

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, Nant Hall Road, Prestatyn on Wednesday, 18th June 2008 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT

Representing Denbighshire County Council

Councillors J.A. Davies, C. Hughes, G.A. Jones and M.M. Jones

Representing the Denbighshire Teachers' Joint Negotiating Committee

I. Barros-Curtis, R. Hayward, L. Linaker and M.B. Lloyd

Representing Religious Denominations

H. Ellis, R. Elms, B. Wyn Evans, S. Harris, M. Hatch and M. Ludenbach

Co-opted Members

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

ALSO PRESENT

Inspector/Adviser RE (G. Craigen) and Administration Officer (K.E. Jones)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE WERE RECEIVED FROM

M. Bradshaw, C. Harmsworth, Rev. B.H. Jones (Chair) together with Councillors G.C. Evans and J. Yorke

Apologies had also been received from the Interim Corporate Director Lifelong Learning.

APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR FOR THE MEETING

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted apologies for absence from the Chair, Reverend B.H. Jones and in the absence of a Vice-Chair members decided to appoint a Chairperson for the meeting. Accordingly it was:-

RESOLVED that *Mrs. M.B. Lloyd be appointed Chair for the meeting.*

SILENT REFLECTION

The meeting began with a few minutes silent reflection.

WELCOME

The Chair welcomed members and officers to the meeting and a special welcome was extended to Councillors J.A. Davies and C. Hughes who were attending their first SACRE meeting. She also took the opportunity to congratulate Ms. Mary Ludenbach on her formal appointment as Head of Religious Education at Blessed Edward Jones Catholic High School in Rhyl. Congratulations were also conveyed to Councillor M.M. Jones on her appointment as Lead Cabinet Member for Children's Services.

67 URGENT MATTERS

There were no urgent matters for consideration by the committee.

68 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

The Chair explained that the former Vice Chair, Councillor G.J. Pickering had not been re-elected during May's county council elections. Accordingly it was necessary to appoint a replacement for 2008-09 and the Chair invited nominations from the Councillor representatives. Councillor C. Hughes proposed, seconded by Councillor J.A. Davies that Councillor M.M. Jones be appointed Vice Chair of Denbighshire SACRE. There being no further nominations and upon being put to the vote it was:-

RESOLVED that Councillor M.M. Jones be appointed Vice Chair of Denbighshire SACRE for 2008-09.

Councillor M.M. Jones paid tribute to the work carried out by the former Vice-Chair and it was agreed that a letter of thanks be sent to him on behalf of the Denbighshire SACRE.

69 MINUTES

(a) Denbighshire SACRE – 4th February 2008

The minutes of the meeting held on 4th February 2008 (previously circulated) were submitted.

Matters Arising -

Page 5 – Item No. 4: Examination Results 2007 – The Inspector/Adviser RE confirmed that he had met with the Head of School Improvement, Mr. Gareth Wyn Jones to discuss areas of poor performance in RE. Whilst the Head of School Improvement was addressing performance issues generally within schools, the focus for advisory work in the next academic year was in terms of secondary schools, particularly Key Stage 4. Accordingly the Inspector/Adviser RE had been asked to specifically focus his work in secondary schools during the next academic year. As a consequence the time available for working with and supporting primary schools would be reduced. Whilst appreciating the need to concentrate on pupils performance in secondary schools, members stressed that primary schools should not be neglected as a result, particularly in view of the development of the foundation phase and adjustment period for primary schools. Members also expressed disappointment that no representative from the local education authority had been present at today's meeting or SACRE's last meeting and hoped that the authority would be represented at future meetings. In response to members' questions and concerns, the Inspector/Adviser RE confirmed that INSET days had been scheduled for the primary school sector and if a particular request for support from a primary school was received it would need to be addressed.

With regard to the feasibility of the proposal for a Pupil Examination Strategy Day, the Head of School Improvement felt that it would be a worthwhile event and was prepared to contribute financially if necessary. Feedback on the proposal had also been sought from schools and approximately half of all schools had responded and those replies had been positive. The intention was to chase up the outstanding responses shortly.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 4th February 2008 be received and approved as a correct record.

(b) Denbighshire Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) – 4th February 2008

The minutes of the meeting held on 4th February 2008 (previously circulated) were submitted.

Matters Arising -

The Inspector/Adviser RE reported that the Agreed Syllabus had now been printed bilingually with logos of the three authorities as previously agreed. The agreed amendments had been inserted into the front of the document in the same style as the original. The Agreed Syllabus would be sent to Denbighshire's schools that week together with a comprehensive guide to RE containing plenty of advice and support to schools and guidance for their schemes of work. Unfortunately problems encountered with the printing and translation process had resulted in a delay in circulating the Welsh version which would hopefully be dispatched towards the end of next week. Copies of the document

would shortly be sent to SACRE members and were available for members to peruse following today's meeting.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the ASC meeting held on 4th February 2008 be received and approved as a correct record.

At this juncture the Chair welcomed Reverend C. Southerton and his colleague, a Roman Catholic Priest from Pakistan who had called in to observe part of the meeting. Reverend Southerton thanked the Council for their warm welcome and paid tribute to the work of his guest in bringing hope and education to disadvantaged remote areas of Pakistan.

70 ANALYSIS OF INSPECTION REPORTS ON SCHOOLS

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted a report (previously circulated) analysing the results of the recent inspections of two schools between December 2007 and February 2008 in the provision of Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development (SMSC), and Religious Education where it was part of the inspection. Inspections had been carried out at Ysgol Trefnant and Ysgol Babanod Bodnant, Prestatyn and a brief history of each school had been incorporated into 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. He confirmed that Religious Education had not been inspected by Estyn at either of the two schools under the current inspection arrangements and references to aspects of SMSC and Key Question 3 had been included within the report. It was pleasing to note the 39 positive comments for SMSC between the two schools with only 4 negative comments.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the report be received and noted;
- (b) the Inspector/Adviser RE write 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 terms of addressing any shortcomings or key issues, and
- (c) the Local Education Authority be requested to distribute the above letters.

71 MONITORING REPORTS

(a) Monitoring and Supportive Review Report on Glan Clwyd High School Consortium of Schools

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted a report (previously circulated) regarding the provision of Religious Education in the Glan Clwyd Consortium of Schools which included Ysgol y Llys, Ysgol Twm o'r Nant and Ysgol Dewi Sant.

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. The Inspector/Adviser RE summarised the good features, shortcomings and recommendations for each school detailed within the report and provided a general summary of the whole consortium. Members were asked to note that the monitoring visit for Glan Clwyd High School would be carried out by an Adviser from Cynnal and a report on the visit would be submitted to SACRE once it had been received.

The Inspector/Adviser RE drew members' attention to the overall comments which featured three statements of shared good practice across two schools with only two areas for development common to two schools. There were three recommendations common to two schools or more including maintaining existing good practice. It had not been possible to make a judgement during the visits but recent inspection reports in two schools had judged standards in both Key Stages as Grade 2. In one school standards were judged as Good at the Inspection in 2003 in both Key Stages and the subject co-ordinator had felt that standards were being maintained.

Members took the opportunity to raise questions with the Inspector/Adviser RE regarding his visits and he explained his role as a 'critical friend' assessing the schools self evaluation process. He was pleased to report that he had never had a negative experience in a Denbighshire school and both himself and schools felt that the visits were positive and worthwhile. Reports were agreed with schools and also included reference to discussions and lessons observations which were not reported in a public meeting due to the professional nature of the information concerned.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) *the report be received and noted;*
- (b) *letters be sent to the schools concerned with a copy of the full report as presented to SACRE congratulating them on the good features and offering the services of the Inspector/Adviser RE in terms of addressing any shortcomings, and*
- (c) *the Local Education Authority be requested to distribute the above letters.*

(b) Provision of Religious Education: Outstanding Schools

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted a report (previously circulated) on the position of RE and collective worship in schools that were not visited as part of their consortium which included Ysgol Bryn Clwyd, Llandyrnog; Ysgol Trefnant; Ysgol Bro Elwern, Gweddellwern; Ysgol Pentrecelyn; Ysgol Pant Pastynog; Ysgol Rhewl and Ysgol Dyffryn Ial.

Following visits by the Inspector/Adviser RE to each of the schools during the spring term, a report of the issues and outcomes had been agreed. The Inspector/Adviser RE summarised the good features, areas for development and recommendations for each school detailed within the report and provided a general summary of the whole group of these schools. Members' attention was drawn to the overall comments with five good features listed which were common to four schools with other good features listed for individual schools. In terms of areas for development there were two listed across two schools with a number of areas of development identified for individual schools. It was interesting to note that the individual areas for development had already been identified by schools via their self evaluation process confirmed by the Inspector/Adviser RE's visits which highlighted that the monitoring process was working effectively with schools also making the right judgements on what actions were required. With regard to standards one school had been judged Grade 2; three schools had been judged Grade 3 with the schools feeling that they were now moving towards Grade 2; at the last inspection one school had been judged satisfactory and the school was now confident that given the changes implemented standards would be judged as Grade 2. The Inspector/Adviser RE felt encouraged by the work being carried out at those schools.

In response to a question from the Chair the Inspector/Adviser RE confirmed that, subject to the two Roman Catholic Schools as referred to in the next report on today's agenda, monitoring visits of all Denbighshire's schools had now been concluded. Councillor M.M. Jones highlighted the hard work undertaken by the Inspector/Adviser RE in undertaking the schools monitoring visits which had proved a valuable and worthwhile experience and queried future monitoring processes in RE and collective worship in schools. The Inspector/Adviser RE confirmed that his focus over the next academic year would be in secondary schools. The whole issue of monitoring was being considered by the Head of School Improvement but the main focus overall would be on Key Stage 4 and secondary schools. The Inspector/Adviser RE felt that it may be appropriate to consider different approaches over the next twelve months and suggested that he could revisit individual school reports and write to the schools concerned to ascertain how they were addressing any shortcomings or issues of concern highlighted within their reports. If issues were still outstanding or new areas identified which required assistance or support then they could be dealt with. This approach would ensure future targeting of school improvements in relation to the monitoring reports without the need for a full monitoring visit. Members agreed that it was important that a new mechanism for targeting school improvements be developed.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) *the report be received and noted;*
- (b) *letters be sent to the schools concerned with a copy of the full report as presented to SACRE congratulating them on the good features and offering the services of the Inspector/Adviser RE in terms of addressing any shortcomings, and*
- (c) *the Local Education Authority be requested to distribute the above letters.*

(c) Provision of Religious Education: Summary of Monitoring Visits

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted a report (previously circulated) summarising the monitoring visits to schools to date. Members were reminded that, as part of its monitoring role, SACRE received reports on visits to schools by the Inspector/Adviser RE and the summary of those for the consortium. That process had been ongoing since 2004 and the report provided a summary of all the monitoring visits to date which covered all schools apart from two.

Members were advised that 43 of the 62 schools in Denbighshire (with the exception of St. Brigid's and Blessed Edward Jones Catholic High School consortiums) were visited during the period Autumn 2004 – Spring 2008 and the cumulative issues arising were shown in the four aspects that had appeared in the consortium reports as presented to SACRE. SACRE's attention was drawn to the good features, areas for development, recommendations and standards as detailed within the report.

The Inspector/Adviser RE highlighted that many good features had been identified as common across a large number of schools with many identified in individual schools which showed that much good work was being carried out within schools. Only one area for development had been identified in a number of schools concerning assessment procedures and recording of achievement. However, there was no statutory requirement to record achievement in RE. The Inspector/Adviser RE had discussed the use of Optional Assessment Materials (OAM) with schools which were now in use in many schools. Other common areas for development were across a smaller number of schools. It was heartening to note that over half of schools had been recommended to maintain the good practice in RE and/or collective worship. There were many individual recommendations for individual schools. Where standards had been judged across 31 schools the following results had been provided:-

- Grade 1 – 16% (5 schools)
- Grade 2 – 54% (17 schools)
- Grade 3 – 25% (8 schools)
- Grade 4 – 5% (1 school)

The standards showed that 95% had achieved Grade 3 (good features outweigh shortcomings) and above. Whilst appreciating that there were issues to be addressed the standards also highlighted the good work being carried out in schools.

In terms of assessment, advice and support had been made available through the Agreed Syllabus and the intention was to reproduce Optional Assessment Materials to ensure that schools could make use of them. It had also been suggested that recording of achievement could be carried out against the Agreed Syllabus and reference within the new syllabus had been included that SACRE could request schools to report on attainment levels at the end of each Key Stage. Members were also advised that DCELLS were in the process of producing guidance and resources which would be useful to schools. To enable schools to familiarise themselves with the new Agreed Syllabus and forthcoming guidance the Inspector/Adviser RE suggested that requests from SACRE for reports on attainment levels be delayed by a year. Members agreed with that suggestion.

During consideration of the report Councillor G.A. Jones paid tribute to the Inspector/Adviser RE's hard work and proposed that a formal letter of thanks be sent to him on behalf of SACRE. Councillor Jones also proposed that letters of congratulation be sent to the five schools who had achieved Grade 1 in their inspections.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) *the report be received and noted;*
- (b) *letters of congratulation be sent to those schools achieving Grade 1 in their inspections, and*
- (c) *a letter of thanks be sent to the Inspector/Adviser RE in recognition of the valuable work he had undertaken.*

72 WALES ASSOCIATION OF SACRES

(a) Minutes of the last WASACRE meeting held in Carmarthen on 14th March 2008

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted the minutes of the WASACRE meeting held in Carmarthen on 14th March 2008 (previously circulated) for members' information. He referred to the presentation received from Christian Education on 'Tackling Tough Issues Project' which had been previously shared with members. The Chair reminded members of the practice for the Chair, Vice Chair and former Chair of SACRE to attend as representatives at WASACRE meetings in addition to the Adviser.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of WASACRE on 14th March 2008 be received and noted.

(b) Nominations for the Executive Committee and proposed revisions to the Constitution

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted details of the nominations for the Executive Committee together with proposed revisions to the Constitution (previously circulated) for members' consideration.

The Inspector/Adviser RE explained that the next meeting of WASACRE was the AGM when nominations to the Executive Committee would be considered. He sought members' views on the election of particular nominations and authorisation of the WASARE delegates in the matter of voting. Members were advised that only one nomination had been received for Vice-Chair of WASACRE from Councillor Michael Gray, Caerphilly SACRE. However, there were three nominations for two positions on the Executive Committee. During consideration of the nominees members felt that Vicky Thomas had a huge amount of proven experience and that Eirian Pierce, as a practicing teacher, would also prove valuable on the Executive Committee. Accordingly it was proposed and seconded that the nominees Vicky Thomas and Eirian Pierce be Denbighshire SACRE's choice for election to the Executive Committee.

The Inspector/Adviser RE also reported upon the proposed revisions to the Constitution concerning the composition of the Executive Committee and clarification involving persons invited to a meeting of the Executive Committee by the Chairperson. Members were willing for the constitutional amendments to be approved. Councillor G.A. Jones noted that, at a meeting of the Association, any members of the SACRE whose LEA or Council was hosting the meeting, would be entitled to attend the meeting as observers. Councillor Jones felt that as SACRE members only had the opportunity to attend a meeting every six years (when authorities were hosting a meeting) an invitation could also be extended to the SACRE members of its neighbouring authorities. After further discussion it was agreed that Denbighshire SACRE's delegates raise this suggestion in the most appropriate manner at the AGM.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) *SACRE's delegates to WASACRE be authorised to vote for the election of Vicky Thomas and Eirian Pierce to the Executive Committee;*
- (b) *the proposed revisions to the WASACRE Constitution be supported, and*
- (c) *SACRE's delegates be asked to raise, at the AGM, the issue of SACRE members of neighbouring authorities hosting WASACRE meetings being invited to attend.*

(c) Letters received from the Association

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted letters received from the Association concerning attendance at meetings and in making links with 14 – 19 Learning Networks (copies enclosed).

The Inspector/Adviser RE reported that, whilst Denbighshire was always well represented at WASACRE meetings, the same could not be said about other authorities and poor attendance had been raised as an issue at the last meeting. Accordingly WASACRE had agreed to write to all SACREs and ask for a real effort to be made to send representatives to the meetings and that the letter be drawn to the attention of SACRE members. At the same meeting WASACRE had also discussed RE in the 14 – 19 Curriculum and asked that a letter be sent to SACREs with a letter that may be sent onto their local 14 – 19 Network Co-ordinator. WASACRE members felt that a letter from WASACRE to 14 – 19 Network Co-ordinators encouraging dialogue and relationship between themselves and SACREs would be pertinent given the responsibility for the 14 – 19 Networks in terms of the school curriculum and the statutory responsibility of the SACREs for the monitoring of the provision and delivery of RE within schools. The Inspector/Adviser RE also suggested that SACRE may wish to invite the 14 – 19 Network Co-ordinator to their next meeting to discuss processes.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) *the letters from the Association be received and noted, and*
- (b) *the letter from WASACRE be forwarded to the 14 – 19 Learning Network together with an invitation for the 14 – 19 Network Co-ordinator to attend SACRE's next meeting.*

(ch) National Conference with DCELLS

The Inspector/Adviser RE verbally updated members regarding the proposals for the National Conference due to take place in October 2008. Members were advised that invitations to the conference would be sent via DCELLS that week for each school to send two representatives. Invitations would also be sent to FE Colleges and key bodies with appropriate interests including Funky Dragon. The purpose of the conference was to raise awareness of what Post 16 RE could be and the benefits to the pupils and to encourage schools to give RE an appropriate time in the curriculum. A video link between the two venues in Flintshire and Cardiff would be used and presentations delivered from both locations including a key note speech by the Minister. All delegates would be given copies of resources specially prepared for Post 16 RE and a range of other helpful and stimulating materials.

RESOLVED that the verbal report from the Inspector/Adviser RE regarding proposals for the National Conference with DCELLS be accepted.

73 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chair reminded members that the next meeting of Denbighshire SACRE had been scheduled for 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday 7th October, 2008 in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Wynnstay Road, Ruthin. Unfortunately the Inspector/Adviser RE reported that the date may be subject to change and members would be notified at the earliest possible opportunity if that was the case.

Prior to the close of the meeting the Chair thanked members for their attendance and contributions to debate and invited them to collect a copy of the RE News which was available to all SACRE members. Copies of the SACRE Handbook were also available for collection by the new members. The Chair also took the opportunity to advise members that Mrs. S. Collingbourne, Secretary of WASACRE would be leaving shortly. She was pleased to report that her replacement was Tania Ap Sion and wished her all the best in that role. Finally the Chair thanked the committee's translator and Clerk to SACRE for their hard work and a special thanks was also extended to the Inspector/Adviser RE and best wishes conveyed to him for his forthcoming trip to Uganda.

The meeting concluded at 11.55 a.m.
