

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, Russell House, Churton Road, Rhyl on Thursday, 26th February, 2004 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT

Representing Denbighshire County Council

Councillors M.M. Jones (Chair), B. Blakeley, S. Drew, K.N. Hawkins and W. Roberts

Representing the Denbighshire Teachers' Joint Negotiating Committee

J. Hannam and M.B. Lloyd

Representing Religious Denominations

P. Spiers

ALSO PRESENT

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

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE WERE RECEIVED FROM

T. Bryer, M. Colbert, H. Ellis, M. Evans, S. Harris, J. Kirkham and Councillors N. Hugh-Jones and R. Ll. Williams

The Corporate Director Lifelong Learning and the Head of Education Services had also submitted their apologies for absence. The Chair reported that, due to the inclement weather, it would not be possible for a translator to attend today's meeting to provide simultaneous translation facilities.

QUORUM

The Chair advised that the meeting was inquorate and members decided to proceed with the meeting on the basis that no formal decisions would be made.

WELCOME

The Chair took the opportunity to welcome members and officers to the meeting and a special welcome was extended to Mr. Glyn Jones, a members of the public who was also present. Mr. Jones would be shadowing Councillor S. Drew this week in the undertaking of her role as a county councillor.

SILENT REFLECTION

The meeting began with a few minutes silent reflection.

1029. URGENT MATTERS

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

- (i) Christian Uganda Relief - visit by the Inspector/Adviser RE
- (ii) Nominations of representatives for election to WASACRE's Executive Committee

1030 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th October, 2003 (previously circulated), as approved by the County Council on 20th January, 2004 were submitted.

Matters Arising

Item No. 3 - RE in Prestatyn High School - The Inspector/Adviser RE indicated that he hoped to arrange for a Junior School teacher to deliver a similar presentation to members at the next SACRE meeting. Mr. P. Spiers reported upon the warm welcome he had received at the open day held in Prestatyn High School on 23rd October, 2003 and he confirmed that the day's themes reflected Mrs. Bateman's presentation.

Item No. 7 - WASACRE - Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) Changes: The Inspector/Adviser RE confirmed that he had written to the Assembly Members and Members of Parliament highlighting SACRE's concerns and had received responses from all but two members. A copy of the letter received from Jane Davidson, Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning was circulated to members at the meeting and the Inspector/Adviser RE drew members' attention to the salient points which encapsulated much of the responses received from other AMs who had taken up this issue. Members were pleased with the interest shown by the AMs and Councillor W. Roberts asked that, in future, the written responses be circulated to members as soon as possible.

Item No. 5 - Draft Annual Report of SACRE - The Inspector/Adviser RE advised that copies of the final document were available to members at the meeting.

RESOLVED that the minutes be received.

1031 ANALYSIS OF SCHOOLS' 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 seven schools between February 2003 and November 2003 together with a brief background history of each school.

Inspections had been carried out at the following schools:-

- ? Ysgol Mair (Aided) RC, Rhyl
- ? St. Asaph VP Infants School
- ? Llanbedr Church in Wales Controlled School
- ? Bro Elwern CP, Corwen
- ? Henllan School
- ? Ysgol Bodfari
- ? Ysgol Dewi Sant, 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. Members were asked to note that if a school was not represented in a particular category it did not necessarily mean that there was a deficiency in that area but rather that no reference had been made to it in the inspection report. With regard to Religious Education, the Inspector/Adviser RE advised that the findings for Ysgol Mair RC had not been included because Section 23 had been received too late to be included within the report.

Councillor W. Roberts noted that schools had their own policies on racism and he felt it would be beneficial for schools to follow the Unitary Authority Policy on racism. The Inspector/Adviser RE thought it was likely that the schools already used the Unitary Authority Policy as a basis for their own policies but agreed to pursue this directly with Denbighshire's schools.

Members were pleased with the overall findings as contained within the report and agreed that the schools should be congratulated on the positive aspects highlighted by the inspection. Accordingly it was:-

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the report by the Inspector/Adviser RE be received and noted, and

- (b) *the Inspector/Adviser RE write to the schools inspected, congratulating them on the positive aspects of their reports and offering any services in terms of addressing any shortcomings and key issues.*

1032 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION - EXAMINATION RESULTS 2003

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted tables detailing examination results in Religious Studies for 2002 and 2003 within Denbighshire's secondary schools (circulated at the meeting) for members' consideration. He apologised for the late arrival of the data which he had only received the previous day and indicated that work was ongoing to ensure the results were submitted within reasonable time in the future.

The Inspector/Adviser RE proceeded to take members through the results in detail and comparisons between each year's results were made. He particularly referred to the following points:-

- GCSE Results All - Religious Studies 2003 - overall there was a decrease of eight candidates on the previous year which coincided with a drop in Religious Studies nationally; there was a huge improvement in the performance with 1.8% below the national average in 2003 compared to 8.2% the previous year; it was hoped that next year's results would be equal to or exceeding the national average;
- GCSE Results Boys - Religious Studies - there was a decrease of seventeen candidates with the performance overall being 6.4% below the national average compared to 12.7% the previous year; the improvements in results were encouraging despite the drop in candidates;
- GCSE Results Girls - Religious Studies - there was an increase of nine candidates on the previous year with performance improving from 5% below the national average in 2002 to 4.2% above the national average in 2003 with an overall increase in performance of 11.9%;
- Religious Education All (Short Course) - the short course was extremely popular and it was now possible to take specification A and B as a full or short course; there was a decrease of six candidates which was contrary to the upward trend nationally; the performance was 3.3% below the national average which was an improvement on last year's figure of 6% below which was encouraging;
- A Level Results All - Religious Studies - there were very few candidates for A Levels and therefore the percentage figures were not particularly helpful; the number of candidates had increased to twenty three from sixteen the previous year; only two of the twenty three candidates were boys and their results had been graded D with the girls performance being a drop on the previous year but still 3% above the national average, and
- Certificate of Educational Achievement (now known as Entry Level) - there was a large drop in the national average with Denbighshire's results being 8.3% below the national average which was an improvement on the previous year's results.

In conclusion the Inspector/Adviser RE advised that overall, the results were pleasing and work was ongoing to encourage continual improvements in schools including looking at ways to try and increase performance.

Members were pleased that, in general, the examination results reflected well on the county and congratulated the schools on their achievements.

RESOLVED *that the examination results of Denbighshire's schools for 2003 be received and noted.*

1033 ICT AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The Inspector/Adviser RE verbally reported that the General Teaching Council of Wales (GTCW) had funded a Network Group involving a group of fifteen teachers to work across the four authorities (Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham). The initiative had resulted in the production of a CD

Rom which included a vast range of activities and resources for teachers to use to address RE at all four key stages. The teachers involved with this process had benefited greatly from the experience and had enjoyed learning from each other. As part of the project, the Group had approached the United Jewish Israel Appeal who had provided 500 copies (120 copies for Denbighshire) of a free CD entitled "Living Jewish - An interactive guide to Jewish life" which would be distributed in tandem with the Network Group's CD Rom to schools next term.

Members were delighted with the material being sent out to schools to further the work of SACRE but noted that, although the Living Jewish CD had been provided for free, the organisation accepted donations and members felt that Denbighshire should offer some reimbursement for the privilege of being able to provide that material free to schools. After consideration members felt it would be appropriate to offer a donation of £120 to the United Jewish Israel Appeal as a token gesture of £1 for each CD provided to Denbighshire's schools and it was subsequently:-

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) *the verbal report by the Inspector/Adviser RE on the work of the Cross LEA General Teaching Council of Wales (GTCW) Network Group be received and noted, and*
- (b) *the council be asked to offer a donation of £120 to the United Jewish Israel Appeal as a gesture in lieu of the free CDs provided to Denbighshire's schools.*

In response to a request from the Chair, the Inspector/Adviser RE agreed to provide members with details of the content of the CD produced by the Cross LEA GTCW Network Group.

1034 WELSH BACCALAUREATE SPECIFICATION

The Inspector/Adviser RE delivered a power point presentation on the Welsh Baccalaureate Specification. A similar presentation had been made to WASACRE by Mr. Richard Carter from the Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC) and copies of the presentation slides were made available to members at the meeting. The Inspector/Adviser RE had also added concerns raised by WASACRE to his presentation.

The Inspector/Adviser RE provided a synopsis of the Welsh Baccalaureate to members, outlining the requirements and curriculum content for pupils to achieve the award including its aims; key characteristics; structure; key skills and work related education. One of the sections covered personal and social education and Mr. Carter had pointed out possible Religious Education links within the criteria. However, there was no reference made to RE anywhere in the document and no signposts had been given for where RE could be developed. Accordingly, WASACRE had requested that SACREs write to the WJEC to express their concern over this issue and to ask that, when the pilot scheme ended and the Baccalaureate was reviewed, that this omission be rectified.

Mrs. M.B. Lloyd, Chair of WASACRE thought that the Welsh Baccalaureate was a wonderful opportunity but a missed opportunity for RE and she urged members to take up this issue with other individuals and organisations.

The Chair reported that Jane Davidson, AM would be opening Ysgol Brynhyfryd, Ruthin on 1st March, 2004 and would be delivering a presentation on the Welsh Baccalaureate Specification and she felt this would be an excellent opportunity for members to raise this issue directly with the Minister.

Members were extremely disappointed that there was no specific mention of RE in the Welsh Baccalaureate and agreed to take up this issue with their local organisations and church councils.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) *the presentation on the Welsh Baccalaureate Specification together with the concerns expressed by WASACRE be received and noted,*

- (b) a letter be sent to Mr. Keith Davies, WJEC and the Minister for Education at the National Assembly expressing SACRE's serious concerns regarding the lack of reference to RE in the Welsh Baccalaureate Specification, and
- (c) a copy of SACRE's representations be also sent to Mr. Richard Carter, WJEC and Denbighshire's Assembly Members and Members of Parliament.

1035 WALES ASSOCIATION OF SACRES

(a) WASACRE - 11th November, 2003 at County Hall, Cardiff

Mrs. M.B. Lloyd, Chair of WASACRE verbally reported upon the last meeting held on 11th November, 2003 at County Hall, Cardiff as follows:-

- the special significant of the day commencing at 11.00 a.m. on 11th November;
- a presentation by Mr. Richard Carter, WJEC on the Welsh Baccalaureate (as presented by the Inspector/Adviser RE earlier on the agenda);
- a presentation by Ruth Garnault, Arts Explorer Director regarding the Wales Millennium Centre which had proved extremely enjoyable with Ms. Garnault seeking suggestions for inclusion of RE opportunities within the Education Pack available to schools; a follow up meeting with Ms. Garnault would be taking place on 3rd March to discuss Education in the Millennium Centre, and
- a presentation by HMI Paul Morgan providing an update on standards in RE across the key stages (which would be presented by the Inspector/Adviser RE later on the agenda).

In conclusion, Mrs. Lloyd reported that the next WASACRE meeting would be held on 5th March, 2004 at County Hall, Aberaeron.

The Chair thanked Mrs. Lloyd for her report and paid tribute to her hard work on WASACRE.

RESOLVED that the verbal report by the Mrs. M.B. Lloyd be accepted.

(b) Standards as reported by HMI Paul Morgan

The Inspector/Adviser RE delivered a power point presentation providing a statistical analysis of the standards achieved in RE from 1997 - 2003 across the key stages. A similar presentation had been made to WASACRE by HMI Paul Morgan and copies of the presentation slides were made available to members at the meeting.

The Inspector/Adviser RE presented the standards of achievement in RE for each key stage; comparisons with other subjects together with standards in aspects of RE. Reference was also made to the changes in inspection arrangements. Most schools would receive a standard inspection, 10% of schools a full inspection and 5% a short inspection. Inspectors would look at information associated with subjects, specifically the top three and the bottom three.

Mrs. M.B. Lloyd reported upon a recent meeting of the Estyn Forum when presentations had been received from three schools piloting the new arrangements. Mrs. Lloyd indicated that she had raised the issue that, as only the top and bottom three subjects were being specifically targeted, the data to enable SACRE's to monitor standards in RE may not be available. Susan Lewis, the Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales, had provided some reassurance that all subjects would have some form of inspection.

The Inspector/Adviser RE confirmed that Denbighshire LEA had agreed that he should look at the provision of RE in secondary schools and feeder primary schools. A programme covering a five year period had been mapped out which would enable SACRE to identify the strengths and weaknesses in RE. The programme would be flexible and varied to some extent by risk assessments carried out by

the LEA. Whilst recognising the extra work for the Inspector/Adviser RE members were pleased that the LEA had agreed to take on this additional responsibility.

RESOLVED that the presentation by the Inspector/Adviser RE be received and noted.

(c) WASACRE/NAFRE/NGFL Project through General Teaching Council of Wales

The Inspector/Adviser RE verbally reported upon a meeting between representatives of WASACRE and NAPfRE with the National Grid for Learning (NGFL) and he was pleased to announce that the General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW) would be funding a project of working groups to produce a range of RE materials across the key stages which could be placed on the web site. The project would be carried out over the next twelve months.

The Chair referred to the excellent work being carried out and she particularly paid tribute to the Inspector/Adviser RE and Mrs. M.B. Lloyd, Chair of WASACRE for their valuable contributions.

RESOLVED that the verbal report by the Inspector/Adviser RE be received and noted.

1036 CHRISTIAN RELIEF UGANDA

(This item was considered as a matter of urgency, notice having been given by the Chair at the commencement of the meeting).

The Inspector/Adviser RE reported upon his forthcoming trip to Uganda in March which was partly in connection with work but also through the charity Christian Relief Uganda where, along with other teachers, he would be visiting schools and communities. Links would be made with specific schools and educational approaches and community strategies would be shared and discussed. Gifts and resources would also be distributed and the Inspector/Adviser RE had been overwhelmed with the generosity of individuals and schools in providing financial resources and goods to be transported.

The Chair referred to the valuable work carried out by the Inspector/Adviser RE and wished him best wishes for a safe and fruitful journey.

1037 NOMINATIONS OF REPRESENTATIVES FOR ELECTION TO THE WASACRE'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

(This item was considered as a matter of urgency, notice having been given by the Chair at the commencement of the meeting).

Mrs. M.B. Lloyd, Chair of WASACRE, reported upon the membership changes to the Association's Executive Committee and in accordance with their constitution, nominations were sought from SACREs for a Vice-Chair as well as members to serve on the Executive Committee. It was noted that nominations must be submitted by 1st March, 2004. After a brief discussion it was:-

RESOLVED that Mr. Gavin Craigen, Inspector Adviser RE be nominated for the appointment of Vice-Chair and Councillor M.M. Jones, Chair of Denbighshire SACRE be nominated to serve as a member on the Association's Executive Committee.

In concluding the meeting the Chair thanked the Inspector/Adviser RE and Clerk to SACRE for their hard work and thanked members for their attendance at the meeting and valuable contributions to debate.

The meeting concluded at 4.00 p.m.
