

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 Monday, 7th June 2010 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT

Representing Denbighshire County Council

Councillors M.M. Jones (Chair), J.A. Davies, C.M. Evans, G.C. Evans, G.A. Jones and J.G. Yorke

Representing Religious Denominations

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

Representing Teacher Association

M. Bradshaw, C. Harmsworth, L. Linaker and M. Phillips

Co-opted Members

G. Craigen and T. Ap Siôn

ALSO PRESENT

Senior Learning Adviser RE (PL) and Clerk to SACRE (KEJ)

APOLOGIES

M. Hatch. M.B. Lloyd and E. Wright

SILENT REFLECTION

The meeting began with a few minutes silent reflection.

WELCOME

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. She also extended a special welcome to Mr. G. Craigen who was attending his first meeting as a co-opted member.

97 URGENT MATTERS

In accordance with the requirements of Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair declared that she intended to include for discussion the following matter requiring urgent attention –

Election of members to the WASACRE Executive

98 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) held on 24th February, 2010 (previously circulated) were submitted.

Page 5 – Item No. 4 Analysis of Inspection Reports on Schools – Councillor C.M. Evans sought clarification on the comment made regarding the criticism leveled at particular schools in terms of weaknesses shown in matters relating to Entrepreneurship and Enterprise and Work related education. It was clarified that this aspect had been included as a negative comment within the Estyn Inspection reports for two schools and had been considered an unfair comment by the SACRE member concerned in the context of Religious Education.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 24th February 2010 be received and approved as a correct record.

99 ANALYSIS OF INSPECTION REPORTS ON SCHOOLS

The Senior Learning Adviser RE submitted a report (previously circulated) analysing the results of the recent inspections of four schools between December 2009 and February 2010 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 y Parc, Denbigh, Ysgol Maes Hyfryd, Corwen, Ysgol Bryn Collen, Llangollen and Ysgol Gellifor and a brief history of each school had been incorporated into the report.

The Senior Learning 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. Religious Education had not been inspected at Ysgol y Parc and Ysgol Gellifor. In terms of Key Question 3 – how well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community, three schools had achieved Grade 1 – good with outstanding features whilst one school (Ysgol Bryn Collen) had achieved Grade 4 – some good features but shortcomings in important areas. Despite those shortcomings it was highlighted that the provision for pupils' SMSC development at Ysgol Bryn Collen had good features and no important shortcomings with the school providing pupils with a strong sense of achievement and encouraged pupils to respect the talents of others. It was pleasing to note the 74 positive comments for SMSC across the four schools and the Senior Learning Adviser RE drew members' attention to the 13 outstanding features specific to PSE provision, statutory requirements for RE and collective worship which had been highlighted within the inspection reports for particular schools. Whilst 6 negative comments had been received only one had related to RE with the school not meeting the statutory requirements for RE which would be addressed.

With regard to Religious Education the four schools had received 19 positive comments between them with the 3 negative comments having been made in respect of one school (Ysgol Bryn Collen).

Councillor C.M. Evans felt that it might be confusing for young children to be taught a number of religions in addition to Christianity and she queried whether the teaching of other faiths was a requirement within the curriculum. Ms. L. Linaker advised that she taught children up to age 7 and felt they were not too young to be introduced to other faiths advising that it was important for children to understand that they would encounter other religions and she found that they enjoyed learning about how others worshiped in different ways. The Senior Learning Adviser RE indicated that the Agreed Syllabus had taken this aspect into account and Christianity was taught in the foundation phase with other religions being introduced and explored at other Key Stages in order to broaden the horizons of pupils. Religious Education was locally agreed in order to take into account the ethnicity within the community and he emphasised the importance of interaction with, and learning about, other cultures. Tania Ap Siôn agreed that the Agreed Syllabus dealt appropriately with that issue in its approach to teaching. Other SACRE members also added their support for introducing other faiths to children at an early stage. Mr. G. Craigen referred to the statutory nature of the teaching of additional religions, thus it was not really an issue for SACREs.

Councillor G.C. Evans queried the actions being undertaken in order to address the shortcomings highlighted at Ysgol Bryn Collen. The Senior Learning Adviser RE confirmed that he had visited the school with a view to addressing the issues raised during the inspection and would be visiting the school again at the end of September in order to monitor progress. The Chair referred to the new inspection system being introduced from September 2010 and the impact on the inspection of RE. The Senior Learning Adviser RE confirmed that RE would not be inspected as a separate subject unless schools deemed it to be necessary. Collective Worship and Religious Education would only be commented upon if not meeting statutory requirements so the absence of comments would indicate a satisfactory outcome. Whilst Estyn inspected schools on a six year cycle, the Senior Learning Adviser RE monitored RE in Denbighshire for SACRE on a three year cycle.

The Chair encouraged members to read the full inspection reports for the schools which put the various elements of the inspection into context. She highlighted that two of the schools had performed exceptionally well and it was agreed that letters be sent out in the usual manner

congratulating the schools on their positive features with encouragement and support being offered to those schools with identified shortcomings.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) *the report be received and noted;*
- (b) *a letter be sent to the schools inspected congratulating them on the good features identified and offering the services of the Senior Learning Adviser RE and School Improvement Officers in relation to any areas for development or key issues needing addressing, and*
- (c) *the Local Authority be requested to distribute the above letters.*

100 PRESENTATION ON KEY STAGE 2 / KEY STAGE 3 TRANSITION PROJECT

The Senior Learning Adviser RE delivered a power point presentation to members on Key Stage 2 / Key Stage 3 Transition Project entitled 'Archaeological Dig' which was a resource for teachers of RE he had developed. He provided members with some background to the resource based on an idea arising from a television programme during which artefacts were unearthed. The Senior Learning Adviser RE explained that the web based resource, hosted by Flintshire County Council, was used to uncover an artefact with pupils asking questions and investigating its origins in order to engage with beliefs of Christianity and other faiths. He guided members through the project explaining how it was used in practice whereby eight objects, two of each relating to Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism could be uncovered by Key Stage 2 pupils. A pamphlet was subsequently produced by the pupils which would be reintroduced at Key Stage 3 when they would be asked to produce an IT based power point project followed by a peer assessment.

Members were advised that the project was currently being piloted by Denbigh High School and five of its feeder schools and it was hoped that a Welsh version would also be produced by the end of the year. The Chair expressed her disappointment regarding the delay in producing the Welsh version. Mr. G. Craigen referred to the difficulties in translating materials subject to change and felt the delay needed to be accepted when such resources were introduced on a trial basis. The Council felt that the resource was an excellent means of engaging children and introducing them to different faiths and would prove a valuable tool in counteracting the dip in pupil performance from pupils at Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. In response to questions the Senior Learning Adviser RE confirmed that the resource could be used time and time again and could possibly be introduced for other topics and subjects. He assured members that children who had not been involved with the project at Key Stage 2 would not be disadvantaged as different groups of pupils would be considering different artefacts and this aspect had been taken into account in the pilot. The Chair asked that feedback on the pilot be submitted to SACRE's next meeting in October 2010.

The Senior Learning Adviser RE also drew members' attention to a number of resources he had used during his time as Head of RE at John Bright School, Llandudno (as previously requested by members) and particularly elaborated upon the following materials –

- Interactive Jigsaws
- Interactive Power point (Plenary Quiz)
- Interesting Websites
- Use of Video

He emphasised the importance of such materials in engaging pupils and capturing their imagination. Members were also advised that two development days had been arranged on 22 and 29 June whereby teachers could meet in order to share ideas and good practice for particular key stages. The development days had been promoted in schools and initial indications showed a positive response with thirty teachers having indicated their intention to attend.

The Chair thanked the Senior Learning Adviser RE for his interesting and informative presentation and members were encouraged by the initiatives being undertaken in order to share best practice and further develop resource materials in order to effectively engage pupils in RE.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the presentation by the Senior Learning Adviser RE be received, and
- (b) feedback on the resource project currently being piloted at Denbigh High School be submitted to SACRE's next meeting in October 2010.

101 WALES ASSOCIATION OF SACRES

5(a) Minutes of WASACRE – 18th March 2010

The minutes of the meeting of the Wales Association of SACREs (WASACRE) held at the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Swansea on 18 March 2010 (previously circulated) were submitted for members' information.

Reverend B.H. Jones reported upon the meeting he had attended which had proved a beneficial and worthwhile experience. He particularly drew members' attention to the presentations by Detective Superintendent Pam Kelly, Dyfed Powys Police who had discussed the importance of RE for jobs in the public sector with particular reference to the police service and the NAPfRE presentation by Norma Glass on learning outside the classroom: places of worship. The Chair had been disappointed that she had been unable to attend the meeting in March but indicated that she was looking forward to attending the next meeting which was being held in Wrexham on 24 June 2010.

RESOLVED that minutes of WASACRE held on 18th March 2010 be accepted.

5(b) SACREs and the Local Community Survey

The Senior Learning Adviser RE referred to a survey entitled 'SACREs and the Local Community' (previously circulated) provided by WASACRE for all SACREs in Wales to complete regarding SACRE representation, involvement with local interfaith organisations and other interfaith initiatives. Completion of the survey would contribute to WASACRE's report mapping the relationships between SACREs and their local communities and also exemplify ways in which SACREs contribute in their local contexts to the Welsh Assembly Government's cross-cutting theme of community cohesion.

Whilst some of the questions could be easily answered through the administration role, others warranted further discussion by SACRE. In response to a question from Councillor C.M. Evans regarding the acceptability of particular religions to be represented on SACRE, Mr. G. Craigen elaborated upon the statutory requirements for the composition of the Religious Denominations reflecting the variety and numerical representation of the different faith communities in the area. Despite approaches being made to the Muslim and Jewish faith communities no representatives for those religions had been obtained. Mr. Craigen also referred to the difficulties in filling other outstanding vacancies on SACRE despite best endeavours. Councillor G.A. Jones suggested that contact be made with the three Roman Catholic schools in an attempt to fill the Roman Catholic vacancy.

During consideration of the survey questions members particularly commented on the following –

Section A – Questions 2 & 3 – SACRE had experienced difficulties in securing representation for Christian denominations having a number of outstanding vacancies despite best efforts to fill them. Appropriate representation from the Muslim and Jewish Communities had also been sought but had not been secured. Accordingly SACRE could not be satisfied that its membership appropriately reflected the relevant Christian denominations and other religions and their denominations in the area despite best endeavours.

Section B – Questions 1 & 2 – Individuals had been co-opted onto SACRE in light of their experience and the valuable contribution they would make to meetings.

Section C – Question 1 – There were contacts with Christian denominations and other religions and their denominations in the area through SACRE's individual members.

Section C – Question 2 – The local authority had associations with both the Jewish and Islamic Centres and schools were provided with those links.

Section C – Question 3 – Projects or activities involving others included the Christianity Experience Day in St. Asaph Cathedral, Millennium Service and the Jewish Way of Life Exhibition.

Section C – Question 5 – SACRE would be promoting relations through the forthcoming RE Festival and Resilience project.

Section D – Questions 1 & 2 – A local forum of faiths in the area would include the church together group 'Cytun' which SACRE member Reverend B.H. Jones was involved in.

Section D – Questions 3 – 7 – Given the absence of local interfaith groups in the area SACRE did not have an involvement.

Following the above discussion, and in response to a question from the Chair, Tania Ap Siôn indicated that WASACRE would be collating the questionnaire responses and providing an official report on the work of SACREs in their local communities by September 2010.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) *the Senior Learning Adviser RE be asked to complete and return the survey entitled 'SACREs and their local communities' taking into account members' responses as detailed above, and*
- (b) *the report produced by WASACRE following the collation of responses to the questionnaire be submitted to a future meeting of SACRE.*

102 RE FESTIVAL

The Senior Learning Adviser RE referred to a leaflet (previously circulated) informing members about the forthcoming RE Festival in March 2011 which was a month long celebration of promotion of RE through schools. The aims of RE month had been detailed within the leaflet and included the provision of a showcase for enjoyable and relevant religious education with pupils of all abilities and age groups and strengthening links between RE and local, regional and national faith communities.

During the ensuing discussion, the Senior Learning Adviser RE put forward a number of initiatives for the celebration including a competition for the best video/montage from the schools primary and secondary sectors for each key stage. Other ideas included visits, debates, presentations, newsletters and displays, etc focusing on schools, public buildings, the local authority and religious communities. Members were advised that the festival was an opportunity to discuss ideas as to how RE could be promoted. The Senior Learning Adviser RE also suggested a mini launch event held locally in St. Asaph Cathedral and to invite the press to attend and asking schools to provide a showcase of RE together with an exhibition of work within schools. Members were keen for other buildings to be used for exhibitions and displays including libraries and the Scala in Prestatyn. The need to cater for all age ranges was emphasised together with ensuring the largest audience possible for events. It was also recommended that approaches be made to the Cathedral Dean at the earliest opportunity as their calendar was very busy.

In response to a question from the Chair the Senior Learning Adviser RE indicated that specific funding for the festival was not being provided. The Chair suggested that a Sub Committee be established in order to discuss ideas and take the matter forward and sought expressions of interest from SACRE members in that regard. It was agreed that a date for the first meeting be agreed between those interested members at the end of today's SACRE meeting.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) *the leaflet regarding the forthcoming RE Festival be received and noted, and*
- (b) *a Sub Committee consisting of the Chair, Councillor M.M. Jones, Mr. G. Craigen, Ms. T. Ap Sion and Mrs. S. Harris be established to meet with the Senior Learning Adviser RE with a*

view to promoting RE during the month long celebration in March 2011 with a report back thereon to this SACRE in October 2010.

103 RESILIENCE PROJECT

The Senior Learning Adviser RE referred to a leaflet (previously circulated) regarding the REsilience project managed by the RE Council of England and Wales.

Mr. G. Craigen reported upon the background and context to the REsilience project (for which he was Lead Mentor in Wales) which was funded by the Home Office with the focus on building teacher confidence and skills in addressing controversial issues which was particularly relevant for RE. A pilot had been completed in England and the project was currently being piloted in five schools in Wales, the closest being Wrexham and Ysgol Maes Garmon, Flint prior to being rolled out to other schools in September 2010. A self evaluation would be undertaken by schools following a visit by the mentors to provide appropriate training and resources. Mr. Craigen advised that it was a very exciting project and another way of reminding the community that RE had a significant contribution to make and enabled schools to encourage open dialogue in classrooms and recognise that there were differences. In response to a question regarding funding for the project, Mr. Graigen indicated that the Home Office had committed funding for the initial phase of the project up until June 2010. Whilst there was a second intended phase it remained to be seen whether the project would continue. A significant part of the project was the use of Gateway Documents as a valuable resource providing further links and guidance to teachers which would be provided bilingually in Wales. Councillor J. Yorke had been pleased to hear of the project which she felt would prove extremely useful and helpful to teachers based on her previous experience of such issues when working in a high school in East London following the 9/11 tragedy.

RESOLVED that the leaflet regarding the REsilience project managed by the RE Council of England and Wales together with the verbal report thereon by Mr. G. Craigen, Lead Mentor in Wales be received and noted.

104 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chair reminded members that the next meeting of Denbighshire SACRE would be held at 10.00 a.m. on 11 October 2010 in the Council Chamber, Russell House, Churton Road, Rhyl. She was also disappointed to note that no officer had been present at today's meeting from the Council's Lifelong Learning Directorate and indicated that she would ask for an officer to be present at SACRE's next meeting.

105 URGENT MATTER – ELECTION OF MEMBERS TO THE WASACRE EXECUTIVE

(This item was considered as a matter of urgency, notice having been given by the Chair at the commencement of the meeting)

The Senior Learning Adviser RE verbally reported upon the three nominations received for the two places on the Executive Committee, namely County Councillor Huw George, Pembrokeshire, Mary Parry, Carmarthenshire and Dafydd Treharne, Vale of Glamorgan and sought members' views on those candidates.

Members considered the background and experience of the three candidates and following a brief discussion it was –

RESOLVED that Mary Parry, Camarthenshire and Dafydd Treharne receive Denbighshire SACRE's vote for election to the WASACRE Executive Committee.

Prior to the close of the meeting the Chair thanked the Senior Learning Adviser RE, Clerk to SACRE and the Simultaneous Translator for their work and members for their attendance and contribution to debate.

The meeting concluded at 12.05 p.m.
