

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, Nant Hall Road, Prestatyn on Thursday, 16th October, 2003 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT

Representing Denbighshire County Council

Councillors B. Blakeley, S. Drew, M.M. Jones and W. Roberts

Representing the Denbighshire Teachers' Joint Negotiating Committee

I. Barros-Curtis and M.B. Lloyd

Representing Religious Denominations

T. Bryer, M. Colbert, Rev. P.J. Collinson, H. Ellis, Parch. J. Owen and P. Spiers

ALSO PRESENT

Inspector/Adviser R.E., Head of Education Services and Administrative Officer (K.E. Jones)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE WERE RECEIVED FROM

M. Evans, Prof. Rev. L.J. Francis, S. Harris, J. Hannam and Councillor K.N. Hawkins

The Corporate Director Lifelong Learning had also submitted her apologies.

SILENT REFLECTION

The meeting began with a few minutes silent reflection.

539. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

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

The retiring Chair, Parch J. Owen, took the opportunity to thank members for their support and commitment during his 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, Councillor M.M. Jones, was invested as Chair for the ensuing year and members conveyed their best wishes to Councillor Jones on her appointment. The Chair thanked Parch Owen for his hard work over the last twelve months she also took the opportunity to thank the teachers for the good work in providing Religious Education in Denbighshire's schools.

At this point in the proceedings the Inspector/Adviser RE advised that SACRE's constitution required the appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair on an annual basis. In view of the fact that only three meetings of SACRE were held each year, and to allow greater continuity, he suggested that members may wish to consider amending the constitution to allow these appointments to be fixed for a two year period. Members agreed with that proposal and it was **RESOLVED ACCORDINGLY**.

(b) Appointment of Vice-Chair (from Teacher Representatives)

The Chair invited nominations for the appointment of Vice-Chair from the Teacher Representatives. It was proposed and seconded that Mrs. M.B. Lloyd be appointed Vice-Chair for the ensuing year and upon being put to the vote it was:-

RESOLVED that Mrs. M.B. Lloyd be appointed Vice-Chair for the ensuing two years.

Upon the arrival of the Head of Education Services, the Chair took the opportunity to welcome him to the meeting and members emphasised the importance of a representative from Denbighshire's Education Department being present at every SACRE meeting.

540. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 1st July, 2003 (previously circulated), as approved by the County Council on 23rd September, 2003 were submitted.

Matters Arising

Item No. 2 - Minutes: Item No. 577 - The Inspector/Adviser RE circulated copies of an extract from the handbook issued to registered inspectors on the context of inspection reports for schools. In response to SACRE's concerns regarding the inconsistencies in the content and completion of reports, HMI Paul Morgan had advised that inspection reports were monitored and any areas where inspectors departed from the procedures were highlighted.

Item No. 2 - Minutes: Item No. 1103 - The Inspector/Adviser RE advised that he wished to discuss the issue of a Young People's Faith Forum with Heads of Departments before arranging a meeting with Garth Thomas, Denbighshire Youth Officer in that regard.

Item No. 3 - Christianity Experienced - St. Asaph Cathedral Pupil Days - In response to a question from Councillor S. Drew regarding the use of photographs from the pupils days, the Inspector/Adviser RE confirmed that the photographs would be included as part of the ICT pack being produced for schools. He suggested that the presentation material received by members could also be included.

Item No. 5(b) - ESTYN: New Inspection Draft Framework - The Inspector/Adviser RE read out a lengthy letter from Estyn's Head of Inspection Division which had been received in response to the concerns raised by SACRE regarding the new inspection framework. A limited number of copies had been made available at the meeting. The Inspector/Adviser RE reported that he was currently in discussion with Denbighshire, Flintshire and Conwy local authorities regarding ways in which SACREs could obtain clear information on standards and provision on a rolling basis rather than relying solely on inspection reports. However, any proposals would require agreement of all three authorities for consistency.

Item No. 6 - Wales Association of SACREs - The Inspector/Adviser RE reported upon a letter received from Denise Morris, Subject Officer for Religious Education, ACCAC, seeking three nominees who would be willing to take part in reviewing the guidance document for Annual SACRE Reports. Once nominations had been received one member from each SACRE in Wales would be invited to be part of the group. In addition to the Inspector/Adviser RE, who had already been nominated as a representative, it was proposed that the Chair, Councillor M.M. Jones and the Vice-Chair, Mrs. M.B. Lloyd be nominated to represent Denbighshire SACRE. Members agreed with that proposal and it was **RESOLVED ACCORDINGLY**.

RESOLVED that the minutes be received.

541. RE IN PRESTATYN HIGH SCHOOL - PRESENTATION

The Chair introduced and welcomed to the meeting Mrs. Jackie Bateman, Head of RE at Prestatyn High School, who was in attendance to give a presentation on the provision and delivery of Religious Education in the school.

Mrs. Bateman addressed members and reported upon:-

- the staffing arrangements including the qualifications and experience of those teachers involved in the provision of RE;
- the dedication of a large area of the school to RE including four major RE rooms which had been decorated to aid spiritual aspects and displayed artefacts together with two murals depicting faith and heaven;

- one criticism in the school's inspection report having been the lack of compulsory RE in the sixth form. To address this issue, compulsory RE lessons now formed part of general studies for Year 12 pupils. Topics included spirituality and rules and regulations. Music and videos had been used to make these aspects relevant to the pupils and teachers worked hard to ensure that lessons were varied;
- a large group of pupils having taken RE at A Level with 15 out of 17 pupils continuing to AS Year 2. Topics included Christian Ethics and Judaism and plenty of school trips had been organised for students including a trip to the Holocaust Memorial Centre;
- large numbers of pupils having taken RE at GCSE level with approximately 200 out of 300 pupils undertaking an RE course. The WJEC syllabus included topics such as medical ethics; war and peace and prejudice and discrimination. Both long and short courses were offered so each pupil had a viable chance of obtaining a qualification in RE upon leaving school;
- Year 7 pupils having one lesson lasting fifty minutes each week and Years 8 and 9 having two lessons of fifty minutes. The syllabus for Key Stage 3 included a mixture of pure religion and thematic work with much experiential learning. Topics for Year 7 covered Celebration, Religious Language and Belief; Year 8 covered Christianity and Islam, and Year 9 covered Hinduism, Philosophy of God and health related issues (alcohol, drugs, sex), and
- circle time having been introduced in school and teaching RE covered other issues such as tolerance, empathy plus other skills such as communication; lessons included trips to churches and other places of religious significance and local religious groups were invited to interact with pupils to try and make the subject as interesting and relevant to the children as possible.

In closing, Mrs. Bateman invited members to attend an open day at Prestatyn High School on Thursday, 23rd October, 2003 between 4.00 p.m. - 6.30 p.m. which would feature circle time; a Muslim wedding enactment and access to a Christian and spiritual room.

Members took the opportunity to raise questions with Mrs. Bateman regarding various aspects of RE provision in Prestatyn High School, particularly referring to: methods of teaching first year pupils with varying experiences of RE; financing of school trips; funding allocated for books, materials and other resources; morning worship; the merits of using food in teaching RE; and the importance of links with the community including local clergy, gideon and the muslim community. In response to a question from Councillor B. Blakeley, the Inspector/Adviser RE reported that the Agreed Syllabus recommended that RE should account for 5% of the curriculum and the majority of Denbighshire's schools complied with that guideline. The allocation of resources to subject areas was the responsibility of each school's governing body.

The Chair thanked Mrs. Bateman for her interesting and informative presentation which had given an insight into the tremendous work undertaken in Prestatyn High School in delivering Religious Education. Members echoed those sentiments and paid tribute to the quality and variety of teaching methods carried out within the school to ensure that the subject was relevant and interesting for pupils.

RESOLVED that the presentation by Mrs. Jackie Bateman on RE in Prestatyn High School be received and noted.

As previously requested by members, the Inspector/Adviser RE confirmed that he would invite a Junior School teacher to deliver a similar presentation to members at a future SACRE meeting. Councillor W. Roberts suggested that members could be proactive within their own religious groups in highlighting the need for specialist RE teachers and by further promoting this issue.

542. ACCAC: REVIEW OF ANNUAL REPORTS 2000 - 2001 & 2001 - 2002

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted ACCAC's Review of annual SACRE reports 2000 - 2001 & 2001 - 2002 (previously circulated) for members consideration.

The Inspector/Adviser RE advised that Denbighshire SACRE was referred to consistently throughout the review and he was pleased to report that Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham featured in the top four out of seven in the examination table for GCSE Religious Studies. He also wished to clarify that, contrary to the report, Denbighshire had not reported that no school inspections had taken place during 2000 - 2001, rather that SACRE had not considered any inspections during this period because of a delay in obtaining the inspection reports.

In considering the summary detailing ACCAC's recommendations to SACRE it was pleasing to note the positive recommendation that SACRE's continue their good practice. The new procedures currently being discussed and developed in monitoring standards and provision arising from the changes to the inspection process should also have a positive impact in this area. The Inspector/Adviser RE confirmed that advice and INSET had been undertaken but he referred to the difficulties in directly measuring the effectiveness of this guidance. However, Denbighshire's five year review highlighted the increase in provision in RE so this was not an area for concern.

The Head of Education Services indicated that under the new inspection arrangements there was a mechanism for schools to evaluate their own performance and he also reported upon the Annual Headteachers Conference to be held on 23rd October, 2003 when monitoring arrangements would be discussed. In conclusion, the Head of Education Services paid tribute to the excellent work undertaken by the Inspector/Adviser RE and conveyed his thanks in that regard.

RESOLVED that ACCAC's Review of Annual SACRE reports 2000 - 2001 and 2001 - 2002 be accepted.

543. DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT OF SACRE

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted a draft of the Annual Report of the Denbighshire SACRE 2002 - 2003 (previously circulated) which summarised Denbighshire SACRE's activities during the year including the Agreed Syllabus; Standards in Religious Education; Collective Worship/SMSC Development; INSET Provision; together with various other issues.

The Inspector/Adviser RE briefly took members through the report following which Mrs. M.B. Lloyd complimented and thanked the Inspector/Adviser R.E. for the work he had undertaken for Denbighshire SACRE during the year.

RESOLVED that the Draft Annual Report of SACRE be approved.

544. 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 eight schools between June 2002 and March 2003 together with a brief background history of each school.

Inspections had been carried out at the following schools:-

- ? Borthyn VP School, Ruthin
- ? Ysgol Bro Famau
- ? Ysgol Pentrecelyn
- ? Ysgol Heulfre
- ? Rhyl High School
- ? Brynhyfryd High School, Ruthin
- ? Ysgol Mair (Aided) RC, Rhyl
- ? Christchurch, Rhyl

The Inspector/Adviser RE provided members with a brief resume of the findings relating to each school, explaining and clarifying specific issues in response to members questions thereon. He was pleased to report that the positive comments within each school's inspection report had far outweighed the negative comments with 169 separate commendations. Full credit must be given to

those schools on their achievements. With regard to Religious Education, the Inspector/Adviser RE advised that the findings for Ysgol Mair and Ysgol Borthyn had not been included because the Section 23 for Ysgol Mair had been received too late to be included within the report, and RE had not been included for Ysgol Borthyn owing to misunderstanding between the Section 10 and Section 23 Inspectors.

Members were delighted with the positive findings contained within the report and were satisfied with the action being taken to address the few shortcomings 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 any shortcomings. Members discussed the merits in highlighting the individual commendations for each school in this manner following which it was:-

RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

545. WALES ASSOCIATION OF SACRES

The Inspector/Adviser RE reminded members that they had received a verbal update from members attending the meeting of WASACRE held on 27th June, 2003 at their last meeting and he circulated copies of the draft minutes of that meeting for information. He also reported that Susan Collingbourne had taken over from Meinir Evans as Secretary of WASACRE.

The Inspector/Adviser RE and Mrs. M.B. Lloyd (Chair of WASACRE) jointly reported upon the positive meeting they had attended as representatives of WASACRE with ACCAC and the NGfL (National Grid for Learning) regarding the preparation and production of material on the NGfL web site in order to share good practice. During the ensuing discussion the Head of Education Services referred to the development of Denbighshire's web site and advised that schools would be encouraged to share their own good practice on this site.

The Inspector/Adviser RE also referred to a letter dated 25th July, 2003 from the Department for Education and Skills (DFES) regarding changes to Initial Teacher Training (ITT) provision in awarding Qualified Teacher Status. With effect from 1st September, 2003, any student from England who undertook teacher training experience in Wales would not be awarded qualified teacher status and vice versa. Members raised concerns regarding those changes in light of the implications for schools where links were made across border counties and concerns were also expressed regarding the lack of consultation with local education authorities, schools and unions. After further discussion it was:-

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) *the Inspector/Adviser RE write to the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, expressing the concerns raised by Denbighshire SACRE in light of the recent changes for awarding qualified teacher status, and*
- (b) *the Inspector/Adviser RE write to Denbighshire's Assembly Members and Members of Parliament regarding the lack of consultation over the changes to the Education Regulations.*

546. DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chair reminded members that the next meeting of Denbighshire SACRE would be held at 2.00p.m. on Thursday, 26th February, 2004 in the Council Chamber, Russell House, Rhyl.

In closing, the Chair thanked members for their attendance and positive contributions to debate.

The meeting concluded at 12.15 p.m.
