that the positive comments within each school's inspection report had far outweighed the negative comments. He provided members with a brief resume of the findings relating to each school, explaining and clarifying specific issues in response to members questioning thereon.

Members were pleased with the overall findings as contained within the report and were satisfied with the actions being undertaken to address the negative comments as highlighted by the inspection. In accordance with the usual practice the Inspector/Adviser RE confirmed that the schools inspected would be written to congratulating them on their reports and offering any services in terms of addressing shortcoming and key issues.

During the ensuing discussion, the Inspector/Adviser RE raised a number of concerns regarding the inspection process and felt that many inspectors had not distinguished between the RE curriculum and collective worship aspects which had resulted in inconsistencies found in the inspection reports and negative comments in some areas. He emphasised the importance of the inspection process matching its own criteria and ensuring that inspectors were made fully aware of the appropriate reference. In response to a member's question the Inspector/Adviser RE confirmed that whilst the celebration of a festival such as Christmas and Harvest Festivals was part of collective worship, it was outside the curriculum provision for RE.

Members expressed their own concerns regarding the inconsistencies and it was:-

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) *the report by the Inspector/Adviser RE be accepted, and*
- (b) *the Inspector/Adviser RE send a letter to Estyn detailing SACRE's concerns regarding the inconsistencies in the inspection process.*

578. WALES' NATIONAL HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted a letter (previously circulated) from the Welsh Assembly Government regarding Wales' National Holocaust Memorial Day. The memorial service would be held on 28th January, 2003 at the Temple of Peace and Health in Cathays Park, Cardiff from 7.00 p.m. to 9.00 p.m. SACRE's were being encouraged to assist in this project by asking primary schools to write a poem on racism and 'Hope for the Future' on a card leaf. SACRE would then judge those poems and send the best poem together with ten other poems to the co-ordinator for display at the memorial service. It was also suggested that secondary schools be asked to produce a picture or poster based on the theme of prejudice and hope and to write a poem on racism and hope for the future.

The Inspector/Adviser RE verbally reported upon a subsequent letter he had received from the Event Co-ordinator, clarifying the suggested format for school contributions to the Holocaust Memorial Day and revising the timescale for school entries, and he displayed a sample template of the card leaf as referred to in the correspondence. He confirmed that, subject to members approval, a letter would be sent out after half term asking schools to send in examples of pupils' work if they wished to participate in the event.

In view of the tight timescales involved in the selection process the Inspector/Adviser RE suggested that members consider nominating a small representative group consisting of four members to consider the entries from schools. Members agreed with that suggestion and proposed the selection panel consist of the Chair and Vice-Chair of SACRE together with two other members available on the selection day. The Inspector/Adviser RE indicated that the probable day for considering the entries would be Monday, 2nd December and he confirmed that himself or the Clerk to SACRE would arrange that meeting and contact the relevant members a little nearer the time.

RESOLVED *that the officers arrange a meeting consisting of the Chair and Vice-Chair of SACRE plus two other available members in order to select the best entries from schools for display on the Wales' National Holocaust Memorial Day in Cardiff.*

579. WALES ASSOCIATION OF SACRES

(a) **WASACRE - 12th July, 2002**

The Inspector/Adviser RE verbally reported that Mrs. M.B. Lloyd had been elected Chair of WASACRE and members took the opportunity to congratulate Mrs. Lloyd on her appointment and extended their best wishes in the undertaking of her new role. He verbally reported upon the last meeting of WASACRE held on 12th July, 2002 in Swansea as follows:-

- 'Standards in Religious Education' - Mr. Paul Morgan had given a presentation on standards in RE and copies of that presentation would be made available to members at the next meeting, and
- 'ELWa's consultation on proposed funding models in Wales' - Julie James had given a presentation on the funding models and concerns had been expressed regarding RE's position in their funding formula and criteria.

Mrs. M.B. Lloyd also updated members regarding further consultation with ELWa concerning the funding for 16+ education and lifelong learning from August 2003 and WASACRE's concerns in that regard. Members asked that they be kept informed of future developments in this matter. Mrs. Lloyd also reported that Councillor Arwel Jones (Gwynedd SACRE) and Mr. Huw Erfyl Jones (Flintshire SACRE) had been elected to the Executive Committee and Professor Aled ap Gwynedd (Pembrokeshire SACRE) had been elected Vice-Chair of the Association.

RESOLVED that the verbal report be accepted.

(b) **Annual WASACRE Report 2001 - 2002**

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted the Annual WASACRE Report 2001 - 2002 (previously circulated) detailing the activities of the Association. He paid tribute to the work carried out by WASACRE and advised that the next meeting would be held on 15th November, 2002 hosted by Rhondda Cynon Taf.

RESOLVED that the report be received and accepted.

Members were disappointed that the Corporate Director Lifelong Learning had been unable to attend at the meeting and felt it was important that the Director, or her representative, be in attendance at future SACRE meetings.

The Chair thanked the members and officers for their contribution to and attendance at the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 12.00 noon.
