

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, County Hall, Ruthin on Wednesday 18th October, 2006 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT

Representing Denbighshire County Council

Councillors R E Barton (Observer), G C Evans, G A Jones, M M Jones, N H 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

T Bryer, H Ellis, R Elms, S Harris, M Hatch, Rev B H Jones, T Ap Sion and C Williams (observer).

ALSO PRESENT

Inspector/Adviser R E (G Craigen), Administration Services Manager (R Davies), Senior Education Primary (Primary) (G Luke Jones) and B Bowen (Inter Faith Council for Wales).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE WERE RECEIVED FROM

Councillor C L Hughes.

SILENT REFLECTION

The meeting began with a few minutes silent reflection.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair:

- (i) referred to a letter of resignation received from Mrs Mona Evans representing the Welsh Congregational Church. The Chair expressed her appreciation of Mrs Evans' contribution to the work of the Committee;
- (ii) congratulated Mrs Julia Buckley Jones on her appointment as Headteacher at Abergele Infants School;
- (iii) welcomed to the meeting the new URC representative, Mr Michael Hatch, and the new Society of Friends representative Mr Rodney Elms;
- (iv) welcomed Councillor N H Jones back to the meeting following his recent illness, and
- (v) reported that Kath Jones (Administrative Officer) had given birth to a little girl on August 2006.

514 URGENT MATTERS

There were no urgent items.

515 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 July, 2006 (previously circulated) as approved by County Council on 19 September 2006 were submitted.

Matters Arising:

- (i) Page 2 - Item no. 1 Minutes: Matters Arising - Monitoring and Supportive Review Report - the Inspector/Adviser RE reported that the Wrexham Diocese would now provide support and

advice to secondary/primary Roman Catholic Schools and he would not be required to attend those schools. He indicated that the Diocese would also provide monitoring reports for consideration by SACRE. The Chair indicated that the Committee had to accept the situation but expressed her disappointment with the decision.

- (ii) Page 4 - Item 5 - report on the provision of RE in the Rhyl Consortium of Schools - Mr M Hatch, the URC representative, reported that his grandson was now attending a school within the consortium and referred to the excellent progress he was making.
- (iii) Page 7 - Item 7 - Modernising Education Programme - the Inspector/Adviser RE indicated that he had not contacted Cambridge Education Consultants direct but he had spoken with the Council's Project Manager (Mr D Evans). The consultants had been aware of the role of SACRE but their brief was restricted to reorganisation/restructuring matters only. The Price Waterhouse Coopers review on schools funding would not cover schools delegated budgets and the issue raised by the Committee related to service training which was funded by the delegated budgets.
- (iv) Page 8 - Item 7 - resolution (a) - the Inspector/Adviser RE reported that he had visited Hope University as part of a joint delegation of SACRES from Denbighshire, Flintshire and Conwy and would be reporting on their visit later in the meeting.

RESOLVED that the minutes be received.

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

The Inspector/Adviser RE apologised for the absence of a representative from the school to deliver today's presentation. He indicated that he had not received a response from the school to the invitation but would pursue the matter further.

Councillor N H Jones requested clarity on the rules of entry to St Brigid's and the number admitted each year based on examination results, religion, etc.

The Senior Education Officer (Primary) indicated that the school was an aided school by Trust and governed their own admissions criteria which was published annually in the local press. He briefly referred to the criteria for admissions to the school which was mainly based on examination results but did include special needs, catholicism, etc. The Chair indicated that the school was not a catholic school but had a catholic ethos.

In response to a question from Rev B H Jones, the Inspector/Adviser RE referred to the new format for the front of reports which had been introduced following comments from the Councils Chief Executive regarding the need to improve the reporting mechanisms for SACRE, particularly relating to background, purpose of report, recommendations, etc.

The Chair felt that the standard of reporting to SACRE was excellent and suggested that the Chief Executive be invited to the next meeting to gain first hand knowledge of how the Committee operated.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) *the Inspector/Adviser RE be requested to pursue the invitation to St Brigid's to give a presentation to the Committee, and*
- (b) *the Chief Executive be invited to attend the next meeting of the Committee.*

517 DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2005/06

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting members to accept the draft of the Annual Report of SACRE for the previous academic year. He indicated that SACRE was statutorily required to produce an Annual Report and to lodge that report with the Department for Education Lifelong Learning and Skills (DELLS) by 31st December 2006 and to distribute it to all schools, colleges and other interested establishments.

The Inspector/Adviser RE indicated that the Committee had previously discussed the guidance from DELLS regarding the production of the Annual Report and there had been a number of changes in procedure. He referred to the executive summary and was pleased to report that the LEA had implemented the advice given.

The Inspector/Adviser RE took members through the Annual Report and particularly referred to the:- agreed syllabus; standards; methods of teaching; teaching resources; collective worship; lack of funding for training; the value of guidance and materials given to schools and other local and national matters.

In conclusion the Inspector/Adviser RE referred to the examination results attached to the report.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) *the Annual Report of Denbighshire's Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education for 2005/2006 be accepted, and*
- (b) *the Local Education Authority be requested to prepare and distribute the report.*

518 ANALYSIS OF INSPECTION REPORTS ON SCHOOLS

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting Members to analyse the comments made in recent Estyn Inspection Reports on three schools in the LEA and to note the positive and negative aspects in the SMSC provision and RE where it was part of the Inspection.

The Inspector/Adviser RE reported that the three schools inspected were Ysgol Dyffryn Iâl, Llanarmon, Ysgol Dinas Bran, Llangollen and Ysgol y Faenol, Bodelwyddan. He also referred to an additional Inspection Report issued in respect of Gwaenynog Infants School, Denbigh (circulated at the meeting).

With reference to the main report the Inspector/Adviser RE indicated that religious education was not a designated subject in any of the 3 schools. He referred to the analysis of the reports and indicated that 50 positive comments had been made compared with only 13 negative comments. The Inspector/Adviser RE felt that there were no real areas of concern and the schools would address the issues highlighted in the report.

Councillor R E Barton reported that Ysgol Dyffryn Iâl was in his ward and expressed surprise that the covering report did not indicate that it was a church school. He indicated that the church was actively involved in the school. The Inspector/Adviser RE reported that the standard of worship at the school was generally good but that the spiritual content of collective worship needed to be improved. He indicated that the S.50 report was very detailed.

In response to a question from Councillor G J Pickering the Senior Education Officer (Primary) reported that signage on schools sites was a matter for the school governors. A member indicated that the church involvement at Ysgol Dyffryn Iâl had been covered in the "Links with/involvement in the Local Community".

In response to a query from the Chair the Inspector/Adviser RE explained the difference between Section 10 and Section 50 reports.

The Inspector/Adviser RE referred to the Inspection report relating to Gwaenynog Infants School (circulated at the meeting) and the excellent comments received from the Inspectors. The school had received Grade 1 awards for both the Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development and Religious Education and there had been no reported shortcomings. The Inspector/Adviser RE congratulated the Headteacher on the Inspection results.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) *the analysis of the Inspection Reports be received and noted;*

- (b) *letters be sent to the schools inspected congratulating them on the good features and offering the services of the Inspector/Adviser RE or other officers of the LEA in meeting any shortcomings or key issues, and*
- (c) *the LEA be requested to distribute the above letters.*

519 PRESENTATION - GWAENYNOG INFANTS SCHOOL, DENBIGH

Mrs Julie Buckley Jones, Headteacher of Gwaenynog Infants School, Denbigh indicated that the school catered for 3 - 7 year olds and the children undertook a wide range of activities. The Headteacher circulated at the meeting examples of the children's work and indicated that they had also compiled a book of prayers following the disaster in New Orleans in 2005.

With the aid of a power point presentation the Headteacher reported how the pupils learnt about the Hindu Divali Festival and acted out the story of Rama and Sita. She indicated that the school had worked closely with Debra Pierce, a teacher at Denbigh High School and that pupils from that school attended Gwaenynog School each year in an act of collective worship and to take part in RE lessons.

The Headteacher reported that the children had made artefacts etc in their studies of the festival and referred to the excellent aids available to the school through the county library service. She felt that the children had developed key skills through their work on such festivals. In conclusion the Headteacher thanked the Committee for its support during her term of office and she also thanked Councillor M M Jones for her visit to the school.

In response to a question from Ms B Bowen the Headteacher indicated that the initiative to include the festival in its RE work came from within the school but advice was sought from the LEA and SACRE. She felt that acting out such events helped with the learning and development of the children.

The Chair thanked the Headteacher for the excellent presentation and congratulated the school on the results of the Inspection Report.

520 HOPE UNIVERSITY : ITT - RE DEPARTMENT

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted a verbal report upon the visit to Hope University, Liverpool by representatives of each of the three SACRE Committees. He indicated that the visit was very stimulating and a worthwhile experience. The group had met with the Professor of Christian Education who explained the structure of the courses available and discussions had taken place informally with students whilst sitting in on a Secondary RE Session. The Inspector/Adviser RE felt that the quality of ITT at the University was outstanding.

Reverend B Jones endorsed the above comments and referred to the enthusiasm of the students who were keen to market RE within the school curriculum. He felt that the methods of teaching were very practical with students working in groups sharing ideas. Reverend Jones referred to the resources available through the internet and following on from the discussions with the students felt that there was a wonderful sense of promise for the future.

The Inspector/Adviser RE indicated that a report on this visit was available to members of the Committee and referred to the discussions with the University regarding the development of links with SACREs. He suggested that a joint meeting of SACREs be held in the Spring 2007 which would coincide with the publication of the National Curriculum Review and so allow joint discussion of that document too. It was intended that a member of the RE Department at Hope would give a presentation to the joint meeting.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) *the observations of representatives who attended the college be received and noted;*
- (b) *the LEA be requested to invite the RE Department at the college to make a presentation to a further joint SACRE meeting with Flintshire and Conwy SACREs;*

- (c) *the LEA be requested to seek responses from schools receiving students from Hope College;*
- (ch) *the LEA be requested to arrange a visit to and from other ITT institutions for future meetings, and*
- (d) *the LEA be requested to consider a 'support network' for NQTs in RE or with RE responsibility.*

521 LETTER FROM PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN WALES RE: COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The Inspector/Adviser RE referred to a letter received from the Presbyterian Church in Wales (previously circulated) raising concerns regarding Collective Worship in schools. He indicated that a response to the letter had been submitted by the LEA but the only issue relating to SACRE was an appeal for it to take their monitoring role of school worship seriously; to ensure that the colleges in their area had appropriate training courses and that INSET courses were arranged.

The Inspector/Adviser RE reported that SACRE did take a responsible role through inspection reports and guidance given to schools. He felt that the funding for INSET training was the main problem and suggested that the Presbyterian Church should take the matter up with the Minister. He further reported that colleges operated under very strict criteria and there was a likely change in the law for post 16 collective worship with students having the right to withdraw from worship as opposed to the current position where parents took that decision.

In response to a question from Councillor G J Pickering the Inspector/Adviser RE reported that:-

- he would follow up the request for training for School Governors on school worship, and
- he was not aware of any schools in the three counties that did not provide meaningful collective worship.

In conclusion the Inspector/Adviser RE reported that he had in the past offered In-service training for schools but there had not been any significant response. He also indicated that WASACRE was to raise the issue of collective worship being included in the NPQH qualification with those responsible for its framework.

The Chair referred to the draft minutes of the WASACRE meeting previously circulated to Members and it was agreed that the minutes be accepted.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) *the letter from the Presbyterian Church of Wales concerning Collective Worship in schools be received, and*
- (b) *the LEA's response be noted.*

522 INTER FAITH COUNCIL FOR WALES PROJECT

Ms Bridget Bowen, Project Officer, addressed the Committee indicating that she was responsible to 15 members of the Inter Faith Council which was looking to sustain an inter-faith structure regime in Wales and create meaningful relationships with all faiths in the community. She congratulated the work being done in schools on diversity and part of her role was to attend SACRE/WASACRE meetings to ascertain what were the needs and what were the issues that faced people in the faith communities. The project aimed to encourage inter faith groups in all areas of Wales and look at the possibility of creating an inter faith forum for North Wales. The North Wales Forum would then elect a member to sit on the Faith Council to represent that region. Ms Bowen indicated that the project was being funded by the Home Office and she hoped to have the framework in place by March 2007.

The Chair welcomed the project and especially the proposed links with the schools. She indicated that there was a very strong national forum in England and thanked Ms Bowen for her presentation.

Ms Bowen referred to the youth project for Wales with students meeting each other at Atlantic College. She indicated that a web site was being developed and individual regions could link in to that web site. Councillor G A Jones referred to the need to advertise the project via Headteachers/Governors/religious leaders, etc. Councillor G J Pickering suggested that all information should be directed through the Council's Public Relations Manager.

The meeting concluded at 12:07 p.m.
