

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 Tuesday, 12th October, 2004 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT

Representing Denbighshire County Council

Councillors M.M. Jones (Chair), G.C. Evans, C.L. Hughes, G.A. Jones, D. Owens and G.J. Pickering

Representing the Denbighshire Teachers' Joint Negotiating Committee

I. Barros-Curtis, M. Bradshaw and M.B. Lloyd

Representing Religious Denominations

M. Colbert, Rev. P.J. Collinson, H. Ellis, M. Evans, S. Harris, B.H. Jones, J. Kirkham, Parch J. Owen and P. Speirs

Co-opted Members

T. Ap Sion (substitute for the Rev. Prof. L.J. Francis)

ALSO PRESENT

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

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE WERE RECEIVED FROM

T. Bryer, M. Evans, J.Hannam, Prof. L.J. Francis, Sister Elizabeth Kelly and Councillors K.N. Hawkins and N. Hugh-Jones

SILENT REFLECTION

The meeting began with a few minutes silent reflection.

WELCOME

The Chair took the opportunity to welcome members and officers to the meeting and a special welcome was extended to Maxine Bradshaw and Brian Huw Jones who were attending their first meeting. The Chair explained that Brian Huw Jones would be replacing Parch John Owen who was retiring at the end of the year and she took the opportunity to thank Parch Owen for his valuable contribution to SACRE.

276 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th July, 2004 (previously circulated), as approved by the County Council on 21st September, 2004 were submitted.

Matters Arising

Page 3 - Item No. 2 Draft Framework for Children's Learning in the Foundation Phase - The Inspector/Adviser RE indicated that ACCAC had taken note of the representations made to them regarding the framework for the foundation phase and the latest draft had been significantly improved in terms of its RE elements. Further revisions to the draft may be made following the pilot project. Members were also advised that the local authority had been requested to look into the possibility of funding a working group to consider the new requirements for children's education.

The Chair referred to the Welsh translation of the minutes referring to "SACRE" instead of "CYSAG" throughout the document and she asked that this error be noted for future translations.

RESOLVED that the minutes be received.

277 WJEC AS/A2 RELIGIOUS STUDIES - SPECIFICATION CONTENT

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted a letter (previously circulated) from the WJEC in response to SACRE's concerns regarding the imbalance in content and examinations of AS/A2 Religious Studies.

The Inspector/Adviser RE drew members' attention to the salient points within the letter, particularly referring to the following responses:-

- the team of examiners who drew up the specification were all satisfied that all AS units were equally demanding and the specification had been accepted by the Regulatory Bodies;
- there was an equality looked for and ensured in the marking process;
- there was a reduction in New Testament studies across all examining boards so that biblical studies options were less popular generally. However, overall numbers taking Religious Studies had increased and significantly increased in terms of WJEC numbers, and
- WJEC were unaware of any awarding body conducting exit interviews or questionnaires but agreed to raise this issue with the Director of Examinations.

Members noted the full and detailed answers within the letter in response to the questions raised and recognised that, subsequent to the matter being raised at WASACRE and INSET, some changes had been made which may alleviate some of the concerns expressed regarding the specification content.

Mrs. M.B. Lloyd informed members that Tudor Thomas from WJEC would be delivering a presentation at the next WASACRE meeting and this matter may be looked at again.

RESOLVED that the letter from the WJEC be received and noted.

278 YOUTH FAITH FORUM

The Inspector/Adviser RE verbally reported upon discussions to date in response to SACRE's request that a Youth Faith Forum be staged in Denbighshire.

The Inspector/Adviser RE had met with several teachers and the Youth Officer for Denbighshire, Mr. Garth Thomas and explored various possibilities for the proposed Youth Faith Forum. The main concern was the cost involved such as transporting pupils, supply cover, venue etc. A bid had been made for special grant monies awarded for youth projects in Rhyl and Prestatyn but if successful, this funding would not cover the main costs of supply cover and transport. In addition, the Youth Faith Forum must be held in either Rhyl or Prestatyn if the funding was granted. A further meeting regarding this issue would be held later in the week when it was hoped that further progress would be made. It had been agreed in principle that other faiths within the community would participate in a lead capacity as well as Christian young people and there were many other issues to be considered and explored.

Councillor G.A. Jones advised that Area Partnership monies may be available for such a project and he suggested that the Inspector/Adviser RE contact the relevant Area Partnership Manager directly in that regard.

Members were pleased with progress to date and hoped to receive a further update at their next meeting. The Chair thanked the Inspector/Adviser RE for the work he had undertaken in progressing this project.

RESOLVED that the verbal report by the Inspector/Adviser RE be accepted.

279 DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted a draft of the Annual Report of the Denbighshire SACRE 2003 - 2004 (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 took members briefly through the report commenting on the following points:-

- (b) Standards in RE - all fourteen schools inspected had been judged satisfactory or better with a long list of positive commendations with only minor key issues for improvement;
- (c) Collective Worship/SMSC Development - all schools inspected had been judged satisfactory or better with many positive comments and only minor shortcomings that would not be difficult to address, and
- (d) INSET Provision - a reduction of numbers attending courses had been noted due to the lack of money for INSET provision. The Inspector/Adviser RE indicated that he had only undertaken minor INSET provision this year with some training in 'twilight sessions' because of the lack of funding. The Education Officer explained that the Welsh Assembly provided the funding for INSET provision but this had been affected by the Foundation Phase and workload agreement. The Inspector/Adviser RE confirmed that a meeting would be held between the three LEAs sharing the Curriculum Support to discuss the way forward given that the situation for next year would not improve and INSET provision needed to be considered in the context of a wider issue.

Finally the Inspector/Adviser RE asked members to disregard the reference to Appendix 5 which had been included in error and advised that the pagination and layout would be improved before the report was sent out to schools.

In considering the report members raised the following points:-

- Peter Speirs needed to be added to the membership list for Denbighshire SACRE;
- membership for councillors should be amended to read from and until June, 2004;
- some of the meaning and sense of the report had been lost through the literal translation of the document.

The Inspector/Adviser RE noted members' comments and agreed to arrange for the Welsh translation of the document to be rechecked. In response to a question from Mr. P. Speirs, the Inspector/Adviser RE reported upon work undertaken to foster links between schools in Uganda and Denbighshire's schools.

The Chair thanked the Inspector/Adviser R.E. for the work he had undertaken for Denbighshire SACRE during the year and it was:-

RESOLVED that, subject to the above comments, the Draft Annual Report of SACRE be approved.

280 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 December 2003 and June 2004 together with a brief background history of each school. He asked members to disregard the findings relating to Ysgol Llanefydd which had been included in error and apologised for any inconvenience caused.

Inspections had been carried out at the following schools:-

- Ysgol y Parc, Denbigh
- Ysgol Bryn Collen, Llangollen
- Ysgol Maes Hyfryd, Cynwyd
- Ysgol Gellifor, Gellifor
- St. Brigid's School, Denbigh
- Ysgol Frongoch, Denbigh

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 125 separate commendations for SMSC and 115 separate commendations for RE. It was also pleasing to note there were no significant shortcomings in any of the schools inspected.

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 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. The Chair referred to the hard work carried out within schools and was pleased that this success had been reflected within the inspection reports. Members also paid tribute to the work of the Inspector/Adviser RE in supporting Denbighshire's schools.

Mrs. I. Barros -Curtis referred to an inspection carried out at Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn in May, 2004 and the Inspector/Adviser RE confirmed that the school inspection report would be considered at the next SACRE meeting.

RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

281 MONITORING AND SUPPORTIVE REVIEW REPORT

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted a report (previously circulated) on the provision of Religious Education in the Prestatyn Consortium of Schools which covered Prestatyn High School and the following feeder schools: Penmorfa CP School; Bodnant Junior School; Bodnant Infants School; Ysgol Melyd and Ysgol Hiraddug, Dyserth.

The Inspector/Adviser RE reminded members of the new arrangements for monitoring the provision of Religious Education following the recent changes to the ESTYN inspection process. Following visits by the Inspector/Adviser RE to each of the schools during the summer term, a report of the visit and issues and outcomes had been agreed with the school. The report provided details of the good features, shortcomings and recommendations for each school together with a general summary of the whole consortium. Members were advised that there was much to celebrate in terms of the good features in the schools of the consortium, in particular:-

- The levels of planning and quality of schemes of work
- The good range of activities and tasks undertaken by pupils
- The status of the subject or the attitude towards it by staff and pupils
- The monitoring and evaluation of work, schemes and activities
- The use and support of the local faith communities

It was noteworthy that the shortcomings identified were largely for individual matters in individual schools and that since the report had been prepared measures had already been undertaken to address particular issues in some schools. Given the individuality of the shortcomings, the recommendations focused on individual aspects in the schools. However, the maintaining of continuing of good practice was a recommendation referred to several times.

Overall the Inspector/Adviser RE indicated that he had found the process a very positive experience and members were pleased to note the good work being undertaken in the provision of RE within those schools. During the ensuing discussion members took the opportunity to raise questions with

the Inspector/Adviser RE who advised of the time he spent at individual schools during the review process and the reactions of the schools to the new arrangements. With regard to pupils' views on RE, the Inspector/Adviser RE indicated that there was no formal process to speak with pupils during the review but it could be something to consider during future school visits.

Members were pleased with the new arrangements as a way forward in view of the changes to the inspection process and paid tribute to the extra work undertaken by the Inspector/Adviser RE in this regard and the continuing support that he offered to all schools. The Education Officer echoed those sentiments advising that schools and teachers depended on the Inspector/Adviser RE's expertise and support in the provision of Religious Education.

RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

282 ACCAC - LAUNCH OF OPTIONAL ASSESSMENT MATERIALS FOR RE

The Inspector/Adviser RE sought three nominations (one from each representative group) from Denbighshire SACRE to attend the launch of ACCAC's new optional assessment materials for RE at key stages 2 and 3 on 1st December, 2004 at the Metropole Hotel, Llandrindod Wells.

After consideration it was:-

RESOLVED that the Chair Councillor M.M. Jones, Mrs. M.B. Lloyd and Mr. B.H. Jones be nominated to attend the launch of ACCAC's new optional assessment materials on 1st December, 2004.

283 WALES ASSOCIATION OF SACRES

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted the minutes of the meeting of WASACRE held on 23rd June, 2004 at County Office, Llangefni for members information which had been verbally reported upon at the last SACRE meeting by Mrs. M.B. Lloyd.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of WASACRE held on 23rd June, 2004 be received and noted.

284 DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chair reminded members that the next meeting of Denbighshire SACRE would be held at 10.00 a.m. on Thursday, 3rd February, 2005 in the Council Chamber, Ty Nant, Nant Hall Road, Prestatyn.

At this juncture Parch J. Owen suggested that, for the benefit of new members, it would be useful for acronyms to be used in full until members were familiar with their meaning.

In closing the meeting the Chair thanked the Inspector/Adviser RE, the committee's translator and Clerk to SACRE for their hard work.

The meeting concluded at 11.05 a.m.
