

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

Minutes of a meeting of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) held in the Council Chamber, Nant Hall Road, Prestatyn on Wednesday, 31st January 2006 at 2.00p.m.

PRESENT

Representing Denbighshire County Council

Councillor C.L. Hughes.

Representing the Denbighshire Teachers' Joint Negotiating Committee

M.B. Lloyd (Chair), M. Bradshaw and L. Linaker

Representing Religious Denominations

T. Bryer, H. Ellis, B.W. Evans, S. Harris and M. Hatch

ALSO PRESENT

I.R. Miller (Chief Executive), Inspector/Adviser R.E. (G. Craigen), Senior Education Officer (Primary) (G. Luke Jones) and Administration Officer (W.J. Harness) together with R. Ellis (St. Brigid's Primary School, Denbigh).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE WERE RECEIVED FROM

Councillors G.C. Evans, H. Evans, M.M. Jones, N. Hugh-Jones and G.J. Pickering together with Mrs. I. Barros-Curtis and Corporate Director: Lifelong Learning.

SILENT REFLECTION

The meeting began with a few minutes silent reflection.

WELCOME

The Chair extended a welcome to –

Mrs. B.W. Evans (representing the Union of Welsh Independents)

Ms. L. Linaker (representing Infant Headteachers)

Mr. I.R. Miller – Denbighshire Chief Executive – attending at the Committee's invitation

Ms. Rhian Ellis – attending to address the Committee in respect of the provision and delivery of RE within St. Brigid's Primary School, Denbigh

Mr. C. Halliday, Chair of the Standards Committee – attending as observer.

861 URGENT MATTERS

There were no urgent matters for consideration by the Committee.

862 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 18th October 2006 (previously circulated) as approved by the County Council on 23rd January 2007 were submitted.

Matters Arising –

Page 3 – Item No.4 – Draft Annual Report 2005/06 – the Inspector/Adviser RE reminded members that the Annual Report had been approved at the previous SACRE meeting and had now been printed and distributed as required. Copies were given to members present.

Page 6 – Item No.7 – Hope University: ITT – RE Department – the Inspector/Adviser RE referred to the resolutions passed in respect of this item and advised members that, as a follow up to the visit by SACRE members in October 2006, Hope University had been invited to address members on RE and IT at a joint meeting of all three SACRES to be held on 9th March 2007 when a presentation was also being given by Denize Morris, DELLS Officer on the Curriculum Review (RE). He said that questionnaires would shortly be sent out to obtain responses from those schools that had received students from Hope University and a visit was being arranged to Bangor University on which the Inspector/Adviser RE would report at the next SACRE meeting to be held in July 2007.

The Inspector/Adviser also informed members that he had been in discussion with Flintshire LEA in respect of an intranet service that they could host, access to which would be given to both Denbighshire and Conwy RE teachers to support each other. Relevant information would be made available for all three LEAs through this service for them to access and to download. The Inspector/Adviser added that he had another meeting on Friday of that week and would be reporting further thereafter. In response to the Chair, the Inspector/Adviser said that the discussions had considered a 'support network' not only for NQTs but also for teachers of RE.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of SACRE held on 3rd July 2006 be received.

863 PRESENTATION – RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN ST. BRIGID'S PRIMARY SCHOOL, DENBIGH

The Chair introduced and welcomed to the meeting Mrs. Rhian Ellis (RE teacher in the secondary department of St. Brigid's School) who was in attendance to give a presentation on the provision and delivery of Religious Education within the school.

Mrs. Rhian Ellis subsequently provided members with an overview of the ways in which RE was delivered at St. Brigids, the main points of which were –

- Currently the school had approximately 330 pupils in the secondary school. Pupils between the ages of 11 and 16 were all girls with both boys and girls attending in the 6th form.
- Pupils were frequently reminded of the importance of caring for one another both within the school community and in the wider community. Each class had the opportunity to choose their own form charity and to raise funds for it during the year. At the end of the year the principal of that organisation would receive a cheque and give a talk to the pupils.
- The school had a Roman Catholic ethos and celebrated mass regularly, usually with the Franciscan monks from St. David's Church, Pantasaph in attendance.
- 1st February was a special day for the school as it was St. Brigid's Day. On this day pupils and staff normally celebrated mass with each one lighting a special candle to represent the past and the future. This year was the 200th anniversary of the establishment of the school by the Brigidine Sisters. Two weeks ago one of the Sisters had travelled from Ireland to give the St. Brigid school pupils a talk on the religious background to the school and on what it was like to be part of the school community.
- In contrast to formal worship, home made assemblies were prepared by the pupils themselves every Friday morning. Those assemblies used music, drama and dance to convey religious and moral lessons.
- KS3 pupils received one and a half hours' tuition of RE every week - Mrs. Rhian Evans being ably assisted by two members of staff – Kate Harnsworth and Michelle Nicklin. Michelle had introduced into lessons some of the gospel choir music from the film 'Sister Act' and Kate had provided the pupils the opportunity to bake a 'bible cake'. Binding of the ingredients being the key to the baking as the pupils had to find bible references as ingredients for the cake.
- 30 new bibles had recently been received from the Parents Association
- Year 7 was currently working on producing a brochure on the Holy Land.

- Year 9 was focusing on Martin Luther King.
- At KS4 all pupils were entered for the GCSE examination as RE was a core subject at St. Brigid's. Pupils were also entered for the short course at the end of year 10 and then sat a further short course in order to ensure that at the end of year 11 they could attain a full course certificate.
- There were pupils with a range of ability attending the school, including those with special needs.
- RE made an important contribution to the spiritual and moral side of the school and a significant contribution to the academic development of the pupils. RE results were usually the best sets of results in the school. Two years ago a record number of pupils had achieved A* in the subject. Out of 49 pupils, 21 had achieved A*.
- RS also attracted a large number of pupils at AS and A level. Many A level students had gone on to study the subject at university or to study law. One pupil who had achieved an A grade in RS last year had been accepted at Oxford. Some A level students had, in fact, gained 100% in some of their RS modules.

Mrs. Ellis concluded by extending her thanks to all those who had been so supportive in making RE what it was today.

In response to a member's question, Mrs. Ellis advised that different criteria existed for those Roman Catholic pupils who had priority in respect of entering the senior section of the school. However, pupils from other denominations were also accepted.

Mrs. Ellis further advised that when pupils were accepted at the school they had to agree to conform to the requirements of the school and one of those requirements was to attend mass.

The Chair subsequently thanked Mrs. Rhian Ellis for her informative and interesting presentation which had provided members with an insight into the excellent work undertaken in St. Brigid's in delivering R E. She added that a letter of thanks would be sent to the headteacher and to the school officers.

RESOLVED that the presentation on RE in St. Brigid's School, Denbigh be received and noted and a letter of thanks be sent directly to the Headteacher and Governing Body of the school on behalf of SACRE.

864 ANALYSIS OF ESTYN INSPECTION REPORTS

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted a report (previously circulated) that requested members to analyse the comments made in recent Inspection Reports on 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 reported that the three schools inspected were Blessed Edward Jones R.C., Rhyl, Ysgol Llywelyn, Rhyl and Ysgol Clocaenog.

A further report in respect of Ysgol Mair R.C., Rhyl was tabled on the day. The Inspector/Adviser explained that consideration of this report should have been given at the last SACRE meeting as a part of the monitoring programme that SACRE had undertaken on schools of the Blessed Edward Jones consortium. However, at that time discussions were ongoing as to whose role it was to support RE in Roman Catholic schools. A decision had now been made by the Diocese that in future this role should not be fulfilled by local authorities. The Inspector/Adviser added that he had received the monitoring report on Ysgol Mair R.C. School earlier that week and had felt that members would wish to consider it.

The Inspector/Adviser subsequently provided members with an overview of the type of school inspections that were carried out.

Insofar as Blessed Edward Jones R.C. School, Rhyl was concerned, a key issue following the inspection had been the placing of the school 'in special measures'.

Out of the 62 positive comments made in respect of SMSC development at the three schools, 24 of those had been about Blessed Edward Jones R.C. School.

The Inspector/Adviser referred to the fact that some outstanding features had been highlighted in the main report. Reference had been made to Ysgol Clocaenog in respect of the work of the school council, and some outstanding spiritual and moral features had been referred to at Ysgol Llywelyn.

AS to the negative comments made by the Inspectors, 15 had been in respect of Blessed Edward Jones R.C. School and 1 in respect of Ysgol Llywelyn. As a result of Blessed Edward Jones R.C. School having been placed 'in special measures', a raft of activities were currently being carried out in order to address the identified issues. The Inspector/Adviser informed members that a meeting was currently taking place between the LEA and Diocesan officers in respect of RE and SMSC development issues at the school with which the Inspector/Adviser would not be involved as a result of the decision by the Diocese.

Insofar as RE was concerned, 17 positive comments had been made – 5 of which were attributed to Blessed Edward Jones R.C. School, 11 to Ysgol Clocaenog and 1 to Ysgol Llywelyn.

On the other hand, 26 negative comments had been made, all of which had related to Blessed Edward Jones R.C. School.

Prior to receiving the report on the inspection of Ysgol Mair R.C., Rhyl the Chair thanked the Inspector/Adviser not only for the work undertaken in respect of the report but also for that undertaken with the Authority's schools.

Members agreed that letters of congratulations be sent to both Ysgol Llywelyn, Rhyl and to Ysgol Clocaenog.

In response to the comments made by the Chief Executive, members agreed that rather than send the usual letter of congratulations to Blessed Edward Jones R.C. School, in view of the fact that the school had been placed 'in special measures' following their inspection, that a letter of encouragement be sent to the School instead.

The Inspector/Adviser reminded members that Ysgol Mair was one of the 'feeder' schools for Blessed Edward Jones R.C. School. The report had been prepared by the Diocese and would normally have formed part of the Committee's monitoring of the consortium. The results of the monitoring report would be included in the statistics within SACRE's Annual Report for 2007. The United Reform Church representative informed members that he had been a part of the team who had inspected Ysgol Mair in 1997 and said that he could not see that the school was any different ten years later.

As the Local Authority no longer had any advisory links with Roman Catholic schools, the Inspector/Adviser suggested that it would be appropriate to send a letter to Ysgol Mair, with a copy to the Diocese, to advise that SACRE had received the report on their inspection, had noted the good features in the school and encouraged them in the work that they were doing to take things forward.

RESOLVED that –

- (a) *the analysis of the Inspection Reports be received and noted;*
- (b) *letters be sent to Ysgol Llywelyn and Ysgol Clocaenog, congratulating them on the good features identified in the inspection and offering the services of the Inspector/Adviser RE or other officers of the LEA in meeting shortcomings or key issues;*
- (c) *a letter of encouragement be sent to Blessed Edward Jones R.C. School in response to the school having been placed 'in special measures' following their inspection;*

- (ch) a letter be sent to Ysgol Mair, with a copy to the Diocese, advising them that SACRE had received the report on their inspection, had noted the good features in the school and encouraging them in the work that they were doing to take things forward; and
- (d) the LEA be requested to distribute the above letters.

865 EXAMINATION RESULTS 2006

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted a report (previously circulated) that sought members' analysis of the results for the different examinations, their consideration of the implications and an indication of any support or actions that may be necessary.

The Inspector/Adviser subsequently took members through the results in detail and verbally reported on comparisons between the 2006 and 2005 examination results. He particularly referred to the following points –

- GCSE Results All – Religious Studies: Full Course 2006 – overall there had been an improvement of 7% but the results were 3% lower than the national average for those achieving A* - C grades;
- GCSE Results Boys – Religious Studies: Full Course 2006 – there had been an improvement of 10.8% overall with three schools attaining results that were above the national average for those achieving A* - C grades;
- GCSE Results Girls – Religious Studies: Full Course 2006 – there had been an overall improvement of 5.6% on 2005 results with two schools attaining results that were above the national average for those achieving A* - C grades;
- GCSE Results All – Religious Studies: Short Course 2006 – overall there had been a drop of 6.2% on 2005 results with only two schools achieving results that were above the national average for those attaining A* - C grades;
- GCSE Results Boys – Religious Studies: Short Course 2006 – there had been a drop of 5.8% overall on 2005 results with only one school achieving results that were above the national average for those attaining A* - C results;
- GCSE Results Girls – Religious Studies: Short Course 2006 – similarly for the girls there had been a drop in the 2006 A* - C results, this time of 11.6%. Three schools had attained results above the national average.
- GCSE Religious Studies – Advanced Level – All – there had been a drop of 5.2% overall on 2005 results. Only one school had attained results above the national average.

In respect of the above results, the Inspector/Adviser reminded members that in some cases only a small number of pupils were sitting those examinations in some of the Authority's schools.

- Religious Studies – Entry level (formerly COEA) – All – the Inspector/Adviser drew members' attention to an error within this table whereby the results shown for Rhyl should, in fact, have been attributed to Blessed Edward Jones R.C. School, i.e. 2006 A* - C = 92.9%, 2005 A* - C = 84%, Difference = +8.9%, +/- Nat 2006 = -2.0%.

Referring to the 5 year results, comparison to the national average, table, the Inspector/Adviser suggested that for those schools where results had improved on the previous year and were above the national average (Prestatyn and St. Brigid's), letters of congratulations should be sent.

He also suggested that where schools had under performed and were below the national average for more than 3 - 4 years, letters should also be sent from SACRE asking what actions those schools were taking and offering his assistance to help bring about improvements (Dinas Bran for Full Course, Short Course and A-Level, Brynhyfryd for A-Level and Rhyl for Short Course).

The Chief Executive commented that the results for the GCSEs were encouraging and had shown some overall improvements. He added that it was important to highlight and to commend the performance of Prestatyn High in view of the high number of entrants who had achieved good results, well above the national average.

The Chair subsequently extended congratulations to the pupils and staff for the excellent work done in respect of the above results.

RESOLVED that –

- (a) *the statistical data and summary be received;*
- (b) *letters of congratulation should be sent to the schools where results were improved on the previous year and were above the National Averages;*
- (c) *letters be sent to those schools where results had been below the National Averages for three or more years in order to ask what actions were being taken and to offer the services of the Inspector/Adviser in helping to bring about improvements; and*
- (ch) *to request the LEA to distribute the above letters.*

866 WASACRE – (A) SPECIAL CONFERENCE REPORT

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted the Report on the Special Conference (previously circulated) that had been held at Llandrindod High School on 20th May 2006. He advised members that this had been a joint conference between WASACRE (Wales Association of SACREs) and DELLS (Department of Lifelong Learning and Skills) to discuss the future of Religious Education in Wales at which the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning had given a very positive Key Note speech.

The Inspector/Adviser informed members that during group discussions on the day there had been overall support for the Framework and the direction in which the teaching of Religious Education was going. He subsequently referred to the recommendations arrived at on the day to WASACRE, SACREs, DELLS and to LEAs.

The Chair then sought the Committee's approval to the recommendations made to SACREs. Having regard to the request to review the representation of faith groups on SACRE, as there was a community of Muslims living within the area, it was suggested that a member of that community be invited to observe a meeting of the Denbighshire SACRE in order to have an insight to the work undertaken by SACRE. If it was then found to be of mutual benefit to both Denbighshire SACRE and the Muslims, that the question of full membership of SACRE could be explored further.

RESOLVED that –

- (a) *the report of the Special Conference be accepted;*
- (b) *the following recommendations made to SACREs at the Special Conference be implemented:-*
 - *To work together with other SACREs, locally and through WASACRE, in the development of good RE in Wales and in responding to the Framework for RE developed by DELLS*
 - *To respond to the consultation on the new Framework and to share their responses with WASACRE*
 - *To request their LEAs to ensure adequate funding for the revisions to Agreed Syllabuses in the light of the DELLS Framework and the development of supporting material*
 - *To request their LEAs to fund teacher representation on and attendance at SACRE meetings and WASACRE meetings*

- *To review the representation of faith groups on SACRE and ensure they reflected the changes in society and religious nature of the locality and of society; and*
- (c) *That a member of the Muslim community, resident in the Local Authority's area, be invited to observe a meeting of the Denbighshire SACRE in order to have an insight to the work undertaken by SACRE. If it was then found to be of mutual benefit to both Denbighshire SACRE and to the Muslims, that the question of full membership of SACRE be explored further.*

(B) WASACRE – MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION HELD ON 17TH NOVEMBER 2006

The Chair informed the Committee that she, Councillor M.M. Jones and Rev. B.H. Jones had attended the WASACRE meeting held on 17th November 2006. Unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances, they had not arrived until Item 7 – NAPfRE Presentation: NGfL project through GTCW Funding. The Inspector/Adviser RE said that in Denbighshire funding had been obtained through links with the RE Movement in Wales to make copies of all materials developed during the project. The materials had been translated and would be sent out to all schools on compact disc later this term.

The Chair informed the Committee that neither she nor Councillor M.M. Jones would be able to attend the WASACRE meeting in Haverfordwest on 23rd March next. In response to her request for substitute members to attend the meeting in their stead, Mrs. S. Harris indicated that she may well be able to attend. The Inspector/Adviser RE suggested that Rev. B.H. Jones may also be able to attend. It was agreed that the Inspector/Adviser would liaise with both Mrs. Harris and Rev. Jones.

RESOLVED that –

- (a) *the draft minutes of the meeting of WASACRE held on 17th November 2006 be accepted; and*
- (b) *the observations of the representatives attending the meeting also be accepted.*

867 DELLS: SCHOOL CURRICULUM REVIEW (A) FOUNDATION PHASE FRAMEWORK 3 – 7

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted an excerpt of the Consultation Framework (previously circulated) that enabled members to see the changes taking place and to evaluate their response in terms of the provision of RE within the Foundation Phase.

The Inspector/Adviser RE said that currently delivery of the revised RE curriculum within the Foundation Phase was being piloted in some schools, including schools in Denbighshire. He added that WASACRE had identified areas within the revised Framework that they did not agree to and had felt that delivery of RE was not as they desired.

Following consideration of excerpts of the Consultation Framework, it was –

RESOLVED –

- (a) *that the excerpts of the Consultation Framework be accepted; and*
- (b) *to respond to the consultation by requesting (i) that the People Beliefs and Questions section of the Draft Framework be reinstated so as to strengthen the place of RE within the 5 - 7 ages (which was a statutory requirement); (ii) that a non-statutory entitlement for children aged 3 – 4 based around People Beliefs and Questions be included, so as to provide a basis for the statutory provision from age 5; and (iii) that reference to Religious Education in the Background section be strengthened, and included in the Areas for Learning, and Knowledge and Understanding of the World pages, as well as referencing the National Exemplar Framework for RE and local Agreed Syllabuses.*

868 DELLS: SCHOOL CURRICULUM REVIEW (B) RE EXEMPLAR FRAMEWORK 3 – 19

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted the Consultation Framework (previously circulated) that enabled members to see the changes taking place and to evaluate their response in terms of the provision of RE and the statutory requirement to review the Agreed Syllabus.

The Inspector/Adviser RE informed members that a joint meeting of Denbighshire, Flintshire and Conwy SACREs had been arranged for the 9th March 2007 in order to examine the nature and the format of the proposed changes to the delivery of RE. He added that Denise Morris from DELLS had been invited to attend this joint meeting. The purpose of including the item on the agenda for today's meeting was to enable members to give broad consideration to the Consultation Framework.

The Inspector/Adviser RE said that the proposed changes in the curriculum were such that he did not see that it would be a problem for Denbighshire schools to adopt, apart from addressing how topics would be referenced. He added that he hoped agreement could be obtained across Wales both for the adoption of the document and for the preparation of support materials.

In conclusion the Inspector/Adviser RE informed the Committee that Denbighshire County Council would be hosting the joint meeting on the 9th March 2007.

Senior Education Officer (Primary) (G. Luke Jones) subsequently referred to the excellent work undertaken by the Inspector/Adviser RE in Denbighshire schools. He added that the new RE curriculum would have a major impact on the delivery of RE in schools and asked members to give very serious consideration to their response to the National Exemplar Framework.

The Inspector/Adviser RE advised members that there would also be a national consultation on the proposed new RE curriculum and that Denbighshire SACREs nominated representatives were Mrs. Sylvia Harris and Councillor M.M. Jones; DELLS would be choosing names from those nominated to represent all committees within SACREs.

RESOLVED –

- (a) *that the National Exemplar Framework be accepted;*
- (b) *to support the Joint SACREs meeting on 9th March, 2007 in order to finally determine the response to the National Exemplar Framework in the light of responses from schools;*
- (c) *to agree in principle to adopting the 'Framework' as the main basis of the revised Agreed Syllabus for RE in Denbighshire (subject to its revision after consultation and to advice and guidance from a working group and other SACREs);*
- (ch) *to communicate this resolution to WASACRE; and*
- (d) *to request the LEA to set up a working group of teachers and SACRE members to prepare a revised Agreed Syllabus (in partnership with other local SACREs) to be presented to an Agreed Syllabus Conference and to provide supportive and interpretive materials and guidance documents (in partnership with other SACREs in Wales).*

The next meeting of the Denbighshire SACRE was scheduled for 3rd July 2007.

The meeting concluded at 3.50p.m.
