

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 Monday, 3rd July, 2006 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT

Representing Denbighshire County Council

Councillors G.C. Evans, C.L. Hughes, M.M. Jones and G.J. Pickering

Representing the Denbighshire Teachers' Joint Negotiating Committee

M.B. Lloyd (Chair), I. Barros-Curtis, M. Bradshaw and J. Buckley Jones

Representing Religious Denominations

Rev. P.J. Collinson, H. Ellis, S. Harris, Rev. B.H. Jones, J. Kirkham and P. Speirs

ALSO PRESENT

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

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE WERE RECEIVED FROM

T. Bryer, M. Evans, M. Hatch, Rev. Prof. L.J. Frances, T. Ap Sion (substitute for Rev. Prof. L.J. Francis) and Councillors G.A. Jones and D. Owens

Although not a member of SACRE Councillor R.E. Barton regularly attended meetings and had also submitted his apologies for absence.

SILENT REFLECTION

The meeting began with a few minutes silent reflection.

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 8th February, 2006 (previously circulated), as approved by the County Council on 4th April, 2006 were submitted.

Accuracy -

As a point of accuracy the Inspector/Adviser RE advised that apologies for the last meeting had been submitted from Rev. Prof. L.J. Francis which had been misspelt 'Frances' within the minutes.

Matters Arising -

Page No. 3 – Item No. 2 Minutes: Matters Arising – Monitoring and Supportive Review Report – The Inspector/Adviser RE reported upon ongoing discussions with the Wrexham Diocese regarding the monitoring of Roman Catholic schools. Given that that all Roman Catholic schools were voluntary aided with Religious Education and Collective Worship under the auspices of the Diocese, it was likely that monitoring would be carried out by the Diocese who would submit reports to SACRE in a similar manner to the current monitoring reports submitted by the Inspector/Adviser RE. The issue with regard to secondary schools required further consideration and a meeting had been scheduled the following week between the Diocese Director and the Inspector/Adviser RE. An update on those discussions would be reported to the next SACRE meeting.

***RESOLVED** that the minutes be received.*

2. PRESENTATION - RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN ST. BRIGID'S PRIMARY SCHOOL, DENBIGH

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted apologies regarding the absence of a representative from the school to deliver today's presentation. Unfortunately, the person scheduled to give the presentation had been unable to attend at the last minute and it had been too late to find a replacement. It was agreed that the presentation be rescheduled for SACRE's next meeting in October.

3. REPORT ON UGANDA EXPERIENCE – FEBRUARY/MARCH 2006

The Inspector/Adviser RE delivered a power point presentation regarding his recent visit to Uganda as part of a delegation visiting schools and communities during February/March 2006 through the charity Christian Relief Uganda.

Members were advised that Christian Relief Uganda was based at Maria's Care in Uganda which was a Children's Home, Unit for the Deaf, Day Care Centre, Primary School and also offered training and life skills. The Inspector/Adviser RE displayed numerous photographs taken during the visit and highlighted the significant progress made since his last visit within the schools, colleges and communities and the impact on the quality of life of both adults and children through the charity work. He also reported upon particular activities with different organisations and families within Uganda and during the four week trip visits had been made to the following places: Hope Destitute Children's Centre, Lukaya; Lukaya Polytechnic College; St. Paul's CU Primary School, Bulega; Modern Primary School, Ntabwe and the Golden Christian College, Nsaggu.

In closing the Inspector/Adviser RE reminded members that the trip was his fifth visit to Uganda and each visit was a wonderful experience and he was looking forward to returning.

The Chair thanked the Inspector/Adviser RE for sharing his experiences with SACRE and members paid tribute to the excellent charity work being undertaken. The Chair also wished the Inspector/Adviser RE all the best for any future projects.

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

4. EXCERPTS FROM THE ANNUAL REPORT OF HER MAJESTY'S CHIEF INSPECTOR OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN WALES 2004-05

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted excerpts from the Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training (previously circulated) stating that:-

- Pupils' best work across Key Stage 1 and 2 was in English, maths, science and religious education
- In 2005 there was a big rise in entries for GCSE short course subjects including a continued high entry for Religious Studies
- In Key Stage 3 and 4 the highest standards were found in: English, Welsh as a first language, geography, modern foreign languages, information technology and religious education
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (in primary schools) had outstanding features in nearly two-fifths of schools. School assemblies played an important part in helping pupils to learn to care about other people
- Many more (secondary schools) were providing collective worship on each day of the week. However more than one in six of the schools inspected still did not fully keep to the law on daily collective worship.

Reference was also made to the appendices to the report providing statistics to evidence those summary comments for each of the Key Stages showing the number of lessons that achieved grades 1 to 5 for the subjects in Key Stages 1 – 4 and in the sixth form for schools inspected in 2004-05.

In considering the excerpts members were pleased to note that RE was on a par with other core subjects for pupils' best work across Key Stage 1 and 2 and that the highest standards in Key Stage 3 and 4 subjects also included RE. The only negative reference was that more than one in six secondary schools inspected had failed to provide the required daily collective worship. Estyn hoped to address this issue through the production of guidance to schools to define what acts of collective worship were recognised as such by inspectors. The Chair referred to the difficulties for secondary schools in ensuring daily acts of collective worship and hoped that Estyn would issue guidelines to schools thereon as soon as possible.

Finally the Inspector/Adviser RE stated that Denbighshire SACRE's Annual Report had acknowledged that for the same period (2004-05) good practice had been noted and standards had continued to improve. Members welcomed the report and it was:-

RESOLVED that the excerpts from the Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales 2004 – 2005 be received and noted.

5. REPORT ON THE PROVISION OF RE IN THE RHYL CONSORTIUM OF SCHOOLS

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted a report (previously circulated) on the provision of Religious Education in Rhyl High School and the following feeder schools: Ysgol Bryn Hedydd; Christchurch CP School; Emmanuel CP School, Llewelyn CP School and Ysgol y Castell, Rhuddlan. (Members were asked to note that Ysgol y Castell was predominantly a feeder school for Ysgol Emrys Ap Iwan, Abergele which was situated outside the county and therefore the school been included within Rhyl's consortium for monitoring purposes).

Following visits by the Inspector/Adviser RE to each of the schools during the spring 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. The Inspector/Adviser RE reminded members that the monitoring process was part of the self evaluation and supportive review agreed with schools before being submitted to SACRE, and schools had found it a positive experience and helpful process. With the exception of Blessed Edward Jones, Glan Clwyd and St. Brigid's, the Inspector/Adviser RE had now visited all of the county's secondary schools. Members were also advised that the new process had been discussed at the last NAPfRE meeting and the four authorities (Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham) following that practice had been complimented on the useful approach.

Members were advised that there was much to celebrate in terms of the good features in the schools of the Rhyl consortium, in particular:-

- planning and provision/delivery of collective worship
- policies and schemes of work being clear, comprehensive and helpful/teacher friendly documents
- monitoring processes established, with a clear structure as in other subjects/sharing of outcomes from it
- good range of activities and tasks evident in pupils' work
- links with the local faith community

Overall there were twenty eight good features listed across the six schools which were well worth celebrating and congratulating the schools on. In response to a member's question regarding the fire at Rhyl High School the Inspector/Adviser RE confirmed that the fire had started in the RE storeroom and had destroyed all of the RE materials but the school had been commended on their positive response after that experience and those resource materials had subsequently been replaced.

The Inspector/Adviser RE reported that, in this consortium, there was just one issue in areas for development that was shared across more than one school covering the assessment of pupil achievement and a recording process (5 schools). This was surprising given that the LEA/SACRE had published Guidelines on Assessment in RE and that ACCAC had published Optional Assessment Materials for RE. However, assessment in the foundation subjects had been a developing issue and over the years attention had been largely given to core subjects.

Members were pleased to see how well the process was working and the benefits to the schools concerned and the Chair conveyed special thanks to the Inspector/Adviser RE for all his hard work in that regard. Mrs. S. Harris also paid tribute to the work of the Inspector/Adviser RE on the achievements and ensuring the process was a success.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) *the report be received and noted, and*
- (b) *the Inspector/Adviser RE write to the schools inspected congratulating them on the positive features in their reports and offering any services in terms of addressing any shortcomings.*

6. ANALYSIS OF INSPECTION REPORTS ON SCHOOLS

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 2005 and March 2006 together with a brief background history of each school. Inspections had been carried out at Ysgol Bro Cinmeirch; Ysgol Tremeirchion; Ysgol Dyffryn Ial; Denbigh High School; Ysgol Carrog and Ysgol Hiraddug. Members were reminded that RE was not always included as a subject in the inspection process which was the case for three of the schools listed within the report.

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. It was disappointing to note that one school had a key issue for SMSC in the promotion of Cwricwlwm Cymreig in short term planning as much work had been carried out by the school but had not been shown as such in the planning process. However it was pleasing to note the 94 positive comments for SMSC across the six schools inspected. There were more comments for Ysgol Tremeirchion as that school had received both a Section 10 and Section 50 report. There were only 12 negative comments across just three schools with no particular issues for concern. With regard to Religious Education a key issue was only mentioned at one school to raise standards in Welsh in both key stages in RE at KS2 and the school had been addressing that issue in their action plan. All three schools were given a similar number of positive comments totaling 52 with just 5 negative comments across two schools which had been addressed in their action plan.

Members paid tribute to the schools' achievements and extended their congratulations to those schools on the positive findings. The Chair asked that, in accordance with the usual practice, the schools inspected be congratulated on their reports. She also thanked the Inspector/Adviser RE for compiling the report for SACRE which provided an overall picture on standards in schools.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) *the report be received and noted, and*

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

7. ACCAC (NOW DELLS) REPORTS

(a) Review of SACRE Reports 2002 – 2003 & 2003 – 2004

ACCAC's publication of the Review of SACRE Reports for 2002 – 2003 & 2003 – 2004 together with an Executive Summary and Responses to the Review had been previously circulated with the agenda. The Chair asked members to note that ACCAC had ceased to exist on 31st March 2006 and was now part of DELLS (Department of Education and Lifelong Learning and Skills).

The Inspector/Adviser RE indicated that Denbighshire had been mentioned several times throughout the report and reference had been made to the procedures put in place to continue the monitoring process of standards in RE as a result of Estyn's new inspection framework. He advised that there could be a perception that Denbighshire SACRE had not provided guidance on Collective Worship or training to SACRE members and school governors because there was no specific mention of those actions in Denbighshire SACRE's Annual Report. However reference had been made to Denbighshire's offer of support to schools following inspection and monitoring the provision of Collective Worship in schools. Similarly training for SACRE members and school governors had been undertaken in the past but not mentioned in the Annual Report.

The Inspector/Adviser RE took members through his responses to the issues raised in ACCAC's Review (previously circulated) and clarified particular issues as follows:-

- Given the changes with the advent of the Better Schools' Fund (BSF) and the lack of funding available for RE courses, the In-Service Training session had not been provided during the last two years. The reduction in such training had been mirrored across Wales. WASACRE had raised this issue on a number of occasions with Jayne Davidson, Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning. On a more positive note two courses were being offered for the autumn term 2006 under particular BSF criteria, and
- RE Resources and Teacher Training – SACRE had not formally advised schools on choice of teaching resources but advice was offered through INSET and the work of the Inspector/Adviser RE. Those issues had not been specifically referred to in previous annual reports. There was guidance on methods of teaching and learning through the Agreed Syllabus guidance.

In response to questions from Councillor G.J. Pickering, the Inspector/Adviser RE confirmed that most schools actioned the recommendations arising from the monitoring visits immediately or as soon as possible thereafter. He would begin revisiting schools during the autumn term 2007 when the previous monitoring reports

could be used as a starting point for those visits. In terms of the lack of funding for RE courses following changes to the funding provision, the Inspector/Adviser RE confirmed that in addition to the Welsh Assembly, concerns over that issue had also been raised with central government. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) had provided significant funding for the RE Council including the possibility of setting up a training commission specifically for RE. However, it was not yet clear whether Wales would benefit and any developments would be closely monitored.

Councillor G.J. Pickering referred to the Modernising Education Programme being undertaken by Cambridge Education Consultants and the work being carried out by PriceWaterhouseCoopers regarding schools' funding. Councillor Pickering suggested that some of the issues raised in the responses could be shared with those organisations and Denbighshire SACRE, as a statutory body for RE, should be involved within the consultation process currently being undertaken by Cambridge Education. The Inspector/Adviser RE agreed to contact those organisations directly in that regard.

(b) Annual SACRE Reports: Guidance and Focus

ACCAC's publication on Annual SACRE Reports: Guidance on focus and structure had been previously circulated with the agenda.

The Inspector/Adviser RE explained that the publication was a guide for SACREs in producing their annual reports. However he felt that following the guidance rigidly would lead to sterile reporting and did not reflect SACRE's approach to working in many instances. The Inspector/Adviser RE illustrated this point through various references within the document and SACRE's working practices. He also highlighted those matters not currently referred to in the SACRE Annual Report which would be included in the future such as advice given to the local education authority and reference to determinations even when no determinations had taken place.

The Inspector/Adviser RE apologised for the omission of page 8 of the document and verbally reported upon the missing content covering methods of teaching, the choice of teaching materials and teacher training which should be described within the SACRE Annual Report. He put a number of options to members to address those issues and ensure that the guidance would be closely followed including (1) considering extending SACRE's guidance document and formally requesting local authorities that with the review of the Agreed Syllabus additional materials on that process be published (2) whether to invite colleges to attend at a SACRE meeting to deliver a presentation on teacher training for RE (3) consultation with schools regarding the information received from colleges in that regard, and (4) the Inspector/Adviser RE being asked to visit schools to see the students concerned.

During consideration of the options members felt it would be beneficial for SACRE to be made aware of the work being carried out in colleges and it was agreed that the three main providers (NEWI, Bangor & Chester) be approached with a view to attending a future SACRE meeting to deliver a presentation on teacher training for RE.

The document also referred to advice given regarding governor training and members agreed to make a formal request to the local authority to include reference to SACRE and the Agreed Syllabus in the governor training programme. Councillor G.J. Pickering also suggested that reference be included on the Governors Wales website. Members then considered the merits of visiting schools but it was noted that the majority of members were already involved within schools to varying degrees either as teachers or governors. Mrs. J. Buckley Jones, Headteacher of Ysgol Gwaenynog, Denbigh indicated that a small group of members would be welcome to visit Ysgol Gwaenynog during the autumn term. Mr. P. Speirs advised that he had visited schools' open days which he had found very useful and he felt that all members should be encouraged to take up those opportunities.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) *NEWI, Bangor and Chester Colleges be invited to attend a future SACRE meeting to deliver a presentation on teacher training for RE;*
- (b) *a formal request be submitted to Denbighshire to include reference to SACRE and the Agreed Syllabus in its Governor Training Programme, and*
- (c) *a request be made for reference to SACREs and the Agreed Syllabuses on the Governors Wales website.*

8. WALES ASSOCIATION OF SACRES

(a) Report of the meeting held with Jayne Davidson, Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning on 17th May 2006

A report of the meeting had been previously circulated with the agenda detailing the following issues:-

- Report of WASACRE's activities for the year 2005-06 (led by Father Ieuan Wyn Jones)
- The brief, structure and responsibilities of DELLS (led by Mrs. Mairwenna Lloyd)
- A partnership between WASACRE and DELLS to enhance the National Curriculum Review as far as RE was concerned (led by Mr. Gavin Craigen)
- Future role of SACREs given potential collaboration between Unitary Authorities (led by Father Ieuan Wyn Jones)

The Chair and Inspector/Adviser RE provided a brief summary of the meeting and advised members that WASACRE and NAPFRE were the only subject associations to meet the Minister on an annual basis.

RESOLVED that the report of the meeting held with Jayne Davidson, Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning on 17th May 2006 be accepted.

(b) Verbal report from members attending the last meeting of WASACRE

The Chair apologised that, for various reasons, it had not been possible for Denbighshire SACRE to be represented at the WASACRE meeting held at Margam Park on 7th April 2006 and members would need to accept the minutes as a record of that meeting. With regard to the last meeting of WASACRE (AGM) held at County Hall, Caernarfon on 23rd June 2006, the Chair was pleased to report that the Inspector/Adviser RE had been elected Chair of WASACRE. The minutes of that meeting would be circulated when available. Rev. B.H. Jones advised that the AGM had been the first WASACRE meeting he had attended and he had thoroughly enjoyed the day, particularly the presentation on Thinking Skills Strategy which had involved members participation. Rev. Jones also took the opportunity to congratulate the Inspector/Adviser RE on his appointment as Chair of WASACRE.

RESOLVED that the verbal report from members attending the last meeting be accepted.

(c) Verbal report from representatives attending the Special Conference in Llandrindod Wells High School on 20th May 2006

The Chair and Inspector/Adviser RE verbally reported upon the Special Conference where Denbighshire had been particularly well represented with a number of teachers attending. Members were advised that Jane Davidson, Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning had been guest speaker on the day and members had considered the new review of the curriculum for RE. The Chair confirmed that a report would be published on the outcome of discussions which would be submitted to a future SACRE meeting for members' consideration.

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

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chair reminded members that the next meeting of the Denbighshire SACRE would be held at 10.00 a.m. on Wednesday 18th October 2006 in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Wynnstay Road, Ruthin.

At this juncture, Mr. P. Speirs, representing the Religious Society of Friends advised that he was attending his last SACRE meeting following his three year term and was moving on to other work in Quaker Education. Mr. Speirs thanked the Inspector/Adviser RE for his hard work and conveyed his best wishes to SACRE for the future.

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 12.20 p.m.