

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, Town Hall, Ruthin on Thursday, 27th February 2003 at 10.00a.m.

PRESENT

Representing Denbighshire County Council

Councillors S. Drew, N. Hugh-Jones and M.M. Jones

Representing the Denbighshire Teachers' Joint Negotiating Committee

Ms. I. Barros-Curtis, Mrs. J. Hannam, Sister E. Kelly and M.B. Lloyd.

Representing Religious Denominations

Parch. J. Owen (Chair), T. Bryer, P.J. Collinson, H.M. Ellis, R.J. Gibson, S. Harris and J.M. Kirkham.

ALSO PRESENT

Inspector/Adviser R.E. and Administration Officer (W.J. Harness).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE WERE RECEIVED FROM

M. Colbert, M. Evans, Rev. Prof. L.J. Francis and Councillors K.N. Hawkins and W. Roberts.

SILENT REFLECTION

The meeting began with a few minutes silent reflection.

WELCOME

The Chair extended a welcome to DTJNC representative Mrs. J. Hannam who was attending her first meeting of Denbighshire SACRE.

PERSONAL

The Chair referred to the accident sustained by Councillor D. Jones and reported to members that he understood that Councillor Jones was making good progress. SACRE members asked that a letter extending their good wishes for a speedy recovery be sent to Councillor Jones.

1097. URGENT ITEMS

In accordance with the requirements of Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chairman declared that he intended to include for discussion the following item requiring urgent attention:-

Consultation document - The Learning Country: The Foundation Phase - 3 to 7 Years

1098. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 17th October 2002 (previously circulated), as approved by the County Council on 19th November 2002, were submitted.

Matters Arising -

Item No.6 (under Matters Arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 5th July 2002) - Inset Plans 2002/03 - The Inspector/Adviser RE reminded members of the 'Christianity on offer' experience taking place at St. Asaph Cathedral on 25th March. He said that this was an opportunity for the Christian movement in North East Wales to meet with teachers to see how each could help the other. He expressed the hope that there would be a good representation of both religious denominations and teachers at that event. The Inspector/Adviser RE also referred to the events taking place at the Cathedral on the 10th and 12th June, advising that these were pupil days and that the requests from schools for places at the Cathedral on those days had been overwhelming.

Item No.575 Draft Annual Report of SACRE - The Inspector/Adviser RE informed members that a great deal of cost and administration was involved in sending this document out to recipients in Denbighshire. In order to effect a saving, he suggested to members that, in future, the Annual Report be e.mailed to schools with hard copies of the document being sent to SACRE members and other organisations that currently receive it. Whilst proposing that this suggestion be accepted, Mrs. M.B. Lloyd asked that a check be made in the first instance to ascertain that all schools were on e.mail. All members agreed with this proposal.

Item No.577 Analysis of Inspection Reports - The Inspector/Adviser RE informed members that he had received a response from HM Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales to the letter he had written on behalf of Denbighshire SACRE. He reminded members that he had raised four main issues in that letter - (i) the contextual information given in inspection reports; (ii) that comments in the RE section of the reports very often included collective worship; (iii) that comments were not about standards and did not match the standards given in the report; and (iv) that some of the comments expressed showed that some of the inspectors were not sure of the subject area or statutory requirements.

The Inspector/Adviser RE subsequently acquainted members with the contents of the response from the HM Chief Inspector who had expressed appreciation to Denbighshire SACRE for bringing the issues to her attention. Whilst most of the matters had been investigated and addressed, the Inspector/Adviser informed members that he had been disappointed to note that no mention had been made in the reply as to the issue of guidelines to registered inspectors in relation to the content and completion of inspection reports and he sought the Committee's approval to raising this matter further with the HM I Paul Morgan.

RESOLVED that the minutes be received.

1099. HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL COMPETITION AND SERVICE

The Inspector/Adviser RE informed members that the Holocaust Memorial Evening held on the 28th January had been a very moving occasion and he expressed his gratitude that a number of the award winners from North Wales had taken part in the ceremony. He also advised members that the art work of the Denbighshire winners at KS3 and KS4 had been on display.

The Inspector/Adviser said that he had asked for the art work to be returned to the pupils concerned as he considered it worthwhile to include a copy of it in the Denbighshire SACRE Annual Report this year in recognition of the pupils' achievements. Committee members unanimously agreed that this should be done.

The Chair subsequently referred to the art work prize winner from Denbigh High School and whilst he was aware that a letter of congratulations had already been sent by the Authority to all the competing pupils, he asked that a further letter of congratulations be sent to Denbigh High School from the Denbighshire SACRE Committee members.

RESOLVED that -

- (a) *the verbal report by the Inspector/Adviser RE together with the list of winners from North Wales be accepted; and*

- (b) *a letter of congratulations be sent to Denbigh High School art work winner from the Denbighshire SACRE Committee members.*

1100. EXAMINATION RESULTS 2002

The Inspector/Adviser RE summarised the examination results of Denbighshire's schools for 2002 (previously circulated).

During consideration of the results, in response to Councillor N. Hugh-Jones, the Inspector/Adviser RE informed the Committee that one of the County Council's obligations was to compile the examination statistics in the prescribed format and to comment thereon. He added that whilst many of the percentage figures were below the All Wales figure, members should note the improvements made within the County. Mrs. M.B. Lloyd suggested that Denbighshire schools should be congratulated for upholding RE to the standards that they were. The Inspector/Adviser added that he was encouraged to note that there seemed to be more interest in the subject than there had been in the past.

RESOLVED that -

- (a) *the examination results of Denbighshire's schools for 2002 be accepted; and*
(b) *Denbighshire schools be congratulated on those results.*

1101. A NATIONAL RE SYLLABUS FOR WALES: SOME CONSIDERATIONS

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted a report (previously circulated), supported by a power point presentation, that considered the current situation, the Government's stated position, the scenario for Wales together with some arguments for and against a National Framework.

During consideration of this item, members also considered the report on the WASACRE Symposium held on 27th April 2002 in relation to RE agreed syllabuses (agenda item no.6(b)).

The Inspector/Adviser RE referred, in particular, to question 4 on page 13 of the report on the Symposium that asked what actions SACREs, LEAs and Schools needed to take to help raise the status of, and standards in, religious education in schools? He advised members that Denbighshire SACRE were currently undertaking most of the actions suggested in the report, i.e. Monitoring of standards, raising public awareness of the subject, visiting schools to observe RE and collective worship, and co-operation with other Authorities.

The Chair advised members that it had been suggested that teachers be invited to attend meetings of SACRE from time to time in order for them to share any concerns they may have in relation to the RE syllabus. Members were in full agreement with this suggestion and the Inspector/Adviser RE was requested to arrange for a primary school teacher to attend one meeting of SACRE and a secondary school teacher to attend the following meeting.

The Inspector/Adviser went on to refer to the summary at 5 on page 15 of the report on the Symposium informing members that he was gratified that the role of RE inspector had been referred to at 5.1. He also commended the level of support offered by ACCAC for RE over the past 3 - 4 years. Mrs. M.B. Lloyd suggested, and all members agreed, that Denbighshire SACRE write to ACCAC asking them to consider either making the part time officer a full time appointment, given the special nature of RE, or at least appointing short term additional personnel to assist the part time officer in the completion of specific projects or publications.

The Committee subsequently considered the arguments for and against a National RE Syllabus for Wales. The Inspector/Adviser informed members that if it were agreed to introduce a national framework, it would take at least three years, with full consultation, before it could be operated. He went on to say that he believed that the introduction of a national framework would be beneficial but that there must be consultation and involvement of WASACRE and ACCAC together with investment of time into its development.

RESOLVED - that Denbighshire SACRE support the introduction of a national RE framework for Wales.

1102. **WALES ASSOCIATION OF SACRES**

(a) **Nomination of representatives for election to the Executive Committee**

Members were informed that as Mrs. M.B. Lloyd was the current chair of the WASACRE Executive Committee and the Inspector/Adviser RE was also a member of that Committee, Denbighshire SACRE members were not able to make nominations to fill the various vacancies. Even though this was the case, Mrs. Lloyd asked that a letter be sent to the Secretary of WASACRE acknowledging receipt of their letter and the fact that Denbighshire were not in a position to submit nominations.

RESOLVED that -

- (a) *the letter from WASACRE regarding Election to the Executive Committee be noted; and*
- (b) *a reply be sent to the Secretary of WASACRE acknowledging receipt of their letter and the fact that Denbighshire were not in a position to submit nominations.*
- (b) **To consider a report on the Symposium held at Llanidloes on 27th April 2002**

(discussed under agenda item no.5)

(c) **To receive a verbal report from members attending the meeting of WASACRE on 12th February 2003**

Mrs. M.B. Lloyd, current Chair of WASACRE Executive Committee, advised members that they had received an excellent presentation from Denise Morris, part-time ACAC Education Officer on optional assessment materials for RE. The Inspector/Adviser informed members that he would acquaint them of the content of this presentation at their next meeting. In the meantime he advised them that he had already used some of the materials during inservice training and teachers had been extremely pleased with them.

Mrs. Lloyd subsequently informed members of the second presentation made on the 12th February by Gill Maybury of WASACRE. She had been asked to examine the annual reports received from the Associations of SACRE in order to identify how they were responding to inter faith issues. The Inspector/Adviser informed members that one of the results of this examination had shown that Wales had been undertaking a lot more than England to respond to inter faith issues.

RESOLVED that the verbal reports by the Inspector/Adviser RE and Mrs. M.B. Lloyd be accepted.

(ch) **To receive a verbal report from the Chair of WASACRE and Inspector/Adviser RE on Delegation to the Welsh Assembly Government on 24th February 2003**

The Inspector/Adviser informed members that a very positive meeting had taken place during which the delegation had raised a number of issues.

- (i) Concerns that official documents from various bodies, including the Welsh Assembly, did not refer to the statutory requirement for RE. In response, the Minister had advised the delegation that as there was no intention to change this statutory requirement, it had not been thought necessary to include it within the official documents and that there was a broad area of support for RE in schools, for the training for teachers and for the advisory support.
- (ii) Role of SACRES - the Inspector/Adviser informed members that the Minister had invited the representatives to work with the National Grid for Learning and also with the WLGA in getting a much higher profile for RE.

(iii) Resources - particularly Welsh medium - the Inspector/Adviser said that attempts were being made to simplify and speed up the process of translating material.

(iv) Clarification of Circular 10/94 - the Minister confirmed that she intended sending out a supplementary letter of guidance to clarify this circular.

(v) Symposium - 27th April 2002 - the Inspector/Adviser informed members that the Minister had advised that following consultation with individual SACREs on the report on the Symposium, should any particular issues be raised that required her response, she would be happy to respond at that time.

In response to a request from the Inspector/Adviser, Mrs. M.B. Lloyd agreed to write an article for the RE News on the outcome of the delegation.

In conclusion, the Chair thanked both the Inspector/Adviser RE and Mrs. M.B. Lloyd for their verbal reports on their meeting with the Welsh Assembly Government that had proved very positive and hopeful.

RESOLVED that the verbal reports by the Chair of WASACRE and Inspector/Adviser RE on the delegation to the Welsh Assembly Government on 24th February 2003 be accepted.

(d) To consider the minutes of the meeting of WASACRE held on 15th November, 2002 (previously circulated).

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of WASACRE held on 15th November 2002 be accepted.

1103. INTERFAITH DIALOGUE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: QUEEN'S JUBILEE AWARD

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted a letter from the Golden Jubilee Office together with a summary report on the Golden Jubilee Young People's Faith Forum held on 10th June 2002 (previously circulated).

The Inspector/Adviser informed members that the Secretary of WASACRE had represented the Welsh SACRES at the Forum and had taken six people along with her. The Inspector/Adviser added that he had been particularly impressed with the contribution made to the Forum by Welsh representatives.

Referring, in particular, to the letter from the Golden Jubilee Office, the Inspector/Adviser invited members' comments on the suggestion that SACREs might like to consider putting together a discussion event for young people of faith in their areas. During the ensuing discussion, it was suggested that a copy of the letter from the Golden Jubilee Office together with the accompanying report be sent to the RE departments of the County's Secondary Schools with a request as to whether they would be interested and willing to be involved in taking part in a Young People's Faith Forum. It was also suggested that a suitable article be included in the RE News that might include a copy of page 8 of the report - 'How faith motivates service'. Whilst accepting that such an event was worthy of consideration, the Inspector/Adviser informed members that it would need careful planning with a lot of preparation being put into the event to ensure that it worked well. The Inspector/Adviser expressed concern at his ability to arrange an event of this nature without some assistance bearing in mind his already heavy workload. He also advised that, bearing in mind current world issues, should it be agreed to hold an event in Denbighshire, that it not be held at the present time.

RESOLVED that -

- (a) the letter and accompanying report from the Golden Jubilee Office be accepted;
- (b) the County's Secondary Schools be sent a copy of the letter and report with a request as to whether they would be interested and willing to be involved in taking part in a Young People's Faith Forum; and
- (c) an article concerning the Young People's Faith Forum be included in the next issue of RE News and that a copy of page 8 of the Summary Report regarding 'How faith motivates service', be an integral part of that article.

1104. CONSULTATION DOCUMENT - CHILDREN'S LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted Chapter 3 of a Welsh Assembly Consultation Document (circulated on the day). He advised members that whilst SACRE's comments had been requested by 1st May, hard copies of the report had not been made available to him for the committee's consideration. He had, in fact, had to access the report through the internet.

The Inspector/Adviser subsequently acquainted members with the contents of Chapter 3 of the document. He advised members of the six stages of life into which education was currently divided adding that whilst the early years was outside of national curriculum requirements it was subject to RE. He added that currently education within the early years range was governed by ACCAC's Desirable Outcomes.

The Inspector/Adviser provided members with an explanation of the main aims of the changes and advised them of the Welsh Assembly's intention to introduce a Foundation Phase to cover early years and Key Stage 1 (3 - 7 years). He added that the Assembly proposed that the Foundation Phase framework should be based on adapting and integrating the Desirable Outcomes with the programmes of study and focus statements in the current KS1 National Curriculum and that the changes would build on and extend the areas of learning currently featured in Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning Before Compulsory School Age to form a curriculum framework for the Foundation Phase. The Inspector/Adviser informed the Committee that there would be seven areas of learning in the Foundation Phase -

- (i) Personal and Social Development and Well-being;
- (ii) Language, Literacy and Communication Skills;
- (iii) Mathematical Development;
- (iv) Bilingual and Multicultural Understanding;
- (v) Knowledge and Understanding of the World;
- (vi) Physical Development; and
- (vii) Creative Development.

The Inspector/Adviser subsequently sought members' approval to respond on their behalf as follows -

1. That Denbighshire SACRE were not opposed to the introduction of a Foundation Phase provided RE's contribution as a statutory subject was strengthened and that guidance from ACCAC made that clear.
2. That Denbighshire SACRE agreed to personal, social development and well-being being the core and that RE was recognised as having a fundamental and crucial role in that area.
3. That Denbighshire SACRE agreed that the areas of learning should be related to the National Curriculum and that they also expected them to be related to RE which is part of the basic curriculum.
4. That In-service training was clearly needed and that a request be made that such training ensure that RE's contribution was not ignored and that RE had a significant role; and
5. That reference be made to the letter on file from Mr. J.V. Williams of ACCAC that confirmed that any amendments to the Early Years Programme would adequately address the inclusion of spiritual and moral learning in it.

Following consideration of the above responses, it was -

RESOLVED that the Inspector/Adviser RE's proposed response to the Welsh Assembly's Consultation Document in terms of 1 - 5 above be approved.

The meeting concluded at 12.20p.m.
